

January 31, 2011

To: Office of the General Counsel  
U.S. Copyright Office

From: Lizabeth A. Wilson   
Dean of University Libraries  
University of Washington

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on possible federal coverage of pre-1972 sound recordings.

Copyright law is of crucial importance to the operations of the University of Washington Libraries as it provides the legal framework for accessing and preserving library materials. The current copyright status of pre-1972 sound recordings makes it difficult for libraries to preserve these materials and make them accessible for students and researchers.

At the University of Washington Libraries we have extensive collections of sound recordings including oral histories and musical recordings. These works often require preservation of the original artifact and/or digitization to allow for ongoing access to the material. These activities are often inhibited by the uncertain copyright status of these works. Changes in federal law can enable the preservation of our audio cultural heritage.

Specifically we would like the following actions taken:

- Repeal Section 301(c) of Titles 17, U.S. Code that keeps pre-1972 sound recordings under state law and place these works under federal copyright law.
- Give sound recordings a copyright term of 50 years.
- Develop "orphan works" legislation that would facilitate preservation of and access to pre-1972 sound recordings in cases where the copyright owner cannot be located.

I look forward to the Copyright Office's recommendations and legislative action on this matter.