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ONLINE DIARY

Tunes Too Familiar

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The Bee Gees inspired Charles Cronin's epiphany more than 20 years ago, and the Web allows him to share what he discovered.

Mr. Cronin was a law student interested in copyright matters when he heard about the case of *Selle v. Gibb*, which involved the song "How Deep Is Your Love" from the movie "Saturday Night Fever."

"The complaining work was by I guess what you'd call a garage musician who had earlier written a song called 'Let It End,' " said Mr. Cronin, a law librarian at Columbia Law School.

Mr. Cronin said that when the musician heard "How Deep Is Your Love," he said, "Oh, no, that's my song."

Mr. Cronin's quest to get a copy of the plaintiff's song made him realize the need for a music copyright resource. Over the years he has collected what has become the Music Plagiarism Project (www.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/law/library), bringing together hundreds of documents dating from 1845.

Better than a textbook, and used by professors around the world, the site offers clips of music to bring the disputes to life.

"This is the only way they will ever be heard again," said Mr. Cronin, who is partial to classical music and said his body of research has been an overview of American popular music from the last century and a half. "It's really to see what was popular. It's almost invariably works that made money that were the subjects of these cases."