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

Date: 05/06/2005

From: Ben Wheeler

Comment:
I was an intern and website developer for the Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project
at Stanford University in the summer of 1999. The project had access to thousands
of newspaper articles, magazine articles, and photographs taken in the 1950s and
1960s of civil rights meetings, marches, and sermons, but of course these all fell
under the copyright of their respective creators, or subsequent owners. We were
happy to pay fees for permission to use the photographs, but I was told that I
could not use many of these because the owners of the copyright of most of the works
could not be found.

With no way to identify the owners, I was simply unable to use these documents, and
I was forced to abandon major aspects of my site design, rather than risk being
forced to redo large parts of the site later should we use a photograph whose
copyright holder would later come forward and demand fees or sue. This was a huge
disappointment--wonderful, historically relevant photographs that were earning no
one money could nonetheless not be displayed on our site for the benefit of
historical researchers or everyday students of King's life and the civil rights
movement.

We badly needed a way to confirm that the copyright holders of most of these
photographs were no longer tracking their use or seeking royalties on their use.