

Bromberg-Ni col ette-20050304110002

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

Date: 03/04/2005

From: Nicolette Bromberg
Title: Visual Materials Curator
Org: University of Washington Libraries

Comment:

To the US copyright office:

I am in charge of a large collection (about a million) of photographs and moving images in an academic research library. We have researchers from all over the world who come to use our materials in their publications, documentaries, films, journals, educational products, etc. Well over half of our photographs and films do not have any information about the possible copyright holder. Since we do not collect feature films, our moving image materials tend to have little potential "commercial" value that would need to be protected by copyright. Even films we have that have some credit information are still often extremely hard to locate the actual copyright holder, such as industrial films made by/for companies that no longer exist. Many of our photographs have no photographer or studio name with them or are from photographers who are dead or studios that have been closed for years. It would take massive amounts of money to track down potential heirs to this material and the amount of money a copyright holder might receive is minimal or possibly non-existent (because scholars often can't afford to pay). This is not a unique situation, most historical societies and regional history archives have similar collections that are in a large part "orphan" or "semi-orphan" materials. We serve large populations of researchers from academics to documentary filmmakers, to students, and local historians. Almost all of our client base cannot afford the money to do copyright searches--neither can this institution afford to confirm the copyright status on large volumes of material.