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

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From: Chris Marko

Comment:

I believe after a certain amount of time, copyright should fall into the public domain, so as all can benefit from the effort of the original author. Copyright law was designed to provide income and reward an individual for their hard work. However, if that individual is no longer able to be contacted, then this displays a disinterest in generating income from the product. However, the public still may provide a demand for the product, so why not make it freely available? In the case of software, new versions come out all the time, which build upon previous ideas. That idea would become public domain after, say, 7 or 14 years. If the individual is just sitting on the copyright, then it is impossible to build upon and further those ideas. If that individual wishes to continue to work on the product and enhance it, those enhancements may also potentially be eventually copyrighted by them (or someone else if they took the work from public domain at that point, though the original work still remains public domain). With books, photos, and movies, which do not necessarily benefit from innovation in the same way software does, 75 years seems more than reasonable for a person to derive benefit during their lifetime of their work. After this, the public at large can enjoy the benefits and this would continue to allow creativity and innovation, two great things that put America competitively ahead of other cultures.