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SOPA: Why should you oppose it?

Are you aware that your right to free speech on the Internet, may be taken away with bills like the Stop Online Piracy Act? This, and many like it, are being written to “protect” copyright holders from illegal exchange of their goods. In reality, many of these bills have other motives. According to a Washington Post article, Law makers have even admitted that they do not understand the bill. If record companies were smart, they would embrace change, and think of piracy as the new radio. There’s also the side of software companies, which this paper will cover.

Before the Internet there was this thing called the Radio. The radio allowed people to listen to their favorite artists for free. A license was not required to listen to the radio, instead it was publicly broadcasted to anybody that wanted to “download” it. With this kind of technology, people had the ability to discover new artists. When people discover new artists, they typically want to hear more. Neil Young, a recording artist, was quoted as saying “Piracy is the new radio. That’s how music gets around...it’s the Radio.” (Peckham)

From Young’s perspective, we should not be trying to kill piracy, instead we need to open our arms to it. We need to treat Piracy as if it were the radio. By putting music online, and making it freely available, more people will be reached. While a lot of people will choose to download the music for free, there will always be those that want the full quality version. Before the Internet, recording music from the radio to tape cassette was widely accepted.

Aside from music, there is also piracy in the form of software. Through the use of file sharing networks online, people have the ability to download just about any program they want

illegally. Many software applications reside on the user's computer, making it possible to "crack" software so that it will work for free. The solution is Cloud Computing. (SL.TV)

With the Internet, we have the ability to place entire applications on a website. Client computers access the application with just a web browser, there is nothing to install. When updates are released, the update is applied to the server, and changes take affect for everyone using the application. Microsoft offers their entire Microsoft Office suite online, known as Office 365. In terms of piracy, software companies can protect their software by authenticating users.

People may never buy music, and record companies are simply going to cease to exist. If this were true, record companies would have gone out of business when the tape cassette was invented. The idea of Cloud computing will fail because it requires an Internet connection. Google Docs is a prime example of an application which offers an "offline" mode, allowing users to utilize their web application, without the Internet.

There are two sides to the issue of piracy. Record companies need to embrace piracy, and utilize it to their advantage. Rather than opposing it, the industry needs to think of piracy as the new radio. Software companies, on the other hand, need to eliminate the availability of pirated software through the use of cloud computing. By putting applications on the web, companies will avoid issues with piracy. If companies in today's world wish to succeed, they will embrace and utilize piracy, rather than oppose it.

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