

# FORTHCOMING FROM OXFORD

## WITHOUT COPYRIGHTS

PIRACY, PUBLISHING, AND THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

By Robert Spoo

“No work better puts copyright in its place. This beautiful book is essential reading for the remaking copyright will need.”

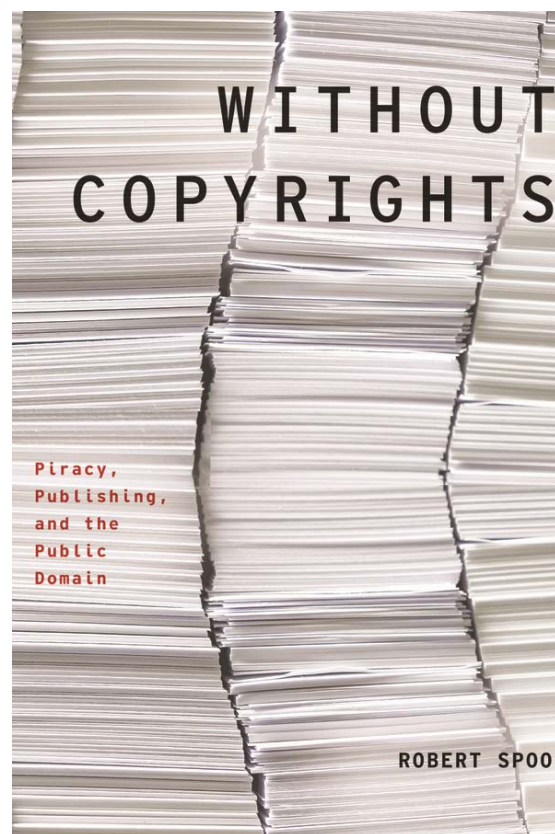
—Lawrence Lessig, author of *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress—and a Plan to Stop It*

The names of James Joyce and Ezra Pound ring out in the annals of literary modernism—that of Samuel Roth, less so. A Jewish immigrant from Eastern Europe, Roth attended Columbia University and both wrote and published poetry. In the 1920s he founded literary and men's magazines. He published selections from foreign novels—including the risqué parts, and without permission. When he reprinted segments of *Ulysses*, James Joyce took him to court.

Their battle, writes Robert Spoo, influenced both American copyright law and modernism itself. Spoo, professor of law at the University of Tulsa and former editor of *James Joyce Quarterly*, tells the story in *Without Copyrights*. From its inception in 1790, he writes, American copyright law offered no or less-than-perfect protection for works published abroad—to the fury of Charles Dickens, among others, who often received no money from sales in the United States. American publishers avoided ruinous competition with each other through “courtesy of the trade,” a code of etiquette that gave informal, exclusive rights to the first house to announce plans to issue a foreign work. American piracy and copyright law deeply affected transatlantic modernist writers. Spoo draws on previously unknown legal archives to recount Joyce's lawsuit, his campaign to discredit Roth through an international protest, and efforts to free *Ulysses* from an obscenity ban that prevented a legitimate release by an American publisher. Ezra Pound plays a role in the story with his attempts to reform U.S. copyright law, as does Bennett Cerf, founder of Random House, who finally issued an authorized edition of *Ulysses* in 1934, reviving trade courtesy to protect it from pirates. More than the tale of one book, *Without Copyrights* offers a new look at the history of the American public domain, a commons shaped by custom as much as by law, and of piracy's crucial role in literary history.

### Features

- Provides a thorough historical survey of the impact of U.S. copyright law on transatlantic modernist authors
- Documents the growth and development across time of the American public domain, as shaped by the historically protectionist and formalistic U.S. copyright law
- Gives fresh insights drawn from unpublished materials—letters by Joyce, John Quinn, Ezra Pound, Sylvia Beach, John M. Price, and others—and makes extensive use of hitherto unknown legal archives



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