

A brief introduction to law for computer scientists.

Coursework.

May 19, 2014

In your WebApps group, write brief answers to the following questions. Your full answer should cover no more than 1-2 A4 pages.

The exercise will be marked out of 20 with 10 marks allocated to each question.

1. The Madingley Model (<http://www.madingleymodel.org/>) is a global ecosystem model developed by Microsoft Research. The model website claims that the Madingley Model is open source (<http://www.madingleymodel.org/about.html>). The licence for the Madingley model can be found at <http://goo.gl/jTHORK>.

List the restrictions in the licence of the Madingley Model which are incompatible with the Free Software Foundation's four freedoms. For each of these restrictions, briefly explain which of the four freedoms they violate.

2. Alice, Bob and Charlie are computing students at Imperial College London. They form a group for a group project exercise in which they are to implement a social network data mining algorithm developed by Dr Smart, an academic in the department. Charlie is really smart but socially awkward and rather hard to work with¹ so Alice and Bob arrange things so that he implements part of the algorithm by himself as a stand-alone library. Alice and Bob then implement the rest of the project without Charlie's involvement, and produce a working prototype using Charlie's library. Dr Smart answers lots of their questions about the algorithm but doesn't help them with the code at all.

Alice and Bob are excited about their results and discuss launching a web service based on their work. At the group projects poster display, they talk with Emily, an Imperial Computing graduate who now has a successful career with a large finance firm in the City. Emily has lots of money and is keen to give a helping hand to students at her alma mater, but she is also a bit skeptical about students actually delivering on their bright startup ideas. Emily says to Alice and Bob "if you can actually get as far as launching your web service, I'll give you £5000 towards it". Alice and Bob are both impressed and eager to show that Emily's

¹Naturally this would *never* be true of any actual Imperial computing students.

skepticism is misplaced “it’s a deal”, they reply, “ it’ll take a few months but you won’t be disappointed”. Emily replies that that’s just fine by her.

- (a) Who among Alice, Bob, Charlie and Dr Smart owns copyright in which code? Briefly justify your answer.
- (b) Alice and Bob want to go ahead with their project without Charlie and Dr Smart. What are their options to avoid breaching copyright law?
- (c) After several sleep-deprived weeks and borrowing some money from their parents Alice and Bob manage to get the web service up and even find a few clients. They then email Emily with a link to the website and claim the £5000. However Emily is now less enthusiastic about the idea than she was at the poster display. Does a contract exist which requires Emily to pay the money? Explain your answer in terms of agreement and consideration.