

A-Chase-Rosemary-20050323063003

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

Date: 03/23/2005

From: Rosemary A. Chase
Address1: MSN 5G6 University Copyright Office
Address2: George Mason University

Comment:

At George Mason University, the University Libraries Copyright officer is consulted when there are unusual circumstances or issues with a permission request for photocopied readers and library course reserves. We occasionally obtain permissions for Mason authors to use others' copyrighted works in new publications. Often we are informed by publishers that the rights have reverted to the author, and they do not have contact information for the author. After doing some detective work, we sometimes are able to locate an author or author's estate, depending on the age and notoriety of the author.

The Author's Registry is a good concept, but we rarely find our missing authors there. Currently, we are preparing a paper trail on an author to enable a Mason professor to convince his publisher that they will not be held liable in the event that the author surfaces and demands remuneration (highly unlikely due to the technical nature of the book, and the proposed limited distribution..)

We had a request from another Mason author to locate the artist or rights holder of a 1937 cartoon, to obtain permission to use it to illustrate and enhance her journal article. We were unable to find any contact information so the publisher declined to include the cartoon. It is unfortunate that publishers seem unwilling to include a disclaimer statement about untraceable authors, artists, or publishers, but it is understandable considering the litigious nature of contemporary society.