

Staggers-Kevin-20050314070011

To: Julie L. Sigall  
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From: Kevin Staggers

Comment:

A few years back I found, and was using regularly, a piece of shareware software for virtual windows management on Windows OS. The software was shareware, and I found it useful so I went to pay for it. Well that's when I found out the original author had sold it to a software company, and since he no longer owned the code he wouldn't accept payments. Unfortunately the company he sold it to had since gone out of business and apparently no one purchased their software rights before this occurred. I was left with a piece of software that was not legally free, but I had no recourse to pay for it. It was very much orphaned and I ended up using it for years until I could find a comparable replacement that I could actually pay for. (I offered to pay the original author of the software but he refused as he didn't own the software any longer.)

When copyrighted works are orphaned currently they become useless. Works that require you to pay for them may stop functioning, yet you have no way to pay for them at all. In other cases, like mine above, the works still function but the user is left essentially breaking the law even though they tried to do the right thing.

Orphaned works should revert to the public domain, this way the works can benefit society even when the owners of those works disappear. I strongly urge you to take this stance, the public domain has so little returned to it anymore that every little bit counts.