Software / Computer Programs

Software which can be a computer program or a computer game is protected as a literary work. Unauthorised copies should never be made, shared or used.

Running a computer program, storing on a computer or displaying on a screen involves copying the entire work, which requires permission or licensing, as does converting a program into different computer languages or codes, as this is considered a form of adaptation.

Copyright owners of software and computer programs side-step exceptions in law, by claiming that they licence their products as opposed to selling them. This ensures that licensees are bound by the terms of the licensing agreement which override any legal exceptions.

However, in May 2012 the High Court ruled in the case between [SAS Institute and World Programming (WPL)](#) that copyright protection does not extend to the functionality of a computer program or its programming language. The Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) also ruled that an owner of a computer program could not prevent a licensee from observing, studying or testing its functioning to determine the ideas and principles underlying that program

The Federation Against Software Theft (FAST)

FAST was founded in 1984 by the software industry and is now supported by over 1,200 companies. It is a not-for-profit organisation with an aim to prevent software piracy and has a policy of prosecuting anyone found to be breaching copyright law.

In addition to huge fines, FAST claims that Directors of companies can be personally charged and risk up to 10 years imprisonment. Criminal prosecution normally follows where deliberate infringement on a commercial scale has been proved.

Legitimate uses

University software is licensed for educational use by staff and students. Any other use or allowing access to other external organisations would require additional licensing or permissions.

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