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VOL 1, NO6

Dear Subscriber,

In the next several issues (starting with this one) we're going to talk about several ways to take a public domain project, that you have identified as being potentially profitable, and making it a reality.

Once you have a system for identifying potential candidates for your project the rest falls into place rather neatly. Re-publishing public domain information is not hard, but there are steps that need to be followed in order to achieve the desired outcome: a profit making venture. The hardest part is identifying likely re-publishing candidates.

Step One

The first step in creating a potentially profitable project is to identify the source of works you will be re-publishing or re-packaging.

You always start with your current business focus. It is very difficult to succeed in a project area that you have little personal knowledge of, so always start with your current interests. In other words, what business are you in or what business do you think you would enjoy (and know something about) being in?

- Advertising and marketing
- Publishing (general)
- Business development and consulting
- Retail, etc...

Then we need to discover the 'sources' of published work that relates to your business focus. Remember that it is always best to find the original published work for our projects rather than depend on another publishers recently re-published work, if one exists. See issue Vol1, No5 for the reason we only want original published works.

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Page 2...

One of the ways to do that is simply go to one of the used book sites we mentioned in a previous issue and conduct a search:

BookFinder (meta search engine: includes searches on Alirbris, abebooks, powells and others)

Alibris

Fetchbook info

Abebooks

What will you be searching for? In your line of work or business you must have books related to your business that reference previously published works... look in the 'index' of those books for references to other books.

Many times you'll come a cross a book published years ago that was unknown to you. Do a search for it on one of the above search engines and determine the copyright date or published date and the ISBN (if there is one).

Another way to begin developing a list of potential re-publishing candidates is to simply enter 'keywords' (such as, 'marketing', 'advertising', 'fly fishing', 'mind reading', 'book making' or whatever your interests are) in the search box and begin making a list of the books that may be potential candidates.

Take the information with you to your public library and see if the have a copy. If they do, look carefully at the copyright notice (if there is one). If the book was published prior to 1978 and does not contain a notice of copyright it could be in the public domain.

While you're at the library search the stacks in the area you are interested in to see if any of the books there catch your attention... theses shelves are filled with gold! Always take a paper and pen with you to the library and select titles and works that could be potentially in the public domain.

Once you have the following information you can look it up online:

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Page 3...

- Title
- Author
- ISBN (if any)
- Date of publication

When you have this information you'll be able to take that information back to your computer and do a search at: <http://www.copyright.gov/records/cohm.html> to determine if a copyright renewal had been filed for that book. If not, you may have found a potential candidate for your project.

How can you tell if a renewal exists?

When you do a search at the page above, you'll get a result that look like this:

1. Registration Number: RE-398-608
Title: The Magic power of emotional appeal. By Roy Garn.
Claimant: [Author and claimant] Roy Garn [Author]
Effective Registration Date: 19Oct88
Original Registration Date: 21Apr60;
Original Registration Number: A445214.
Original Class: A

Take a close look at the first box titled "Registration number". If you see a "RE-" preface to the actual number that indicates that a renewal was found. Further down the results is the "Effective Registration Date" which is approx exactly 28 years after the "Original Registration Date" just beneath it.

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Page 4...

Let's say that you are still interested in re-publishing the above work by Mr. Garn. In order for you to do that you would now need their written permission. This book is not in the public domain. In addition to their written permission they may also require a fee and possibly royalties on the sale of the book.

Contrast that to a book that is in the public domain. Once you have found a title that appears to be in the public domain, all you need is a copy of the book. You can then do anything you like with it and don't need anyone's permission.

What happens when there are no results from your search? What if you enter the name of the author and the returned search results indicate that they are not in the copyright database?

Here's an example:

I searched for "*A Fortune To Share*" by Vash Young. No results. The original copyright date is 1931, so even if a renewal was filed on time, the book's copyright still would have expired (1931 + 28 renewal years = 1959 expiration) so it's not in the database.

It appears that only current copyrighted works are being entered into the online database. In other words, if the copyright has not expired you'll find an entry there. If it has expired it will not be in the database and when you search on the author no record will be found for that title.

This is not as definitive as I would like it to be, but it's a start. I'm hoping that they will eventually include all registered works going back to the beginning of the century, but I don't know if that will ever happen.

Before we move on I just want to tell you one other 'trick' I use frequently whne I do find an author or title that appears a good candidate for a project—I look at the dust cover

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Page 5...

of the jacket to see what other titles are listed there. A lot of publishers will list other books by the same publisher in the same subject area of the book you're holding in your hands on the dust jacket to advertise those books.

Here's a list of potentially MORE public domain works to mine! Write these down and follow-up on them to see if the copyright has expired!

Here's another tip: When you're searching for books on any of the used book sites mentioned above, ALWAYS buy the copy you want with a dust jacket... for the very same reason... research to identify more books, on the same subject, for re-publishing!

Sometimes you won't have a choice, there will be only one copy of the book available without a dust jacket. But, when you do have a choice always get the one with a cover on it.

A used book dealer with usually indicate (in fact, it would be very bad form if they didn't indicate) the presence of a dust jacket on the book such as "w/dj" if it has one or "wo/dj" if the book doesn't have one.

In the next issue we will continue our discussion and begin formulating a plan for generating a working file for our project. In addition we'll design the steps we need to take to 'digitize' the work and get it into a format that'll make it easy to update and publish in digital formats as well as soft or hard cover printed books or manuals or audio.

That's all the news for now!

Until next time,

David Vallieres