



OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Topic 9: File Sharing and Copyright

Most recordings and videos available today are protected by copyright laws. To obtain a work that is not in the public domain, it is necessary to get permission from the owner of the copyright. This can be accomplished by paying the appropriate fee at a legal download site. Services such as Napster, Apple iTunes, and Musicmatch provide download permission based on a signed agreement or a service charge. Sometimes owner sites will have an explicit statement saying that it is acceptable to download and reproduce their work without permission, but this is a rare occurrence.

Accusations of illegal file sharing typically come from either the music or movie industries, in the form of a "DMCA Complaint." The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) was passed by the US Congress in 1998 to reform copyright laws for the digital age. It defines penalties such as hefty fines for individuals found guilty of illegally sharing copyrighted materials.

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and other companies representing the entertainment industry contact the University when they believe illegal downloads have occurred, providing identifying information that obligates the university to track down the copyright violator.

Other indicators such as high bandwidth consumption may alert the university to the illegal use of information technology resources. As with any such abuse, the user may lose network access, as well as more severe penalties.

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