

**Problem 1.4.6 Digital Property and Forensics**

Introduction

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| In Geroge Orwell’s book *1984*, brutal thought police control all of the citizens in a dystopian “future” through unconscionable breaches of privacy made possible by technology.  Today we witness unprecedented freedom and ability to design, create, and modify. We enjoy countless creature comforts and quality of life improvements thanks to technology. The same technology has increased the ability of government and industry to track the ideas exchanged by people, as well as to enforce intellectual property laws. Do we need property rights for ideas? | <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/images/results.aspx?qu=court&ex=2#ai:MP900385346|> |

Materials

* *Blown to Bits* by Hal Abelson, Ken Ledeed, and Harry Lewis, available at <http://www.bitsbook.com/excerpts/>
* Computer with Internet access

Procedure

1. Skim the questions in this activity, especially the debate resolution at the end. Read “Chapter 6: Balance Toppled: Who Owns the Bits?” in *Blown to Bits*. Respond to the following questions indvidually, supporting your answers with information from the text.
2. Consider the text beginning with the second to last paragraph on page 210 of *Blown to Bits* and extending though page 215. Journal about whether you believe U.S. citizens have appropriate rights where the use of digital data is concerned.
3. Consider the information about how U.S. laws may be promoting unsavory business practice in“Copyright Protection or Competition Avoidance?” beginning on page 215 of *Blown to Bits*. Journal about your beliefs regarding balancing the protection of digital work property rights versus safeguarding against anti-competitive practice.
4. After reading pages 219 through 222 of *Blown to Bits*, summarize what you believe about whether creativity is supported and safeguarded in U.S. laws.
5. **Metadata** is information contained within a digital file, such as

* Date file was created
* Location of file creation (e.g., some cameras tag photos with location)
* Type of file
* Serial number of the device used License number of the software used

Medadata is available to the computer, the software it runs, and people who know how to read it.

1. Use the Internet to find five other examples of what metadata might reveal and record them here.

b. Describe how metadata can be used in the investigation of crimes, including theft.

1. Respond to one of the following two writing prompts.
   * 1. Describe what should be done, if anything, to further protect the identities and privacy of people using digital technologies. Provide support for your answer. In addition, acknowledge potential pitfalls (e.g., conveniences we might lose).
     2. Describe a real or imagined society where digital technology rights and laws are abused and/or enforced for human benefit. Comment on both the negative and positive aspects of this society as you describe it.
2. Form debate teams as instructed by your teacher. Your teacher will assign you to the affirmative or negative sides of the debate. These sides, respectively, will support or oppose the following resolution:

*Resolved: That the United States federal government should significantly increase the protection afforded to property rights for those who create and distribute digital products.*

With your partner, prepare a 4-minute speech for your position. Also prepare an outline for additional arguments that could be used for follow up.

Prepare to debate the issue against another team as directed by your teacher. One possible structure is as follows:

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| Affirmative | 3-minute speech supporting the resolution |
| Negative | 3-minute speech opposing the resolution |
| Preparation | 2 minutes for teams to prepare follow-up speeches |
| Affirmative | 2-minute speech supporting their case and responding to the Negative team’s arguments |
| Negative | 2-minute speech opposing the Affirmative team’s case and responding to Affirmative arguments |

Conclusion

1. How did you feel about digital privacy before this activity? How has your understanding of digital privacy changed?
2. How did you feel about copyright law before this activity? How has your understanding of copyright law changed?
3. In one or two paragraphs, summarize who gets to own what sort of bits in the United States.