

While I currently live in Australia, I am originally from the UK and feel compelled to contribute what little I can to this review. I have no doubt that whatever policies the UK adopts regarding the "Digital Rights Management" movement will lead to other countries following suit.

There are many opponents to this technology, more eloquent than myself. But I would like to make my voice heard, and hope you will listen.

From my perspective, DRM technology, the Trusted Computing Platform Alliance, and software patents all have a common theme; taking away the freedoms of the end users. If I were to buy a DRM-enabled music CD, or download a DRM-enabled album, it is certainly not my rights that are being protected, but only those of the IP holder. If I buy a TCPA-enabled computer, it is not a machine that I can put my trust in, only the manufacturers and OS vendors can trust it to do what they want.

Please re-examine the arguments pro-DRM; certainly, one of the original arguments for it is the advent of piracy. Digitising our information onto our computers has given us many benefits, but one of the perceived downsides is that it becomes trivially simple to copy that information once it is in digital form. To quote Bruce Schneier: "Trying to make bits un-copyable is like trying to make water not wet." Piracy will continue to exist regardless of the media involved. More and more complex systems can be put in place to try to stop this happening, but in the end, they only harm the end-users. For example, PC games; recent games involving highly convoluted copy-protection have been "F.E.A.R." and "The Sims 2"; both of these games were released on DVD and both caused massive suffering for those people who bought the game on DVD as the copy-protection scheme prevented them from playing the game they legally purchased. Some copy protection mechanisms ("StarForce") go as far as silently installing virtual DVD device drivers onto users' systems, just to ensure their original disc is in the drive at all times while playing. This is completely unacceptable. Not only does their malware make the users' systems unstable, but the practice of requiring the game disc to be in the drive is archaic; Most games play directly from the computer's hard drive for speed, and keeping the DVD spinning in the DVD-drive only means it gets scratched and wears out (until some point where it is too scratched to be recognised and renders the game unplayable)

This method of copy-protection via taking over users' home computers is unscrupulous at best, and more likely, illegal. I have no doubt that you have already reviewed the Sony DRM "Rootkit" scandal in detail, so I need not supply my own account of it here, but it is another example of just how low some will sink to "protect" their content.

Does it actually protect things though? I say it does not. As I've said, almost all modern games require 20-digit security keys and the like after purchase and before installation. Windows XP requires online registration and even needs re-registration if your hardware setup changes. But crackers and professional pirates work together and get around these restrictions easily. These are the people who work hard to duplicate box-art, who have a professional CD mastering machine, the people who attempt to profit from other people's IP. However, rather than stopping the professional pirates, DRM and other copy-prevention tactics have only been harming

the legitimate users, forcing people to jump through hoops to prove their right to use something they paid for.

I was amused to see you using Microsoft Word .doc and Adobe .pdf formats on your website. I am quite certain that these will be some of the first formats we would see with restrictive DRM rules. What if your cover sheet.doc file had restrictions on how many copies could be made? or what software could be used to edit it? Personally I avoid the .doc formats as much as possible, and I am using the free OpenOffice software to edit this document to send it back to you.

A hypothetical situation: if you had created this cover sheet with some future DRM-Word software, then I am sure that Microsoft would take pains to ensure the resulting document files could only be opened with official Microsoft products. After all, if I used OpenOffice and it didn't obey or understand the DRM rules embedded within the file, I would be able to edit the document and circumvent any DRM-style protection. So, in this case, the only way I could edit your cover sheet and return it to you would be to use the latest version of Microsoft Word+DRM; but this presents a problem for me, because I do not have a certified Microsoft operating system that can be "Trusted" to run such document-editing software. In the end, to contribute my voice to your review, I would have had to buy Microsoft Windows Vista (or whatever future equivalent DRM mandates), and obtained some license to give me limited rights to use Microsoft Word, and if the TCPA group has it's way, possibly even purchased particular hardware with which to run all this software.

I do not wish to have a "DRM"-enabled computer. I wish to retain my freedom of choice, and to be able to trust my own computer and trust the software I run on it. Having some "Big Brother" code lurking in my OS, whispering to it behind my back, urging it to betray me, is the last thing I want from hardware and software that I purchased. I do not mean to sound so sensationalist, but the simple fact is that for users, these DRM technologies are devised purely to remove freedom.

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