

The True Cost of Digital Piracy

This topic provides a breakdown of how commonly practiced digital piracy hurts some industries. Many pirates think that theirs is a victimless crime. According to Joanne Seiff (2016), a published author, this is far from the truth.

Seiff (2016) begins by explaining that most artists and writers are unable to support themselves with their work royalty payments. In a particularly sobering moment in the article, she goes on to clarify just how her publishers calculate costs and royalties and how her books' earnings failed to outearn her advances, resulting in her earning no royalties from her publisher. (She is a seven-year veteran of publishing, with two books to her credit.) With her publisher's blessing, she digitally republished some of her content online, earning a mere \$500 for her troubles. The reason she didn't earn more? Almost immediately after her content entered the digital space, it showed up on dozens of websites that illegally make such content freely available for download.

Digital piracy of this sort means that a copy of an artist's work can be downloaded and passed on literally thousands of times, with only a one-time payment going to the artist. That means that digital piracy does something far more harmful than cost artists money—it robs creative ideas of their value.

More Resources

Use the following resources to conduct your research.

- **“Is the Streaming Industry Lying About Piracy?” (Hassan, 2016):** www.digitalmusicnews.com/2016/03/31/is-streaming-making-piracy-worse
- **“The War on Internet Piracy” (Molla & Ovide, 2016):** www.bloomberg.com/gadfly/articles/2016-03-23/google-and-media-titans-clash-in-a-war-on-internet-piracy
- **“No Big Deal? Copyright and Piracy Online” (Vitrium, 2014):** www.vitrium.com/media/images/no-big-deal-copyright-piracy-online.jpg
- **“Top 10 Most Common Digital Piracy Myths Busted: Who's Pirating What and Why?” (Lanaria, 2016):** www.techtimes.com/articles/121118/20160105/top-10-most-common-digital-piracy-myths-busted-who-s-pirating-what-and-why.htm

Discussion Questions

Use the following questions to facilitate your classroom discussion.

- *Do you agree or disagree with digital piracy? Why?*
- *What are some of the hidden costs of Internet piracy (psychological, emotional, and so on)?*
- *Put yourself in the role of an artist whose work has been pirated and shared illegally. What is your personal reaction or response?*
- *Do you believe digital piracy will get better or worse as time goes on? Why?*
- *Which do you feel is a more effective deterrent against digital piracy and why: stricter laws or evasion strategies?*
- *Do you think industry labels and companies could be doing more to help artists suffering from the effects of digital piracy? What could they do?*

Global Digital Citizen Assessment Framework

Use this four-phase assessment framework to establish the connection between digital citizenship and respect and responsibility for property.

1. **Phase 1 (awareness, connection, remembering):** Has an awareness of the laws of copyright, intellectual property, and privacy; occasionally cites sources in a suitable manner
2. **Phase 2 (understanding, applying):** Can follow the guidelines and norms for digital property; shows an understanding of the laws surrounding copyright, intellectual property, and privacy and sometimes applies them; occasionally requests permission to use resources and suitably cites sources
3. **Phase 3 (analyzing, evaluating):** Is often thoughtful in his or her online actions; shows a general understanding of the laws surrounding copyright, intellectual property, and privacy and often applies them; sometimes requests permission to use property, acknowledges ownership, and cites resources
4. **Phase 4 (evaluating, creating):** Shows consistent deliberation and consideration in his or her online actions; possesses a deep and rich understanding of the laws surrounding copyright, intellectual property, and privacy and applies them ethically; requests permission to use property and abides by the owners' rights to deny use; is always respectful and responsible in acknowledging ownership, citing resources, and protecting and securing sites and data; is considerate and reciprocal in others' requests to use his or her intellectual property

Discussion and Assessment Debrief

After conversation, students develop their own opinions about the assessment.

- *How did you evaluate this line from the assessment framework and why?*
- *How does the line from the assessment framework fit into the conversation?*
- *What does it mean for us? For the community? For the world?*

References

- Hassan, C. (2016, March 31). Is the streaming industry lying about piracy? *Digital Music News*. Accessed at www.digitalmusicnews.com/2016/03/31/is-streaming-making-piracy-worse on January 16, 2017.
- Lanaria, V. (2016, January 5). *Top 10 most common digital piracy myths busted: Who's pirating what and why?* Accessed at www.techtimes.com/articles/121118/20160105/top-10-most-common-digital-piracy-myths-busted-who-s-pirating-what-and-why.htm on January 16, 2017.
- Molla, R., & Ovide, S. (2016, March 23). *The war on Internet piracy*. Accessed at www.bloomberg.com/gadfly/articles/2016-03-23/google-and-media-titans-clash-in-a-war-on-internet-piracy on January 16, 2017.
- Seiff, J. (2016, March 13). *Time to assess the true cost of digital piracy, says Winnipeg author*. Accessed at www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/time-to-reconsider-the-cost-digital-piracy-1.3488270 on January 16, 2017.
- Vitrium. (2014). *No big deal? Copyright and piracy online* [Infographic]. Accessed at www.vitrium.com/media/images/no-big-deal-copyright-piracy-online.jpg on January 16, 2017.