

To Whom It May Concern (RE:1201):

I think the issue at hand is simple: Is there a legitimate reason to bypass the security of DVD discs? The answer, in a word, is "Yes." When purchasing media, whether DVD or music CD or whatever, the assumption is that you may use the media for whatever purposes you like (in the privacy of your own home, and without charging fees to do so). Decrypting DVD data is necessary for viewing the content. As an emerging standard, DVD hardware and software are not yet available on all of the commonly used computer hardware and/or operating systems. Therefore if the consumer uses one of the less common operating systems, there is no way to view the content which they have legally purchased. So, bypassing the security of DVDs can be done for a valid reason: to watch DVD content.

Further, I would say that the global nature of the Internet (the place where the controversial software resides) prevents the United States from making a meaningful impact upon the distribution of the software. Because our laws do not apply to the other countries, it is a wasteful use of tax dollars to pursue this matter further. One has to accept that the newly formed global community will follow its own rules, regardless of the laws of individual countries. This is a good thing.

Lastly, I would say this: Digital media will always be copied. It is the very nature of the digital world. The point of making something digital is to reproduce information exactly. However, once something has entered the digital realm, it will be copied (because all copies are exact). I believe that this simple fact has yet to be acknowledged by content producers because their traditional business models don't fit in a digital world (ala alternative-powered vehicles in an oil dependent economy). I believe that current content distribution schemes are a concept that will disappear within ten years, as content producers realize that distribution can be more easily controlled through the internet (and at a far smaller cost). What content producers should do is work with telecommunications companies to create a cheap distribution channel so that they can charge less to the consumer so that piracy becomes non-profitable. The only real way to stop piracy is to make it non-profitable, in my humble opinion.

-Nick Roberts