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To: Julie L. Sigall
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From: Eric Hamilton

Comment:

A friend of the family wrote a book, in the 1960's. It was never a national bestseller, but it sold a thousand copies or so steadily every year... until the publishing company closed shop, and took his copyright with them. Presumably, the copyright transferred to the ownership of the stock holders when it dissolved, but with no way to contact them, our friend lost his right to continue publishing and selling his book.

For him, it wasn't about the money. It was about sharing his hard work with as many people as he could. The fact that copyrights don't auto-expire periodically if they're not renewed means that his book will probably never be on store shelves again (he recently died, and 63 years from now, his work will be lost forever in the shadows of time).

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A friend of mine got suckered into a bad record deal when he was 17. Two albums were produced, and he was delighted that he could buy his CD at Wal-Mart, but he never saw a penny, and the record label collapsed. With no way to contact the current copyright holder, and the last few copies vanishing from store shelves, newer fans will never be able to enjoy the debut album, and he'll never see any money for his hard work.

I've got more stories where these came from -- these are social tragedies. Copyright is meant to protect content creators, and provide incentive to further the arts and sciences -- not meant to rob our culture of important creative works.

Please consider measures to alleviate the orphan works problem! I want my children to have the opportunity to experience the art and culture that shaped my life.