Right to Repair

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What is the right to repair?

The user of a product "should have the right to use it, modify it, and repair it whenever, wherever, and however" they want.
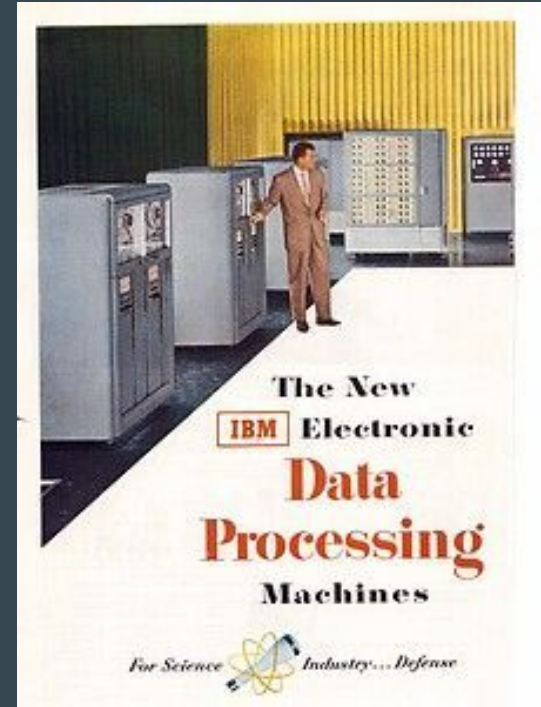
Believe it or not, this right is not guaranteed for most hardware and software we use.

Right To Repair

History of the right to repair

- 1956: the Dept. of Justice finds IBM to be a monopoly. IBM is required to allow a used equipment market and 3rd party repair. These rules apply to IBM and other tech companies for the next 3 decades.

- 1996: The DOJ allows its consent decree against IBM to lapse. Tech industry rapidly re-monopolizes.

History of the right to repair

- 1998: the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) allows manufacturers to place restrictions on software in their products.
- 1998-Present: Manufacturers use these restrictions to make it difficult for users to repair or modify their devices

DIGITAL MILLENNIUM COPYRIGHT ACT

Why is the right to repair important?

Companies use Digital Rights Management (DRM) to prevent consumers from fixing their broken devices. Example:

- 2016: iPhone users who replaced broken parts with non-Apple parts received an error when updating to iOS 9. Their phones no longer worked.
- John Deere software lock their tractors so maintenance must be done by manufacturer

Benefits of the right to repair

- Extend the lifetime of products
- Less e-waste
- Increases business to small repair shops
- Increased accessibility to parts

Limitations of the right to repair

- Complexity of products
- Unibody designs with soldered parts
- Proprietary special parts and/or tools
- Requires manufacturer incentive to redesign products

How to support the right to repair

A bill, the **Digital Fair Repair Act**, is in the NY State Assembly which would: "require original equipment manufacturers to make diagnostic and repair information for digital electronic parts and equipment available to independent repair providers and consumers if such parts and repair information are also available to OEM authorized repair providers."

If you support this bill, find out more and fill fill out our petition at:

https://tinyurl.com/2p9x2yxu

Conclusion

- Protects consumers, and small businesses who want to and can maintain their own products
- Requires serviceable - conscious engineering when designing products
- The copyright office/librarian of congress periodically updates the DMCA to make some products repairable. This year they allowed users to repair their own game consoles.