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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? Also known as SOPA, bills, 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. Law makers have even admitted that they do not understand the bill. (Bell) If record companies were smart, they'd think of piracy as the new radio. There's also the side of software companies, which will also be covered below.

Before the Internet, there was this thing called the Radio. The radio allowed people to listen to their favorite artists, for free. They did not require a license to listen to the radio, instead, it was publicly broad casted 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.

Niel Young, a recording artist, was quoted as saying "Piracy is the new radio. That's how music gets around...it's the Radio." (Peckham) Young makes some good points. 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. Sure, you could download the entire album. While a lot of people will do this, there will always be those that want the full quality version, and they will be buying the music. Either way you look at it, there will always be that group of people who can figure out how to download the music. Just like back before the Internet, there were people recording music from

the radio to a tape cassette.

Aside from music, there's also the software side of the problem. 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 web servers up in the "cloud", or in other words, in some server farm. It doesn't matter where, that is irrelevant. This allows client's computers to 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 web application. In terms of piracy, software companies have the power to authenticate users for an application, on the server side. There is no software that a person could download for "free," because it's all stored on a server.

An opposing view point would say that people will never buy music, and record companies are simply going to cease to exist. Cloud computing will fail because it requires an Internet connection. Look at it this way, when people had the ability to record music from the radio, record companies still profited, otherwise they wouldn't be here today. As far as the cloud is concerned, Google Docs is a prime example of an application which offers an "offline" mode, which allows users to utilize their web application, without the Internet. (Google)

There's two points of view to the issue of piracy. Record companies need to embrace piracy, and exploit it to their advantage. While the radio is technically still around, the reality is that piracy is the new radio, just like compact discs replaced tape cassettes. Software companies, on the other hand, need to eliminate the availability of pirated software through the use of cloud computing. By putting applications on a server, users will no longer have the option to "download" something for free, instead they'll access their favorite applications via a web browser.

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