

I'm a researcher of Yiddish music from before the Second World War and am running into the orphan works problem everywhere. A tremendous amount of Jewish-American culture is disappearing, crumbling into dust before it has been preserved. Libraries are afraid because of the difficulties of dealing with material which perhaps was never copyrighted, or the copyright was allowed to lapse, or the entities which had ownership of the material could not be determined or had gone out of business long since. As an experiment, I went to the Copyright Office myself and poured through card catalogs, discovering that of 125 songs I'd taken there to check, only 5 had renewed copyrights - and of those, NONE of the copyright holders were currently in existence.

Because libraries are afraid, they do not digitize these works - or if they do, they restrict access to people who can physically visit their locations. The books, newspapers, and 78 records will be gone before anybody has had a chance to study them.

We need for orphan works to be liberated before they disappear.