

## **Ethical Copyright**

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Coding is like any other form of art. There are laws set in place to protect individual people's creations, such as movies and novels, so that no one outside of their owners has a legal claim for these works, which is referred to as copyright. Without these regulations, the work that people do would be undermined because of how little they would be able to control what they have rightfully created. It is essential in a functional society for people to be given credit for their own work, and this ambition extends to code as well. It is necessary for a programmer's code to be given the protection and security of copyright.

Copyright is the legal solution for giving owners a right to their own creations. With all individual works, creators have a legal claim that allows them to control how and who may use their projects. If an individual uses another person's writing, art, coding, or any other form of creation without referencing its owner or properly adding on to differentiate it from the original, this action would be in violation of copyright laws. This U.S. legal system prevents people from falsely stealing others' hard work without proper credit, because copyright is the concept that, even if something is for entertainment or easily produced, taking another person's work is a form of theft. Copyright for coding has protection under copyright as any other form of production. As stated by Software Copyright- Basics Explained, all programmers have an immediate right to all code that they write (Software copyright - Basics Explained, 2023). So, when a programmer writes a script, that piece of code is now protected under copyright law.

When people are given no consequences for their actions, society falls to anarchy. Computer science proposes an effective solution to many problems, but it can also become a terrible weapon if taken by malicious people. For instance, invaluable information such as medical documentation or private history can be traced or violated with computer science, which has the potential to harm millions of people through inaccessible medicine or an unconsented distribution of personal information. The potential for harm that technology can provide if given

to undesirable people is greater than any other possible weapon. These threats emphasize the importance of secure programming as vital for the rightful owners and for the ethical avoidance of disastrous consequences. Some of the fundamental ACM Code of Ethics highlight this principle as it advocates for avoiding harm and respecting privacy (ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, 2018). Proper copyright protection creates stronger laws and ethics as it applies to these rules; with strict order on what pieces of code can do, people and privacy are saved from the damage that programs could cause if left under corrupt people.

Deciding ethical, reasonable laws for computer science distribution faces its own challenges. Many programmers may not understand the full legal ownership over their code because there are many rules or guidelines they may never have fully learned of or researched. When people do not know the extent of their rights, these circumstances make it even more important to create legal contracts, such as license agreements. License agreements are a way for producers and other parties to compromise on how the created work is used, and as a computer programmer, there are certain criteria that should be discussed in a license agreement. The Basics of Software License Agreements details that these agreements can benefit from answering possible questions on the program, discussing what ways the code can be used, and the financial requirements for using this product (The Basics of Software License Agreements, n.d.). Although not all pieces of code serve the same purpose, I believe these standards are adequate, foundational material for an agreement alongside the fair use that these agreements can solidify. These agreements are created as circumstantial depending on the project they reference, so the types, requirements, or even number of license agreements can vary.

There are many areas to cover when protecting code as a creator, but these trials extend to consumers as well. Coding is a skill where online research is an inevitable obstacle to cross where prewritten code is commonly used as a guide for programmers. In many cases, code is

directly or indirectly copied when applied to a program, so it is the responsibility of the individual to be careful avoiding code theft. As a programmer, I consider it best to stray from copying reused code as much as possible and, if I do use online code as a reference, I should give proper credit to any owners as well as stay away from copying the code exactly. Whether my project is being made for money or not, ethical citation is an important habit to keep. The IEEE Code of Ethics encourages us to avoid unlawful conduct and to treat everyone respectfully (IEEE Code of Ethics, 2020). Along with the earlier ACM Code of Ethics, these standards are essential foundations for everyone working in computer science as they provide grounding moral standards for people to follow if they are ever unsure of the ethics in their profession.

While not all actions are illegal under governmental law, those with a Christian worldview may have other moral standards to follow. The current laws set in place are fair to distributors and advocate for the creators, but although the law may allow certain actions, Christian ethics may dictate otherwise. Although this principle applies to all sorts of regulations and is not targeted towards computer science, Christian programmers still have many ethical threats to grapple with. Not all legal programs are created for moral purposes, so it is up to ethical people to decide if a program is being written for unsavory reasons and whether these purposes conflict with a Christian moral code or not. For instance, suppose there is a circumstance where a worker is given the right to use and distribute code for an immoral website, such as one promoting adultery or idolatry. The law concludes that, legally, neither the website nor the code breaches any clear prior rule or regulation, so there is no governmental reason to oppose how this program is used. This scenario presents a case where the law does not prevent actions that some people may consider immoral. Many Christians find cases such as these to be in opposition with their religious morality, and so the standard of the law is not always the standard a person should follow. Although this website and code may be legal for the

government, Christians may still choose to deny the job under ethical grounds. A believer in God wishes to follow his commands, even when a government does not support God's direction.

Copyright is an important issue to learn. Whether you are a producer or user, copyright laws affect everyone and everything for essential reasons. It is unethical for a person's hard work to be stripped away from their claim so there are numerous guidelines set in place. Although copyright can be a hassle, it is to everyone's benefit that these standards prevail.

## Works Cited

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