Ethics Paper

Computer science is a vastly growing field. Within this field there is a plethora of code on the internet; however, not all of this code is free to utilize. In order to understand the laws and systems surrounding using code, one must understand how copyright applies to computer science, what license agreements are, and what obligations developers have.

To get a firm grasp on the laws surrounding computer science, one must understand what copyright is, and how does it pertain to computer science. Copyright is legal protection that is used by creators and developers in order to prevent people from copying their intellectual property and ensure it isn’t used without their permission (Software Copyright Guide). Copyright for computer science is a legal right to decide who gets to copy software and gives programmers the ability to prosecute anyone who uses their software in an unauthorized way (Software Copyright Guide). This, in turn, helps to protect software developers from having competitors copy their code (Software Copyright Guide).

By default, when a creator makes a creative work, it is put under copyright (The Legal Side). In order for creators to share their works while managing copyright, one must use a license that states the permissions allowed (The Legal Side). Such licenses include an open-source license, MIT license, standardized license, express patent license, and copyleft license (The Legal Side). Open-source licenses allow others to use, distribute, and modify code (The Legal Side). Standardized licenses serve as a proxy for those with no legal training, and states to avoid custom, modified, or non-standard terms (The Legal Side). MIT licenses allow developers to do anything so long as they keep a copy of the license and of the original developers’ copyright notice (The Legal Side). Express patent licenses appeal to large businesses (The Legal Side). Copyleft licenses are used to ensure only the company can use the project (The Legal Side).

There are a multitude of obligations programmers must follow. One such obligation is to follow is the ACM code of ethics (ACM). It states numerous ethics a computing professional should follow such to contribute to society, avoid harm, be honest, be fair, respect new ideas, respect privacy, honor confidentiality, maintain professional responsibilities, maintain leadership principles, and be compliant with the code (ACM). Another obligation is the IEEE code of ethics, which is designed to commit professionals to the highest ethical and professional conduct by upholding the highest standards of integrity, responsible behavior, and ethical conduct, as well as treating all people fairly, and to strive to ensure code is upheld (IEEE). Both are very similar when it comes to treating others with respect and holding professionals to high standards of integrity; however, The ACM includes more principles involving leadership, the responsibilities of professionals, and treating violations (ACM).

Based on all the information provided, I believe that an MIT License would be the best option and would be the fairest because it still allows a developer to share code whilst also getting credit for their code. Using this license would also help with the ACM ethical code of contributing to societies well-being as it gives more people access to code that could help further technology (ACM). Failing to adhere to programmer obligations such as ACM could result in technological and computer science related discoveries being stagnated, as it would result in more difficult cooperation and collaboration.

In conclusion, there is a plethora of code throughout the internet; however, not all of this code is free for usage. Despite this, it is important to honor copyright and to adhere to programmer obligations as it helps the coding community grow and keeps everything balanced. This is explained through the discussion on how copyright applies to computer science, what license agreements can be utilized, and what obligations there are as a programmer.

Works Cited

“ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.” *Code of Ethics*, [www.acm.org/code-of-ethics](http://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics).

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“Software Copyright Guide: Examples & Protection.” *Software Copyright Guide: Examples & Protection from Infringement*, <https://cpl.thalesgroup.com/software-monetization/software-copyright-guide>.

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