

Ars Electronica 2008

A New Cultural Economy: The Limits of Intellectual Property

The age of copyright and intellectual property has reached its expiration date. A development that already manifested itself in the technical fundamentals of the Internet has reared its head in the actual practices of a young generation of users and is bringing forth a new economy of sharing and open access.

With this provocative formulation, Ars Electronica is placing one of the core issues of modern knowledge-based society at the focal point of this year's festival program. What's at stake: the value of intellectual property, freedom of information and copyright protection, big profit-making opportunities and the vision of an open knowledge-based society that seeks to build its new economy on the basis of creativity and innovation. The crux of the matter is that we still lack practical, workable rules and regulations governing this new reality and—of no small importance—that the task of coming up with them ought not to be left up to lawyers and MBAs alone.

After all, regardless of the perspective from which one approaches this issue—that of the Internet pirates, the inventors of a new information commons, the pioneers of a sharing economy or the apologists of the creative industries—one thing remains true: if knowledge and content actually are to be the new capital of postindustrial society, then they have to circulate and be accessible by all.

Gerfried Stocker, Christine Schöpf

Computers and the Internet have lowered the cost of communication and the creation and distribution of information so much that many fundamental notions of organizations, economics and property have completely changed or require major upgrades. There is a new generation of youth across the globe which is leading the charge into this changing world, modifying their basic behaviors to adapt to technology as it develops. Some businesses and artists have been able to keep up with these trends while others struggle and fail. The much slower to adapt legal system is being pushed to its limits with organizations on all sides of the issues trying very hard to adapt outdated laws. Most of the new behaviors and organizations creating value have a completely different notion of property. Intellectual property, while key to the post-industrial revolution nature of the firm, is more of an encumbrance than an asset to the sharing oriented mode of creation now central to the Internet. This year, we will bring together the users, artists, businesses, policy makers and academics involved intentionally or beyond their control in this change to understand this new world and to try to adapt to it.

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