

Peer-to-Peer File-Sharing and Copyright Infringement: Are You Vulnerable?

1. Peer-to-Peer File-Sharing: What is the risk?

Every day, millions of computer users share files online. Whether it is music, games, or software, file-sharing can give people access to a wealth of information. You simply download special software that connects your computer to an informal network of other computers running the same software. Millions of users could be connected to each other through this software at one time. The software often is free and easily accessible.

Sounds promising, right? Maybe, but make sure that you consider the trade-offs. File-sharing can have a number of risks. For example, when you are connected to file-sharing programs, you may unknowingly allow others to copy private files you never intended to share. You may download material that is protected by the copyright laws and find yourself mired in legal issues. You may download a virus or facilitate a security breach.

2. What is the copyright issue?

Under copyright law, it is illegal to download or share copyrighted materials such as music or movies without the permission of the copyright owner. This is true for all types of copyrighted materials, including music, movies, software, and books.

<http://www.itunes.com/> <http://www.musicmatch.com/> <http://www.listen.com/>

For more information go to www.washington.edu/students/genocat/policy/p2pshare.html