

I am a recent graduate in Mathematics with an interest in Computer Science and Software Engineering. I have no area of expertise as yet, but will offer my thoughts on how I see Intellectual Property law affecting me in the future as a professional and consumer.

- Current term of protection on sound recordings and performers rights

I address these issues merely as a consumer. In an age where access to electronic media pervades the part of the world I live in, it is increasingly important that consumers rights are respected.

Copyright law exists directly for the benefit of the consumer and citizen, not of the author, publisher or artist. Increasing the term of protection to 95 years will not benefit the citizen. After all, we had Bach, Mozart and Rachmaninov before copyrights were a significant issue, and under a 50 year term of protection the world has seen Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Clash, and thousands of other great artists.

Is it reasonable to believe that great work will diminish if the term is not extended? Absolutely not! Copyright law should remain for the benefit of the consumer and citizen, and the term of protection should remain at 50 years.

And of course, since existing work has already been published, retrospective application of an extension of term is blatantly seen to be benefitting merely the current holders. Retrospective application will not encourage any new great works!

- Copyright - Digital Rights Management

It is vital that the consumer should have control over the media that he purchases. As such, it must be mandated that DRM technology allows implementations in free and open source software. Otherwise media outlets have unnecessary influence over how their media is used.

- How IP is awarded

Of all three issues I discuss here, this one concerns me the most. In fact I am gravely worried about my future as a professional software developer.

The patent system in the US is much less restrictive about what counts as an invention, and many software algorithms have been patented. I am no expert economist, but from my knowledge of the complexity of computer systems I realise that this spells disaster. Again, patents are issued for the benefit of the consumer, to increase innovation and provide more useful and successful products.

However, what may work for engineering or pharmaceuticals does not work for software. Building software means integrating hundreds of thousands of separate components, any of which may have patents relating to them. This is going to decrease innovation to a crawl! Much better to let the fast pace and flexible nature of this digital industry ensure success in innovation, rather than placing crippling restrictions.

Software and algorithms must not be allowed to be patented!

Yours sincerely,

Mr Tom Huckstep