Assignment B
Tasks 1-5 from Handout

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September 31, 2004

Task 1

Has the 1996 U.S. Telecommunications Act been a success or a failure?

The 1996 U.S. Telecommunications Act (1996 USTA) should first be compared to the 1934 telecommunications regulation with respect to the people it serves and why the 1934 act was created. In 1934, only one telephone service was offered, no caller ID or three-way calling, and the telephones were cold, black, and rotary; designed solely to allow two people to talk over great distances (Browning, 1994). The 1934 Act was created to leverage the power of the telecommunications monopoly, the Bell System, to bring ubiquitous communication to the entire nation that should have provided more growth and prosperity than allowing a single company control over all voice transmissions. Brining new technology to a nation was a bold initiative and while more than 98% of all Americans now have television service, only ~94% have telephones (Gasman, 1998). As the new millennium approached, additional inventions were stifled by the large carrier since no real incentive existed to challenge the existing price structure and with the "last mile" laid, additional wireline connections could only incur capital expensive with little reward (Leigh, 2001). With deregulation of the industry in the 1980's and the apparent failure of the 1934 Act, the 1996 USTA vested regulatory power in the Federal Communications Commission with hopes that universal access would be expanded to include newer technologies, access for the disabled, and some sense of competition. Many question the ability of such a strained governmental power to complete such a daunting task efficiently (Gasman, 1998; Browning, 1994; Breidenbach, 1997; Global Internet Policy Initiative, 2002).

Some feel that technology alone will stifle the FCCs attempts to comply with the 1996 Act since only 10 years ago their offices consisted entirely of rotary phones and almost no

computers (Breidenbach, 1997). A rapidly escalating fiscal budget, 53% growth between 1989 and 1995 alone, and a shrinking staff that has become overwhelmed with dockets, 300% increase between 1995 and 1997, cannot provide solace to the Americans who are bound to contribute financially by the 1996 USTA (Breidenbach, 1997). Senator McCain (D-Ariz.) and Representative Tauzin (R-La.) have expressed concern about the commission's interpretation of the bill and their devised methods of distributive collections. With emerging technologies like voice over Internet protocol (V/IP) and high definition television, can an antiquated agency like the FCC be expected to control such an expanding industry with such major internal inefficiencies?

Creager (2003) found that millions of Americans still do not have basic telephone service due to the high monthly fees, even with each carrier charging a universal access fee, but nearly "two thirds of American households own cell phones" (Norbut, 2004, p. 1) and almost two thirds have access to the Internet from home (Kim, 2004). With Internet service, Americans can enjoy V/IP for free through brokers like BuyerZone.com instead of paying $35/month with AT&T, or paying the universal connection fee associated with telephones. With a mast majority of Americans owning televisions and V/IP available for free, what is the incentive for the universal connection fee? A number of companies are now offering emergency-only cellular service that extend beyond the likes of conglomerates such as AT&T and Sprint; Radio Shack and Wal-Mart provide an alternative pay as you go plan, or Pagersonline.com emergency-only car phone that offers free 911 service with the one-time $20 purchase of a phone. Cellular phones do not require the same costly infrastructure as telephones and are portable well outside the range of traditional telecommunications.

If the 1934 Telecommunications Act was designed to bring universal communication service to the American public, it failed. The 1996 revision took place with the right intent, a continued attempt to encourage competition, technological enhancement, and include the disabled, schools, and libraries, but the scope and authority assigned to the Federal Communications Commission was overwhelming and handled inefficiently. Newer companies are able to provide free emergency cellular access and a majority of the populace has Internet access, by which communications through V/IP is free, but none of this appears to be incorporated into the FCC's telecommunication plans. When the legislative designers are concerned about the implementation of the bill and the agency assigned barely uses the technology it is meant to regulate, it is difficult to say that the 1996 U.S Telecommunications Act has been successful.

Task 2

Which of the following elements of information must be used on a copyright notice: Copyright symbol, Name of owner, Year of first writing, Words: "All rights reserved"?

