

comment_from_Rodger_Thorm

ATTN.: Julie L. Sigall, Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs
SUBJECT: Orphan works
TYPE: comment
FROM: Rodger Thorm
Organization:
Title:

Date: Fri, 25 Feb 2005 17:29:11 -0500
Comment:

I am a moderator for some websites and online discussion groups related to DragonQuest (a role-playing game originally published by Simulations Publications, Inc. (SPI) in 1980; a novel by Anne McCaffrey and a series of videogames share the same name but none are related to each other).

There is a small but interested core of fans who still play this game. Print copies are becoming rarities because it has been out of print for so long, and attracting new players is more difficult because the rules are not readily available.

Moreover, a number of these players and fans of the game would like to develop new rules and additional material for use with this game. However, because of the uncertain legal status of the game. There have been several attempts by fans of the game and interested parties to try to find out about acquiring the rights to the game in order to bring it back to the market. These have never been fully answered because the ownership of the game has changed hands so many times.

SPI was acquired by Tactical Studies Rules, Inc. (TSR) which was later acquired by Wizards of the Coast (WotC) which was itself acquired by Hasbro. Because TSR did very little with the game once it had acquired the rights, and WotC did nothing with it once they were the owners, it is unlikely that anyone at the parent company now knows anything about this game. For them, unless there is enough money in it, it is simpler (and more economically sensible) to ignore the works than to deal with how the rights to this game have been transferred.

Games that are still in print can continue to grow and attract new players by putting out new materials. As a community, our activity is essentially stifled because of the uncertain legal standing with regard to revising or rewriting the rules to make them more contemporary and up to date.

Because game rules are something that is more prone to revision over time than a work of fiction, this is a much more severe effect on the community of fans and players of this game than if the item in question were a novel or some other work of fiction.

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