

Harvard Lawyers Perception of Intellectual Property and Digital Rights

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Abstract : The near future will bring significant changes to contemporary organizations and management, because of the rapidly increasing role of immaterial goods and knowledge workers. The area of copyright, IP, as well as digital (non-material) goods and media redistribution seems to be one of the major challenges for the economy and society in general, and management and organization studies in particular. The proposed paper shows the views and perceptions of fairness of digital media sharing among Harvard Law School LL.M. students, basing on 50 qualitative interviews and 100 questionnaires. The researcher took an ethnographic approach to the study and joined the 2016 Harvard LL.M. Facebook group, which allowed natural socializing and joining for in-person events and private parties more easily. After making acquaintance with many of the students, the researcher conducted a quantitative questionnaire with 100 respondents, allowing to better understand the respondents perception of fairness in digital files sharing in different contexts (depending on the price of the media, its availability, regional licensing, status of the copyright holder, etc.). Basing on the results of the questionnaire, the researcher followed up with long-term, open ended, loosely structured ethnographic interviews (50 interviews were conducted) to further deepen the understanding of the results. The major finding of the study is that Harvard lawyers, in spite of the highest possible understanding of law, as well as professional standards, generally approve of digital piracy in certain contexts. Interestingly, they are also more likely to approve of it if they work for the government rather than the private sector. The conclusions from this study allow a better understanding of how 'fairness' is perceived by the younger generation of law professionals, and also open grounds for a more rational licensing policing.

Keywords : piracy, digital sharing, perception of fairness, legal profession

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