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File sharing has been around since the dawn of the internet and since then people have been trying to combat it. It has been seen in a negative light and hasn’t been recognized for its true capability of creating more for people in a larger technological sense. File sharing has had its problems (snelling) in the past but due to technologies, fast innovations policy makers have had a hard time keeping up with the new technologies. Most of the issues on policy that seem to be related in piracy are based on the national attitude toward the subject and the national understanding of certain policy which seems to cause even more confusion. In short piracy can’t be stopped but can be monitored. This will bring issues to the forefront of copyright regulation, who gets paid more: the artist vs the music industry, and the legal and economic views on file sharing.

In the past, most media files were distributed through their respective stores. Most media files were purchased in a store usually held in files that were common during their time. For example VCR(Video Cassette Recorder) tapes and Compact Discs(CD) were common things sold in stores during the 90’s (27 Digital Piracy). New means of media caused a lot of pirating of music starting with Napster in 1999. Napster had allowed you to download mp3 files from peer-to-peer sharing connected online. This wasn’t useful to users at first but as devices with mp3 playing capabilities had become more popular, Napster had become more popular. This popularity had started file sharing in a major way because now it was standard using a file type(mp3) that was common amongst music users ( 11 Snelling). Writers had noted this phenomenon of file sharing and how it had made a huge impact on how accessible the files were. Dewan states:

”*The digitization of products has made them (media files) more accessible to consumers through legitimate and illegitimate means” (119)*

However according to others, this digitization killed music sales. Some thought that this new found medium to share files had caused danger to some industries, specifically the music industry. “The pattern of file sharing’s birth and rapid growth followed immediately by the unusually large decline in the sound-recording market is in itself a strong clue that file sharing is responsible for the sales decline”(15 Liebowitz).

Liebowitz brings up a good point on the effects of file sharing but doesn’t seem to address the real issue until later. It seems that there is a need for definition on where piracy begins and ends with all the new innovative technology. This brings us to the ethical and legal side of file sharing. The main questions arise; “Is it legal?” , “how can we hinder it?” and if not, “Why would we hinder such a thing?”.

File sharing caused a sales decrease in the music industry. Audio tapes were the original file sharing system and were not as reliable. Companies didn’t sell as many originals because of the prevalent copies that were being made. After lots of copies were made it was hard to find the original.These copies faded out with older technology and the piracy changed from analog to digital. This change increased the quality of copies dramatically. In the old style of copying someone had to own an original file to copy and could produce less because the quality faded with every generation. Digital copies kept the quality and made copying the original file easier to disperse. This made sales of the original copy decrease even more than the older style of file sharing because having the song available on the internet made it so only one person needed to own the file to copy it to the internet (potentially millions of people)(Liebowitz).

Due to internet music file sharing, huge music corporations made Digital Rights Management(DRM) technology to protect music from being downloaded through encryption of music files in the music file. These DRM technologies were supposed to cause all of the pirating music to stop thus causing albums sales to increase. The new technology did increase sales slightly but after this happened sales plummeted once again. One of the major music companies,EMI, had released the DRM technologies from the files giving capability back to the users to do with the music what they wanted causing a tremendous increase in music sales for EMI. Sony and Universal did the same thing to compete. Releasing the DRM technologies embedded in their music caused an increase in sales ( 7 Strategy). However other companies have tried to stop piracy( or file-sharing) with pollution.

Pollution is the process of corrupting a file to damage the quality of the file. In the music world corrupted files usually have tags of DJs( audio clips playing over the music). These corrupted files were dispersed in attempts to stop peer to peer(P2P) file sharing. These attempts were ineffective because those who copied music to share on websites such as Napster made anti-polluting strategies. Such anti-polluting processes include; *Detection with Downloading* and *Matching*. *Detection with Downloading* is when you download a file having a filter to screen if it could possibly have any harmful software in the file. *Matching* is when you download a file and check with a database of all the original files to see if your downloaded copy matches the original file. This ensures that you have a “clean” copy of the file.( 1174 Liang) However as technology moves forward, there will be more ways to maneuver around piracy stopping attempts.There will always be creative consumers to get around the new legal constraints. However these consumers aren’t the problem.  
 “Internet users who claim to never illegally download music spend an average of £44 per person on music per year, while those who do admit to illegal downloading spend £77, amounting to an estimated £200m in revenue per year”. There are more illegal downloaders of music who buy music than legal downloaders (Demos). This means instead of trying to demonize and slow this file sharing with pollution,we should embrace technology possibilities in terms of file sharing. This would appeal to the target market of those actually purchasing the music(the illegal file-sharers).

