

McPherson-James-20050314080016

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

Date: 03/14/2005

From: James McPherson

Comment:

I am a writer for a computer periodical. I was asked to write an article on the specifications, abilities, and foibles of older computer hardware.

I went to gather user manuals, spec sheets, and support guides from the manufacturers but many companies never survive more than a few years. When the manufacturers are no longer in business their patents are bought and sold between numerous corporations but the copyrights on documentation tends to be forgotten.

Unable to contact manufacturers, I managed to find copies of magazines with the information. But like the manufacturers the magazines were defunct. Of the authors I was able to track down, the majority had sold the article and all rights to the publisher. The authors could put me in touch with a few of the editors but the editors were almost never principles in the company.

I'd already expended more effort attempting to locate information than was expected to complete the article so the article was eventually scrapped. Which is a shame because there's a lot of physical equipment out there that is unsupportable due to the orphaned copyright status of the user and support manuals.