
Kluwer Copyright Blog

Copyright case: Sumrall v. LeSEA, Inc., USA

Robert Margolis (Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory US) · Tuesday, August 6th, 2024

Case arises out of dispute over the estate of noted evangelical minister Dr. Lester Sumrall.

The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago has affirmed the dismissal of claims for copyright ownership brought by a trust asserting the rights of a son of the late evangelical pastor Dr. Lester Sumrall, finding those claims were barred by the Copyright Act's three-year statute of limitations. The court held that the ministry to which Dr. Sumrall allegedly bequeathed his property, including intellectual property, repudiated any co-ownership claim by the son as early as 1996, more than 20 years before the claim was filed. The court also affirmed the dismissal of a claim brought by one of Dr. Sumrall's grandsons, who asserted he owns the copyright in a photograph he took of Dr. Sumrall in China while employed by the ministry and traveling pursuant to his employment. The court held that the photo was a work made for hire, and thus owned by Dr. Sumrall's ministry. The court also affirmed the dismissal of the trust's claim that the ministry violated Dr. Sumrall's publicity rights, finding the trust lacked the requisite ownership interest in the right to assert the claim (*Sumrall v. LeSEA, Inc.*, No. 23-2833 (7th Cir. June 12, 2024)).

Case date: 12 June 2024

Case number: No. 23-2833

Court: United States Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit

A full summary of this case has been published on [Kluwer IP Law](#)

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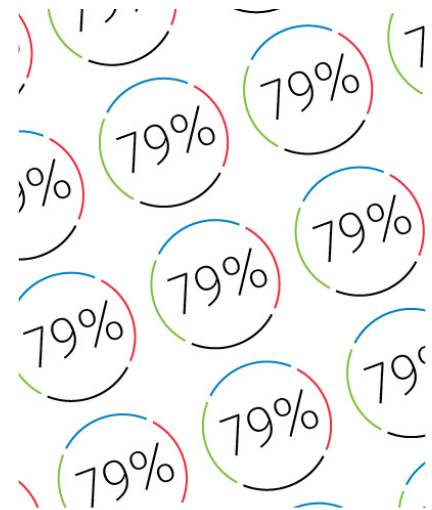
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