

Copyright infringement: costly and complex

Ending copyright infringement requires removal of the file-sharing sources

Eliminate the source, and eliminate copyright infringement.

The federal government should punish the owners of programs that allow illegal downloading, not students.

A possible reason college students download illegally is because they can.

Allowing free file-sharing programs is like putting a piece of candy in front of a child and saying, "Don't eat it."

Programs like LimeWire, BearShare and Kazaa allow students on college campuses to illegally download music, according to the Recording Industry Association of America.

If students were never permitted to participate in illegal file sharing, there wouldn't be an issue.

Because these programs target and inform students on how to illegally download, they should not exist.

"Over the years, record companies have cracked down on regulating illegal downloading," university librarian Jim Kuhlman said.

Kuhlman said whenever he receives a complaint from the RIAA, he blocks students' Internet access in accordance with the provisions of the U.S. Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

"Copyright infringement has a huge impact on sales of music, movies and other computer software," Kuhlman said. "The problem with using the software is that one out of every 10 million people use it legally. Everyone else uses it illegally."

It is ridiculous to expect million dollar payments in copyright damages from college students.

The federal government should



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force downloading programs to prohibit their users from stealing copyrighted items.

"I've heard about a lot of people getting fined on the news," biology student Angelia McElrath said. "A lot of my friends download illegally. I don't think they view it as a big deal, they just look at it as being free."

Students who don't know downloading without permission is wrong shouldn't be punished simply because of their ignorance.

"I used to buy all of my music, but it got really expensive. I just started downloading again from LimeWire just because it is cheaper," McElrath said.

Global music piracy causes \$2.5 billion of economic losses every year, according to the RIAA.

Those trying to protect the rights of music and movie productions should encourage awareness of copyright violations.

Economic Impact of Piracy

According to the RIAA:

- Global music piracy causes \$12.5 billion in economic losses
- Over 70,000 U.S. jobs are lost
- \$2.7 billion in worker's earnings
- Loss of \$291 million in personal income tax
- \$131 million lost in corporate income and production taxes

"We don't want to be the copyright police," Kuhlman said. "I know I do this job because I believe in the law and respect the intellectual profit that people create."

The RIAA should regulate and enforce copyright policies, not the university.

Uninformed students who didn't know it was wrong to illegally download music shouldn't be penalized.

If there were more incentives to obey the current copyright laws, illegal downloading wouldn't exist.

The federal government should work harder to eliminate these Web sites instead of suing students for copyright infringement.

"I like to think that we are a buffer between the RIAA and the student," Kuhlman said. "A lot of folks want freedom in using others' work and not their own. Fundamentally it's stealing, regardless of its purpose."

An e-mail warning students about the illegal file sharing went out this semester, he said.

"Our school could enforce more file transfer protection, but it could create a large issue among our students," Kuhlman said. "If we block peer-to-peer transfers, students would argue that not all students are using the software illegally."

Blocking Web sites that allow unauthorized downloads would prevent future copyright lawsuits. The federal government needs to realize they won't be able to resolve the issue until they continue to seek to eliminate the sources allowing the piracy.

The government should be more lenient toward students who make the choice of illegal downloading or those unaware of the law.

Even though students who break the law deserve to be punished, they also deserve to move on with their lives without being heavily in debt.

The federal government can't find everyone who commits piracy, but they can find the Web sites that allow illegal downloading and punish them.