Brad Bartlett

Professor Garner

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Copyright Law and Digital Property

As modern technology is only becoming more efficient every day, many problems seem to occur as a result of this. People use computers for everything in today’s society. Whether they use it for business use, personal use, or entertainment uses all people use computers to communicate with others and to send each other files, documents, or programs. How many times do people download files from websites, send or download attachments via e-mail, and burn compact disks? On average an individual downloads a combination of these four- hundred, thirty-three times in a single week. File sharing, distributing, and copying are all becoming some of the most prevalent online activities a user may engage in (Oberholzer, 1). These acts of piracy are detrimental to companies, and industries. Will the acts of piracy used to share entertainment, and programs ever stop?

Computers and the World Wide Web provide owners with the luxury of playing music, watching videos, playing games, and using software to make life easier, and more enjoyable. How they obtain these luxuries is another story. One can obtain useable files on their computer in many ways such as: downloading online, file sharing, removable disks, compact disks, and via e-mail. Some of these are not legal or ethical, but most users committing these crimes are unaware that they have committed software piracy or the illegal sharing of music and other files. Downloading licensed software, documents, or files for free, that are not part of the public domain is illegal. Many users download mp3 files, programs, software, and documents all from the internet for free. Some call this taking advantage of the technology that is present, but the government calls this “piracy.”

File trading saves many people money and gives them the access to programs, software, and entertainment they may need to live a successful and happy life. Many people cannot afford the prices of software, music, or programs needed to manage their daily lives and expenses. Being a characteristic of being a human we all constantly look for ways to get around purchasing these in order to live a more abundant life, but critics and law enforcement officers are starting to say that file trading is bad.

Many people believe it is good because they can download music, programs, movies, etc. This is not entirely bad. All the people want is the best for themselves, and their family. These people are only taking advantage of an easy opportunity to save money. If someone walked by a grocery store and there was a table outside with apples stacked five feet high, and there was a sign that said, “Take one” would it be wrong for that person to take one? It was given to them , and they simply took advantage of the opportunity. This is the problem; the government calls this copyright infringement when this is done over the internet.

Piracy is becoming a prevalent problem in the world. Almost everything and anything is now sold or processed through the internet. This is good in the aspect that these things are more accessible to the majority of the population. The problem however, is the fact that many businesses and companies make their sales profit due to listings they have on the internet. This means that many of these companies and businesses are losing millions of dollars due to websites offering these services or products for free illegally, ultimately cheating them out of their money.

**In the *RIAA* article*,*** *FOR STUDENTS DOING REPORTS* the question, **“How much money does the recording industry lose from piracy**?” **was asked. In response to this question they replied:**

“One credible analysis by the Institute for Policy Innovation concludes that global music piracy

causes $12.5 billion of economic losses every year, 71,060 U.S. jobs lost, a loss of $2.7 billion in workers' earnings, and a loss of $422 million in tax revenues, $291 million in personal income tax and $131 million in lost corporate income and production taxes.”  
 As a result many record companies, businesses, software developers, musicians, artists, directors, movie companies and anyone else who benefits from any of these corporations are being deprived of some of their profits due to file trading or sharing. The file sharing of music is affecting artists, and composers as well as the record companies in which they work for. According to the RIAA, in 2002 the number of CD’s shipped in the U.S. fell from 940 million to 800 million (Oberholzer, 1). This has caused uproar in the industry. Many artists are getting mad because of the prevalent file trading and sharing on the internet. This is understandable, if a person was making music for a living, and millions of people downloaded their songs for free online. Especially when the consumers should be paying .99 cents per song as opposed to nothing. That’s approximately a million dollars a person could have obtained in downloads. The same thing is happening with the movie industry. The movie producing companies have lost billions of dollars in profits as well. Many people sitting at their computers at home search for movies online. Many are able to find websites that offer the streaming of movies online free of charge, as opposed to buying them at the store around the average price of ten dollars per movie. This hurts the movie industry badly. Mainly because whenever a person views a movie once, they will not pay to purchase the movie in the future. This is why they have lost so much money due to sharing over the internet. Another problem that is prevalent in the movie industry is the illegal copying of DVD’s, and distributing these copies friends and family. This action is deadly to the potential economic profit of the movie industry. Now one person can buy a copy or even rent a copy of the DVD from the store, copy as many as desired, and give them to anyone who desires a copy for free. This is the most abused act of piracy, because now an individual can obtain the same quality of movie for free. This is the reason why businesses like Blockbuster have been closed many places due to lack of business. People are finding ways to make entertainment in life cheaper, and more efficient. That’s what it all comes down to in the end, despite the fact of whether it’s illegal or not.

All of these are not the consumer’s fault. The businesses and companies that sell these products need to find a way to transcribe them to where a person cannot duplicate them or share them online. iTunes has done something like this with their downloaded files. For example, in iTunes a person can download a song and the file is only authorized to a specified number of computers, and after that number is reached one may no longer distribute or move that file to another drive or computer. Ways to do this with DVDs and programs should be developed/utilized so that people can no longer commit piracy, thus eliminating the issue of companies that produce these particles of entertainment losing money. Companies should offer more benefits from purchasing the actual product. They should include additional products along with the purchase that cannot be downloaded. For example, fan collectibles, posters, basically any little thing that would attract a fan and that is not too expensive to include within the purchase. Companies could just disable these disks from being copied instead of having to rely on consumers to abide by piracy laws and refrain from copying them. New file formats could be created in which a person must purchase software to open them, and once he or she opens them they can only stay in that program on their computer or transferred to an mp3 device and nowhere else. There are many possibilities out there. Developers must find ways to keep people from taking advantage of these opportunities so that everyone is happy and no one has to be trialed for such a crime.

In the end, all acts of piracy are illegal and are bad if the criminal gets caught. These acts are committed by almost everyone who owns a computer, but can be stopped if the developers of these files, programs, and movies will take time to eliminate the loop hole of obtaining the information illegally. Some people are simply taking advantage of the opportunities out there and some are doing everything they can to get anything on the internet for free. Once the government can find the people who are doing everything they can to break the law and obtain these things over the internet, then they can worry about the people who are taking advantage of things posted online. The ethical use of the files is solely up to the person who obtains them. So no, piracy will never end, because not all people always abide by the rules and laws of society.

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