

RANDOM

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COMMUNICATIONS WITH A PURPOSE

THOUGHTS

The EFF Can't Get No Satisfaction from Copyright Office

The Copyright Office of the Library of Congress has reviewed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) as they are required by Congress to do every 3 years. The stated goal of the review is to ensure that new technologies are recognized by the legislation. So far, the result seems to be to maintain the draconian aspects of the law while providing precious little relief for users. This year the Copyright Office granted 6 exemptions. "Unfortunately," says a news release from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, "all the proposed exemptions that would benefit consumers were denied."

The EFF had hoped for exemptions that would cover space-shifting, region coding, and backing up DVDs. As you no doubt know, consumers cannot legally purchase a DVD and make a backup copy for their own use.

The Copyright Office's 6 new exemptions: Persons making noninfringing uses of the following six classes of works will not be subject to the prohibition against circumventing access controls (17 U.S.C. § 1201(a)(1)) during the next three years.

1. Audiovisual works included in the educational library of a college or university's film or media studies department, when circumvention is accomplished for the purpose of making compilations of portions of those works for educational use in the classroom by media studies or film professors.
2. Computer programs and video games distributed in formats that have become obsolete and that require the original media or hardware as a condition of access, when circumvention is accomplished for the purpose of preservation or archival reproduction of published digital works by a library or archive. A format shall be considered obsolete if the machine or system necessary to render perceptible a work stored in that format is no longer manufactured or is no longer reasonably available in the commercial marketplace.
3. Computer programs protected by dongles that prevent access due to malfunction or damage and which are obsolete. A dongle shall be considered obsolete if it is no longer manufactured or if a replacement or repair is no longer reasonably available in the commercial marketplace.
4. Literary works distributed in ebook format when all existing ebook editions of the work (including digital text editions made available by authorized entities) contain

access controls that prevent the enabling either of the book's read-aloud function or of screen readers that render the text into a specialized format.

5. Computer programs in the form of firmware that enable wireless telephone handsets to connect to a wireless telephone communication network, when circumvention is accomplished for the sole purpose of lawfully connecting to a wireless telephone communication network.
6. Sound recordings, and audiovisual works associated with those sound recordings, distributed in compact disc format and protected by technological protection measures that control access to lawfully purchased works and create or exploit security flaws or vulnerabilities that compromise the security of personal computers, when circumvention is accomplished solely for the purpose of good faith testing, investigating, or correcting such security flaws or vulnerabilities.

The EFF says "it's good that film professors, archivists, cell phone recyclers, and security researchers were able to successfully navigate the exemption process, it appears that digital consumers still have no choice but to get Congress to amend the DMCA." The organization says that its members look forward to Rep. Rick Boucher (D-Virginia) reintroducing his DMCA reform bill, H.R. 1201, in the new Congress next year. **B**

When I'm drivin' in my car
and that man comes on the radio
and he's tellin' me more and more
about some useless information
supposed to drive my imagination.
I can't get no, oh no no no.
Hey hey hey, that's what I say.
— The Rolling Stones



Free phones from Google

Now Google says your cell phone should be free, but we all know there's no such thing as a free cell phone just as there is no such thing as free radio and television. They are supported by advertising. Radio stations guarantee advertisers a certain

number of ears. TV stations guarantee a certain number of eyes. That's Google's plan with the "free" cell phones.

Google CEO Eric Schmidt says people will spend as much as 10 hours per day interacting with mobile phones of the future, which will also do many of the things today's computers do. Allowing your phone to display targeted advertising — ads for products and services you already use or are likely to — would pay for the service.

Google already has a lot of that data. The company knows a lot about most computer users and it uses the information to provide services for users. What if you could export your Web search history? Maybe you'd like to download your Google e-mail archives. According to Schmidts, the company is working on what is essentially the equivalent of number portability, the government-mandated program that allows consumers to switch a telephone number from one provider to another.

Schmidt says the relationship between phone numbers and personal data is clear. The government says the phone number belongs to you, not to the telephone company. Likewise, "data should never be held hostage."

As for free phones, that's actually a misnomer. The service would be free, but you would probably still have to pay for the phone. Schmidt compared cell phones to newspapers, which aren't free but cost far less than they would cost if advertisers didn't pay a large chunk of the cost. **R**

Faster browsing

Several months ago, I tried to tell my Internet service provider, Wide Open West, that they were having nameserver problems. The technician I spoke with told me that was impossible because WOW has no nameservers. That, of course, is nonsense. All ISPs run their own nameservers. I was having trouble connecting to websites and the symptoms were textbook examples of nameserver (DNS) problems.

When I complained to WOW's corporate office, I was assured that the gentleman who claimed to be a "level 2 technician" was no such thing.

Recently the problem returned and websites just disappeared. Instead of calling Wide Open West to report the problem, I quickly modified my network settings to use nameservers provided by OpenDNS. Instant relief!

What's a DNS?

The domain name system (DNS) stores and associates many types of information with domain names, but most importantly, it translates domain names (computer hostnames) to IP addresses. DNS is an essential component of contemporary Internet use.

When I type "www.blinn.com" in a Web browser's address line, the DNS server (nameserver) must translate the domain name to "70.96.188.38" because network devices understand only the IP address. Without the translation, you won't see the website.

Do you think you could remember 70.96.188.38 for very long? Probably not, but you can remember "blinn.com", which is all the nameserver needs.

You might not want to depend on your ISP's DNS server (I'm not being redundant here: DNS is "domain name service", so adding "server" after "DNS" simply identifies the computer that is running the service.) Why might you want some DNS other than your ISP's? In my case, the need is obvious, but even if your ISP manages the DNS server with aplomb, you might want a different nameserver because it will provide faster results.

OpenDNS is somewhat faster than using my ISP's DNS even when it's working as expected because OpenDNS runs a large cache on a high-performance network that is geographically distributed and serviced by several redundant connections. OpenDNS responds queries from the nearest location. All of those features improve response, but there are other advantages to using OpenDNS:

- **Safety:** OpenDNS intercepts phishing attempts. OpenDNS customers will be warned if they attempt to visit a phishing site.
- **Intelligence:** OpenDNS fixes typos in the URLs you enter whenever possible. If you accidentally type "craigslist.og", OpenDNS will take you to "craigslist.org", which is probably what you intended.
- **Cost:** It's free. "OpenDNS makes money by offering clearly labeled advertisements alongside organic search results when the domain entered is not valid and not a typo we can fix. OpenDNS will provide additional services on top of its enhanced DNS service, and some of them may cost money. Speedy, reliable DNS will always be free."

There's no software to install, but you do have to tell your computer to send DNS requests to OpenDNS instead of to your (possibly brain-dead) ISP's DNS. If you have a router, you do that by modifying the DNS entries in the router. If you don't have a router, you'll change settings on your computer. OpenDNS explains what you need to do.

Is it perfect?

No. I wanted to visit a website that deals with backup procedures. Instead of seeing the website, I landed on the OpenDNS "problem" page. A quick test revealed that the problem was with OpenDNS and not with the site I was attempting to reach, so I sent a message to the OpenDNS tech support team. Although I received no response from OpenDNS, the problem was resolved within a few hours.

I've seen only that one error that I could trace to an OpenDNS problem. One other website failed to open, but it also failed to open when I tried the URL after connecting to my office computer (on a different DNS), so that was a website problem, not a DNS problem.

Except for that, it's been smooth — and fast — sailing. For more information, visit www.OpenDNS.com. **R**

on the market by A.J. Stinnett

CORNER

"The effective management solution is to enable employees to manage their own performance and to hold them accountable for consistently producing acceptable results."