

A Report on the Copyright Renewals of the Works of H.P. Lovecraft

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The copyright surrounding the works of Howard Philips Lovecraft is a topic of much confusion, complexity and misunderstanding. This report is intended to provide clarification with respect to the question of whether Lovecraft's copyrights were renewed by reviewing the official government documents listing copyright renewals during the years in which Lovecraft's work would have been eligible for renewed copyright protection.

I reviewed the copyright renewal records from the years of 1950 to 1972. This time period covers the years from 1922 to 1944 – the time period when Lovecraft's original works were originally published. The documents reviewed included the full renewal records for the years between 1950 and 1952 and the renewal records for books and submissions to periodicals from 1953 to 1972. Since Lovecraft originally published most of his works in amateur journals and magazines, the documents reviewed should include any existing Lovecraft renewals.

The entries for any Lovecraft renewals would have been found between the many entries of Louisiana Supreme Court filings copyrighted by West Publishing and the entries for the children books copyrighted by Maud Lovelace. In this review of twenty-two years of copyright renewals covering the period from 1922 to 1944, only four renewal records mentioning Lovecraft were found:

- July – December 1966 (p. 2594): LOVECRAFT, H.P.
The outsiders and others. Collected by
August Derleth & Donald Wandrei.
NM: compilation. © 15Nov39;
A134659. August Derleth & Donald
Wandrei (A); 23Dec66; R400418.
- January – June 1971 (p. 1585): LOVECRAFT, HOWARD PHILLIPS.
Beyond the wall of sleep. Collected
by August Derleth & Donald Wandrei.
NM: compilation. © 22Nov43:
A177408. August Derleth & Donald
Wandrei (A); 6Apr71: R504228.
- January – June 1972 (p. 1721): LOVECRAFT, HOWARD PHILLIPS.
Best supernatural stories of H. P.
Lovecraft. Edited with an introd.
by August Derleth. NM: editing &
introd. for new version. © 5Apr45;

A187233. April Derleth & Walden
Derleth (C); 8May72; R528118.

Marginalia, by H. P. Lovecraft.
Collected by August Derleth &
Donald Wandrei. NM: compilation.
© 30Dec44; A185879. April Derleth
& Walden Derleth (C) & Donald
Wandrei (A); 11Apr72; R526902.

These four records are not copyright renewals for any of the original stories of H.P. Lovecraft, rather, they are renewals for the compilations that Derleth and Wandrei released after Lovecraft's death through their Arkham House publishing company.

While the University of Pennsylvania does not host a complete set of the renewal records for periodicals, another digitized summary was located online and verified with the scanned renewal records. According to the periodical records from 1923 through 1925, the copyrights to the magazine "Weird Tales" were renewed in the 1950's. It is reasonable to assume that all the copyrights to "Weird Tales" were properly renewed and this content still enjoys copyright protection. This is relevant because Lovecraft published much of his fiction with "Weird Tales" and it is widely thought that prior to 1926, Lovecraft assigned his copyrights to "Weird Tales". Works potentially affected by this include "The Temple", "The Moon Bog", "The Outsider", "The Horror at Martin's Beach", "The Hound", "The Rats in the Walls", "The Unnamable", "Ashes", "The Ghost Eater", "The Loved-Dead", "The Festival", "Deaf, Dumb, and Blind", "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs" (ghostwritten for Harry Houdini), and "He". Arkham House claims to have purchased the copyrights to these stories in 1947 from the magazine.

From a review of these official government documents, it is clear that a majority of Lovecraft's work was never renewed and many of his original published works entered the public domain twenty-eight years after the original publication date. The only possible exceptions to this would be the stories published in "Weird Tales" and the story "The Transition of Juan Romero" which may have been first published by Derleth and Wandrei in a compilation titled "Marginalia" (1944) and this story would be protected if Derleth and Wandrei possessed the copyright to that specific work.

Sources:

"The Online Books Page", University of Pennsylvania Library,
<<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/cce/>>

"US Catalog of Copyright Entries", Philip Harper,
<<http://www.kingkong.demon.co.uk/ccer/ccer.htm>>

"Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States", Copyright

Information Center at Cornell University,
<http://www.copyright.cornell.edu/training/Hirtle_Public_Domain.htm>

“Bibliography of H.P. Lovecraft”, Wayne Coburn,
<<http://sprg.ssl.berkeley.edu/~wcoburn/hplbiblio.html>>

Lovecraft Renewal Records by Year:

January – June 1950: **No records found**
July – December 1950: **No records found**

January – June 1951: **No records found**
July – December 1951: **No records found**

January – June 1952: **No records found**
July – December 1952: **No records found**

Books / Submissions to periodicals

January – June 1953: **No records found**
July – December 1953: **No records found**

January – June 1954: **No records found**
July – December 1954: **No records found**

January – June 1955: **No records found**
July – December 1955: **No records found**

January – June 1956: **No records found**
July – December 1956: **No records found**

January – June 1957: **No records found**
July – December 1957: **No records found**

January – June 1958: **No records found**
July – December 1958: **No records found**

January – June 1959: **No records found**
July – December 1959: **No records found**

January – June 1960: **No records found**
July – December 1960: **No records found**

January – June 1961: **No records found**
July – December 1961: **No records found**

January – June 1962:	No records found
July – December 1962:	No records found
January – June 1963:	No records found
July – December 1963:	No records found
January – June 1964:	No records found
July – December 1964:	No records found
January – June 1965:	No records found
July – December 1965:	No records found
January – June 1966:	No records found
July – December 1966:	p. 2594 LOVECRAFT, H.P. The outsiders and others. Collected by August Derleth & Donald Wandrei. NM: compilation. © 15Nov39; A134659. August Derleth & Donald Wandrei (A); 23Dec66; R400418.
January – June 1967:	No records found
July – December 1967:	No records found
January – June 1968:	No records found
July – December 1968:	No records found
January – June 1969:	No records found
July – December 1969:	No records found
January – June 1970:	No records found
July – December 1970:	No records found
January – June 1971:	p. 1585 LOVECRAFT, HOWARD PHILLIPS. Beyond the wall of sleep. Collected By August Derleth & Donald Wandrei. NM: compilation. © 22Nov43; A177408. August Derleth & Donald Wandrei (A); 6Apr71: R504228.
July – December 1971:	No records found
January – June 1972:	p. 1721

LOVECRAFT, HOWARD PHILLIPS.
Best supernatural stories of H. P.
Lovecraft. Edited with an introd.
by August Derleth. NM: editing &
introd. for new version. © 5Apr45;
A187233. April Derleth & Walden
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© 30Dec44; A185879. April Derleth
& Walden Derleth (C) & Donald
Wandrei (A); 11Apr72; R526902.

July – December 1972:

No records found