

It's the law ... or is it

Technology, Information Technology



Just because internet technology is available doesn't mean we have a right to it. The invention of internet technology has immensely revolutionized information technology in the contemporary society. The internet has numerous informative materials that help in carrying out enquiries in any aspect of life like political, social, technological, and cultural. Online materials are easily accessed by people all over the world so long as there is a computer and internet connection. The online materials may be educational or artistic in nature, and constitutes the original work of other people and as such should be respected. The fact that the materials are readily available does not give people the right to use them as they want. There exist set rules and laws that are useful in curbing the misuse of other people's work found in the web. The paper will briefly explore copyright laws governing internet information and the penalties for contravening them. There are numerous laws and regulations governing the use of internet information, but the paper will particularly look at copyright laws. In 1998, the then United States president Bill Clinton signed the digital millennium copyright Act (Scott). The act provides guidelines that should be adhered to by the users of the internet when accessing other people's work that may include, music and intellectual work among others. Further, Scott documents that some of the copyright laws and regulations include: fair use, unauthorized access and copying, file sharing and liability. Let us examine liability. As stipulated in the copyright Act, one is not allowed to produce and distribute unauthorized copies from the internet. In the event that production is to be done, consent of the producer is supposed to be sought. Failure to do the same amounts to a breach of the law and the offender is liable for the

legal consequences. When the breach occurs, the plaintiff can sue the actual offender or the internet service provider in a court of law. The complainant is also at liberty to seek an injunction from the court (Lesley). The purpose of the injunction is to prevent the offender from continual violation of the copyright rights. Lesley further documents that the copyright holder has the right to seek compensation from the offender in the court in form of monetary or statutory damages. The court of law is charged with the responsibility of establishing the guilt or innocence of the accused. If one is found guilty of violation the copyright act, he or she must take criminal responsibility. The violation can attract a fine of up to \$ 500, 000 or five years imprisonment for first offenders (Lesley). Note that penalties for copyright Act violations are stiffer for subsequent offenders. The internet is a very vital tool for intellectual empowerment and entertainment but that does not mean that people can use the information the way they want. Great caution should be taken by the users and the service providers to ensure that copyright laws, and other laws and regulations governing online information are strictly adhered to. This is important not only to be safe from the severe penalties, but also to enhance talents and personal development of the copyright right holders. The laws and regulations that govern the online information are available, but many people seem to be ignorant about them. Ignorance cannot be used in a court of law as a defense whatsoever; hence internet users should use the technology to understand legal and illegal practices when using online information. The copyright right holders and authorities do not have the capacity to speedily and efficiently follow up on those breaching the internet information laws. More still needs to be done on

sensitization and enforcement.

Works Cited

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