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Ethics

In the field of computer science an individual will face many challenges; proper use of copyright, fair use, and license conditions is one of them. Not only can it be hard to decipher your way through properly crediting others when creating software, but it can also be a painstaking journey getting your own software properly licensed and copyright protected. Although fully understanding the legality behind copyright and licensing is difficult, a computer science student who can understand copyright as it applies to computer science, determine a fair license agreement for their code, and know how to properly use code on the internet will be more prepared for their future.

Copyright is a form of protection grounded in the U.S. Constitution and granted by law for original works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression for both published and unpublished works (U.S. Copyright Office). Simply put for a computer scientist, any original code they write is protected by copyright laws the moment they write it. However, in order to take legal action towards someone who is unproperly using software you developed the software must have copyright registration.

When a person publishes code it is customary to have a license agreement for it. If I was to have a license agreement for a program I wrote it would in most cases be somewhere between proprietary and permissive. I would personally gauge where in that range the software would be for each project. For example, if I plan on making money on a program I would make the

software have a proprietary license. If I want others to be able to modify the code make additions then I would make the software permissive or even open-source.

It is a programmer's responsibility to properly credit other people's work. When a programmer references someone else's work they must be ethical about how they use the code. The ACM describes how a programmer should use code: "Computing professionals should not unduly oppose reasonable uses of their intellectual works. Efforts to help others by contributing time and energy to projects that help society illustrate a positive aspect of this principle" (ACM, 1.5). In the IEEE Code of Ethics it has all members agree to, "seek, accept, and offer honest criticism of technical work, to acknowledge and correct errors, and to credit properly the contributions of others" (IEEE, 7). The reason for using code does not matter because every time a person uses code it should be for ethical reasons. If I was to reuse code, no matter what the circumstances are, I would give credit to who and what I used. The goal of reusing and referencing other's works are to create a new product and in turn benefit each other. For example, a game developer makes a game inspired by a popular multiplayer game. If the creator mentions the other game, then both creators should benefit.

Work Cited

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