Dear Sir,

I am writing to give you my opinions on DeCSS and the DMCA. Although I live in the UK, I hope that you will take the time to read this as the effects of the DMCA go far beyond the borders of the USA.

From what I can tell, CSS (the encryption algorithm used to "protect" DVD videos) isn't designed to prevent copying. It is designed to make money. In order to play DVD videos, you must buy a DVD video player, and in order to write a player, you must pay $10,000 for access to the CSS algorithms. This is great for the people who make DVD video playing software, because they don't have to compete with Open Source software.

Also, CSS has regional codes, which prevent you from playing DVD videos purchased in other countries. I really don't see any point in this, other than to charge higher prices in the UK and in Europe. I don't see how that can prevent copying.

Apparently, you do not need to decode DVD video to duplicate a disc. You can copy bit for bit (although you cannot do this with normal DVD recorders, pirates can probably afford expensive burners), or you can use video capture, for example. If you're making a video CD, you can probably get away with pointing a camcorder at the screen, or copying it at a cinema -- I don't know. Various tools apparently exist which can do these things, but I doubt that they are user friendly.

AFAICS, DeCSS is meant for playing DVDs -- not for copying them. CSS is not meant to prevent copying. It is meant to stop the people who don't pay the $10,000 from making players. Apparently, the DMCA states that you may not break encryption that prevents the access of a copyrighted work. I can't see a single good reason why it should say "access" instead of "copying"...

Also, I don't understand why the MPAA think that they should be able to stop people from linking to a web site. This is taking away people's right to freedom of speech.

In the UK, I think that it is legal to copy a DVD video to tape, so that you can put it in the VCR. I certainly don't see why anybody in the USA should get to decide upon the rights of people in the UK.

So basically, I think that the DMCA is taking away people's right to watch the DVD videos that they purchased fairly. DeCSS is harmed by the DMCA. The Open Source community is harmed by the DMCA. The free world is harmed by the DMCA.
I think that DeCSS should be considered legal -- CSS it next to useless anyway, so I can't think of a good reason not to allow the usage and development of DeCSS.

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Yours Faithfully,

Stuart Brady