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

Date: 03/15/2005

From: Matthew M. Copeland

Comment:

I've found several instances where books and old computer games that are wonderful works have been abandoned by the companies that hold the copyright or the authors cannot be found. Often, it is not possible to find the software to purchase it, and the books are out of print with the publisher not having a forwarding address for the author. This is a problem as it makes it impossible to share these works with others because of the license on those works. I'd love to recreate some of these old games to run on newer operating systems, but the copyright holder is difficult if not impossible to find.

I do see a problem though with completely opening up a piece of work for general use. In the area of computers, a large set of software is developed by individuals. A large repository of software has been licensed under licenses like the GNU General Public License. These works have the source code available and it is open to use, but it requires that the derivative work must also be placed under the GNU General Public License. Now, if the law were changed to allow others to use this source code in violation of that license, that would cause huge problems with this repository of software, as it could violate the original intent of the author in licensing the software to all people under the conditions of the license. I ask that you consider this particular issue when deciding as it could have a drastic effect on the Information Technology industry.

Thank you for your time.