

WORKSHOP: Copyright And Privacy

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Erosion of the right to privacy is an ever-present danger in a world where technological advancement is making it easier for large amounts of information to be transmitted instantaneously. And, arguably, in Australia there was no other area where this issue was more prominent in 2003 than with regards the electronic transfer of music files over the internet: the question of whether or not the record companies had the right to access the personal details of those who transfer music files, that may or may not contain material copyrighted to those companies, was a hotly contested issue.

Sony, EMI and Universal took University of Tasmania, University of Melbourne and University of Sydney to the Federal Court demanding access to information about individuals who the record companies claim had breached copyright laws by exchanging certain MP3 files over University systems. The Universities asserted that it would be a breach of student's right to Privacy to release such information.

This workshop discussed issues surrounding the case and suggested possible ways of protecting students against intrusion into their privacy. We worked through transcripts from the Federal Court decision of Justice Tamberlin:
<http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/disp.pl/au/cases/cth/federal%5fct/2003/532.html?query=%5e+sony%2c+emi>

We discussed possible recourse to the Privacy Commissioner in cases where a student believes their Privacy rights have been breached:
<http://www.privacy.gov.au/>

And we also discussed the political campaign that raised concerns about the implications that might follow from corporations being able to access personal information of students (see the "pop goes privacy at Oz universities" media release from CAPA, SUPRA and the NSW council of Civil liberties on the following website):
<http://www.capa.edu.au/frameset.html?/media/index.html>