The creation of technology and art is something that humans have been doing as long as history has been recorded and beyond. In today’s society individuals can create almost anything they can imagine if they have access to the internet and some developer tools, be those software or hardware related tools. This large amount of creation and freedom to explore ideas meant that inventions and ideas were being created at an increased rate. One can wonder how they rights to such inventions can be protected from stealing and piracy; the answer to this question is found in copyrights and patents.

According to the U.S. Copyright Office, copyright is the type of protection for published and unpublished works of original, expressions in a “tangible” format (2020). Copyright protects works in the genre of “literacy, dramatic, musical, and artistic works, such as poetry, novels, movies, songs, computer software, and architecture;” however, copyright does not protect “facts, ideas, [or] systems” but it may protect the manner these things are displayed (U.S. Copyright Office, 2020). Another method of protection comes in the form of patents. Patents protect inventions or discoveries, so they are more scientifically based (U.S. Copyright Office, 2020). Another form of protection in the U.S. is the trademark which protects “words, phrases, symbols, or designs identifying the source” that a product or service is from (U.S. Copyright Office, 2020).

While there are many forms of protection for one’s property, infringements upon these forms of protection still occur. One such instance of a copyright infringement can be found in the case between Oracle and Rimini Street. This case involves Oracle, a popular database corporation, and Rimini Street, a third-party enterprise software developer (Morgan, 2018). The issues began before 2007, when Rimini Street was downloading software from Oracle to assist their own customers; Oracle then issued a cease and desist letter to Rimini Street (Morgan, 2018). Oracle then filed suit against Rimini Street in 2010 for copyright infringement (Morgan, 2018). Rimini infringed the copyright protection of Oracle’s software by using unlicensed copies, and then broke Oracle’s terms of service by using Oracle’s software for Rimini facilities (Morgan, 2018). Rimini’s argument was that its practices were lawful by using third party servers and not their own servers to host the Oracle software (*Rimini Street*, 2018). The end of multiple trials resulted in awards for both sides, infringement compensation for Oracle and attorney fee compensation for Rimini Street, and barred Rimini from using Oracle software with a customer unless that customer owned a valid copy or consent from Oracle (Morgan, 2018).

My personal opinion on the Oracle v. Rimini Street is one that agrees with the outcome of the case. Rimini Street seems very sketchy with how it deleted a library of unlicensed Oracle software; to me, that is a red flag about whether or not I can trust a company. It makes complete sense to me that Oracle got compensation for the copyright infringement, since those customers of Rimini Street could have been financially beneficial to Oracle. Rimini Street was completely in the wrong for violating the terms of service and the copyright by distributing and using Oracle’s software unlawfully—profiting from the software’s misuse. There is not much else for me to say about my opinion on this case, besides that the unlawful party was punished accordingly.

The impact of the Oracle v. Rimini Street case isn’t one of large proportions on the computer science field. The case reinforces that one should understand the user agreement for any software they might use to help make a profit, and if there are questions to ask the software author for permission. The case also reinforces the idea that piracy of software is illegal. Following this line of thought, it does make me wonder what could be considered piracy; like if sharing a computer for free that has a large amount of paid applications/software is illegal, or even charging a subscription fee to use a “copy” or clone of that computer. I assume this situation is probably in most user agreements though, especially for how long those agreements are. I am curious if in the future there will be a cliff notes version of user agreements for consumers, since much of the language can be confusing and drawn out, but that is related to a completely different topic.

In conclusion, copyrights, patents, and trademarks are forms to protect ideas, inventions, and expressions of those ideas. Infringements will still occur, but these forms of protection give rights to the protection’s owner. The Oracle v Rimini Street case was a clear case of copyright infringement and also user agreement violation. The results of this case only further solidified the obvious rights given to those with copyright protection.

References

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