

Ross-Nancy-20050226100002

To: Julie L. Sigall
Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs

Date: 02/26/2005

From: Nancy Ross

Comment:

Dear U.S. Copyright Office personnel,

I have experienced many occasions as a student of interactive Media Design on which I have found an image, audio or video file online or elsewhere and been in doubt about copyrights. In many cases I could not locate the copyright holder. In such cases I hardly knew where to start to look or how to do it.

For school projects this is not so much of an issue since no one but the instructor and possibly other class members will see or hear the project during a critique, but it still makes me uncomfortable about using the material even for that purpose.

As students, we are subject to portfolio reviews. We are expected to put our school work into an electronic portfolio that will be viewed by school counselors. The best pieces go into the portfolio to be viewed by potential employers.

If fortune smiles, these pieces will be viewed by those employers and perhaps by the public at large. If and when that happens a student or recently graduated student is potentially in violation of copyright laws.

As a person who appreciates the amount of work that goes into an artist's intellectual property because I create such property myself, I would like to be able to see that the original creator of the property whose work I may be using at least gets credit for it and better, gets paid if they want payment.

I will one day be one of those people who would like to get credit for my work and get paid for it. I would like for people to be able to know that I am the creator of the work and be able to find me so they can pay me for it. Please make it easier for students and artists to be able to locate, give credit to, and pay copyright holders for the use of their work.

There is also another issue that a student deals with. Sometimes we do not know if the material we wish to use for our projects is in the public domain and free to use or is still subject to other protections. If we could easily find that information out we would be able to comply with applicable laws. As conscientious citizens and artists, we want to comply with the laws. Please make it easier for us to do this.

Regarding public domain, could we also, please, have public domain work freely available for students and other public to use? Proposed laws placing this material out of the reach of the public is both unfair and self-defeating. This work belongs to all Americans citizens. Let us have it available to us so we can continue to enjoy and appreciate it.

If this material is restricted, I can see a day when it disappears from our culture because it is no longer being circulated in the public domain. The loss of our cultural icons would be a terrible loss to all Americans. I trust that you don't really mean to do that, but what you are considering doing could have these unintended consequences.

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Thank you for the opportunity to communicate to you on this very important matter.

Nancy Ross