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### Dangerous Dave in Copyright Infringement

Copyright issues have existed for as long as computers have existed, only exacerbated by the general public's ease of accessibility to these systems. Not to say that there weren't such issues prior, but like any technology, the more readily available it is, the susceptible to misuse it becomes. This harkens back to illegal copying of floppy disk software to modern day concerns as it relates to coding repositories like GitHub. While the common user may not give a second thought to copyright law, fair use, or associated licensing, Computer Science professionals have a well-defined moral and ethical responsibility to pursue compliance in these matters.

As a programmer, any code or script you create, whether it be a full and complete program, part of a program, or even a snippet thereof is by default under exclusive copyright. Effectively, this means that as the creator, your work is protected and "nobody else can use, copy, distribute, or modify your work without being at risk of take-downs, shake-downs, or litigation" (The Legal Side of Open Source). This could be ideal for a closed source, single-person development team, but when we consider that the majority of current coding endeavors are collaborative and open sourced in nature (such as in the case with repositories), then there are other legal factors which need to be taken into account.

To that extent, various standard open source licenses are available, each with differing scopes of distribution. The website *choosealicense.com* simplifies these differences by presenting the following statements: "I need to work in a community," for a community specific

license, “I want it simple and permissive,” for the MIT license, and “I care about sharing improvements,” for the GNU license (Choose an open source license). For the purposes of education and code that is created to those ends, I believe the GNU GPLv3 license is the most appropriate as it allows for other students to utilize the copyrighted code in almost any way they want, thereby propagating further examples and references. This license does not however, allow for the distribution of closed source versions, which would be in contention with the objective for it to serve as a learning resource. Dual licensing would also not be appropriate in this interest.

With the framework of copyright and open source licensing established, the question then is: what are our obligations as it relates to fair programming? No matter the purpose, be it work or school, the *ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* states under section 1.5 that “professionals should ... credit the creators of ideas, inventions, work, and artifacts, and respect copyrights, patents, trade secrets, license agreements, and other methods of protecting authors' works” (ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, 2018). The *IEEE Code of Ethics* contains similar verbiage with Principal 7.03: “Credit fully the work of others and refrain from taking undue credit” (IEEE Code of Ethics, 2020). Failure to do so undermines the collaborative philosophy of “developing new ideas, inventions, creative works, and computing artifacts [in order to create] value for society” and also inhibits “efforts to help others by contributing time and energy to projects that help society” (ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, 2018).

Perhaps an oversimplification of the complex, often ambiguous topic of copyright law is the application of: “You shall not steal” (*English Standard Version Study Bible*, Ex. 20.15). This commandment along with the pertinent ACM and IEEE principals must serve as the “fair use” cornerstone of our professional conduct in terms of not presenting another’s work as our own and only utilizing another’s code when permitted by appropriate licensing.

Works Cited

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