A few people have speculated over how we should proceed with this new technology and how to define most of the policy. Such policy as “where piracy starts?” and “how we should deal with the piracy issue?”. One group had come out with the idea to finance file sharing.

Piracy isn’t new, the only thing new about it is its methodology on how it is done. Snelling puts it this way:

“Piracy as we know it is not a new phenomenon - it dates back to the beginning of copyright law. ...The largest impact, however, has been the technological revolution experienced during the end of the last millennium and the beginning of the current one. The advances happened so fast the legal protection and the industry haven’t been able to keep up, and according to some opinions, they still haven’t” (37-38).

With all of these new laws set up around policy it would be assumed that there would be global uniform policy on such an issue that has caused issues for media’s economy. Sadly this is untrue. Data shows that France allows free streaming of files and after enjoying the files they can assess whether or not they want to purchase them. A French respondent to a study on copyright stated that “... I can Download and listen freely to music and movies, and then buy them if they please me, because true artists deserve MY money.” This quote shows how the French view the ownership of copyrights. France believes the copyrights belong to the artist and the funding should belong to the artist. An American respondent to the same study had stated “The industry needs to embrace technology. If I had more legal options, I wouldn’t steal.” The American respondent has harsh feelings toward government/law and focussed more on law and industry. In another study both American and French respondents were interviewed on policy. “The french respondents answers , contained 78 occurrences of the word ‘artist’, 35 occurrences of ‘industry’, and 62 of ‘government.’ The US respondents’ answers, contained only 32 occurrences of ‘artist’, 89 occurrences of ‘industry’, and 163 of ‘government.’ This shows the clear misunderstanding of policy on a global scale. France and North America differ over policy, which shows how polar views are on this topic. Instead of localizing policy we should globalize so there is less uncertainty of what is legal and what isn’t; displayed in the difference between the US and France (99 Larson).   
Fleming states that “There is need for more and better evidence to support policy” (1) and there is no better evidence than a centralized policy.

The future looks like there will be room for policy reform for such a media-hub, government regulated to have a set fee for said media access. With all the policy inconsistencies there will need to be more time for reform. This policy reform should help foster the idea of a media hub which would be a better alternative to free music sharing now(5 Kusek). Some say this idea is similar to spotify, while there are subtle but important differences. Spotify has a limited amount of music on it while these new sites will contain music that is not only hard to locate but hard to keep. People will want to use this over pirating the music themselves because it will simplify the process of finding music that they know and make new musical discovery easier. Unlike spotify also this site will not just be for music it will also be a resource for movies, video games, Television programs, and many more. This new idea will help not only foster file sharing but also monetize file sharing, making file sharing more economically stable. This specific idea has been reviewed and in the end the artist still end up getting paid less than the cost of the other participants in the industry. Acknowledging this factor the idea would still have relevance to push forward the idea that more artist get rights to their music.

File sharing is good. It helps sites that administer this idea of a media-sharing service to charge a flat fee for such larger servers. The idea is similar to spotify however a larger venue of music and files to explore on the internet. This would not be the most practical idea economically however the monetization of the hub will move in the direction that artists and consumers have been pushing for. File sharing reaches global consensus on piracy policy through policy reform, fixes all problems with the legality of music sharing now, and won’t be limited as technology advances. File sharing has increased sales in industry in the past. This proves true specifically for musical sharing data fields but this can also be beneficial for all aspects of media( Movies, Pictures, TV shows).We should accept it for what part it plays and will play in our lives now and in the future. Imagine a world where any media file you could ever ask for was available and downloadable, along with being legal. This will be in our future of technological advances and file sharing shall lead the way.

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