

William Thomas

The main problems I have seen with the current system of copyrights, is that they are too easy to acquire and they last too long. The main reason why college texts cost so much money is the multiple copyrights they draw on and must pay. I do believe that people should receive credit for their hard work, but I have never seen a reason for copyright to last more than 5 years. If your idea is really that awesome then 5 years is plenty of time to establish yourself in your chosen market and strengthen your company for the battering it will take when your product enters the public domain. I wouldn't take such a harsh view except right now the main thing copyright is used for is price fixing of products that are worth significantly less than list price in the entertainment industry. Our market has always been based on innovation and the current system undermines that by making it profitable to sit on your one idea and risky to try something else because someone else may hold the copyright and demand a portion of your profits. The current system is complicated and benefits large business more than the individual. The easiest way to fix this is to make the system simple with only a few rules and guidelines. Also I find it hard to justify someone owning rights to something that is in every home in the US. Letting someone produce 20 million copies of a piece of work then claiming rights to it and expecting the government to protect those rights seems a bit on the wishful thinking side of things. I can understand prosecuting people for the sale of copyrighted items, but should the government really be helping industry to keep individuals from distributing copies of their software if there is no profit involved? The media is so cheap its not even a significant favor to make a copy of a disc for someone. And yet the public is charged hundreds of dollars for rights to a single copy. I do not begrudge a company the right to protect its own interests but these efforts should be internal. CD keys software encryption and online verification are all viable alternatives that do not require the government to arrest some bored fifteen year old kid. If companies are so concerned about the security of their software perhaps they shouldn't distribute it to such a large customer base. This argument is like me leaving my car in the bad part of L.A. and then getting pissed off and yelling at the cops that they have to find it when it gets stolen. You can bet the Memphis PD will "get right on it". My main point is if you simplify the system and put a reasonable time limit on the length of a copyright it may not totally fix the system but it would be better. Abandonware would no longer be much of an issue and although big companies would still dominate the market at least consumers would be able to get reasonable pricing because the system couldn't be used to make me pay 20 dollars for a Beatles CD that Michel Jackson owns the copyright to.