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The issue of copyright infringement is of growing concerns to the entertainment industries today. With the rise of online companies such as YouTube, Netflix, VidAngel, and Hulu, the entertainment industries are not selling as many movies as they used to. This has created a debate on whether or not online streaming services should be allowed or if they should be controlled by more laws. I do not believe that services like these should be banned because people today do not go and buy DVDs anymore, they would rather go and find the movie online quickly. However, some restrictions should exist on the means by which people should be allowed to watch movies.

People today can find almost any movie they wish at the click of a few keys and can even find the movies for free on illegal websites. According to the ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, “Copies of software should be made only with proper authorization” (ACM). This means that companies should not be allowed to copy software, movies or music, freely because it infringes on the rights of the creators. However, companies such as Netflix or VidAngel should be allowed to still exist, so that people can still get movies easily. Netflix and RedBox, according to Ryan Sullivan, have grown “twenty percent and 110 percent in the second quarter of 2009” (Sullivan 338). Netflix pays a fee to the companies that made the movies, so that Netflix can provide the streaming services that they do today. VidAngel however, sells the movies for $20, then buys them back for $19. This company functions almost like Redbox or Blockbuster because the movies are rented out to the viewer, however with VidAngel this is done over the internet. The only difference between VidAngel and other companies are that you do not get the physical copy of the DVD, however VidAngel lends out only the copies that they had bought. This should still be considered ethical because VidAngel still bought each copy of the movie from the entertainment companies, so they have every copy they are lending.

The borrowing of movies through sites like those mentioned above still involve the purchasing of the material that they are streaming, however, companies like YouTube have videos that are not paid for. There have been laws and motions made that have restricted YouTube users from providing copyright materials to their followers. YouTube has begun using a system that gives strikes to those that post copyrighted videos, and when you get three strikes the account is deactivated and YouTube will not allow you to make another account. This is ethical because YouTube is attempting to take down copyright videos instead of ignoring the problem (Shinn 365). This allows for YouTube to catch those that are violating copyright laws, however some people are still able to post copyrighted videos that the program does not catch. There should be more laws on what counts as copyright as well as an understanding for the public what violating these laws can cause. Programmers should also help to make better programs that can search through and flag videos that contain copyrighted material so that the proper action can be taken.

As programmers in the computer science world we have a responsibility to protect the software and entertainment industries because companies like those are the ones that help fuel the computer science world. We must also strive to create better programs that can detect copyright infringements, as well as other copyright related subjects. Although we may not be able to find all the copyright violators, we can still make a difference and protect companies that cannot protect themselves. We can help by making better programs and supporting motions for better restrictions on copyright issues.

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