The use of copyright elements is important because it informs the public that the work is protected by law. On visually perceptible copies, it is also important to include three required elements:

Symbol: Either the symbol ©, the entire word copyright, or an abbreviation of “Copr.”

Date: The year the work was FIRST published, even if additions or revisions have been made to work.

Name: Author of the work, including recognized abbreviations or a designated alternative that is known by a large percentage of the public (USCO, 2000)

Works of the audio variety are considered phonographic, and therefore require the use of letter “p” with a circle followed by the date and name, similar to the visually perceptible copies.

Which of the following types of works can be copyrighted: Titles of books, Computer programs, Mathematical formulas, Musical recordings, Sculptures?

Literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works can be protected under the U.S Code 17 and the protection extends to published and unpublished works (USCO, 2000). Musical recordings are covered, along with any accompanying words along with sound recordings and motion pictures. Sculptural, pictorial, and graphic works are also afforded protection under the copyright laws. While literary works are covered, their titles are not. Computer programs, depending on how they were created, can be original works (or literary works) that, upon storing, become copyrightable items. It is important to consider reused code

from previously copyrighted or public domain programs, and that help from anyone outside of the intended owner is not compromised. Oppehdal & Larson (1995a) suggest ensuring that computer programs have copyright notices when the code is executed, as well as in the code lines in the event disassembly takes place. I could not find any information that specifically related to mathematical formulas from searches of Google or the USCO, but according to the definition of what is *not* covered by copyright a mathematical formula, would be covered provided it was unique and presented in a tangible form of expression. While symbols and designs are not subject to copyright, the selection and/or formulation of such public domain information in a unique manner are provided protection under section 103 of the Copyright Act, but *Harper & Row*, *Publishers, Inc.* v. *Nation Enterprises*, 471 U.S. 539, 556 (1985) provided that facts and discoveries are not themselves subject to copyright protection. This would counteract the previous position. Since the wording provided in the USCO code is not clear, I am yielding to the infinite wisdom of our highest court and my understanding of their interpretation that mathematical formulas would be discoveries that, once discovered, become public domain, much like fire and electricity.

Answer the following statements concerning copyright as true or false. Several of the statements may require elaboration beyond a true/false answer:

"A copyrightable work first becomes protected by copyright law when it is imagined."

False. Copyright protection cannot be provided for works upon thought, for it would impossible to determine ownership, or date of creation in a dispute of claim. The copyright law can only

provide protection to works immediately after they are created in fixed form, or a method that can be replicated and distributed.

"Anything posted to newsgroups or discussion forums on the net are in the public domain."

False. Newsgroups and discussion forums on the Internet provide a means of discussing relevant topics and sharing common information. Applying copyright laws to newer mediums: radio, television, and Internet, become quite a legal battle with respect to the intent of the law and the application of current technology. It could be argued that the posting of information to a newsgroup, forum, or any public Internet site by a layman, or someone who is not hosting their own Internet servers, creates a medium of exchange, thus providing copyright protection for the person providing the information to be published. While each posting may not explicitly disclose restrictions to the content provided, it is implicitly understood that any such information is time stamped and named, providing a basis for the copyrighting of information. This also would lend to the argument that even though millions are exposed to the work and the author did not intend to offer the work for sale, the information, having exchanged hands, was placed in the trust of the hosting service for the implicit use of non-profit informational purposes and the use of said information for resale would violate that trust. The USCO states that “Publication is an important concept in the copyright law for several reasons” (USCO, 2000, p. 5), many of which establish inception of work, ownership of work, and means by which the work can be rigorously defended in a court of law; supporting the posting of information on an Internet site, newsgroup, or discussion forum. It also holds that transfer of rights must be done in writing and be explicit in

the authorization of the agents duties, neither of which are done when a person posts information to these medium.

"I can adapt another's work and seek a copyright for the resulting publication."
True. The copyright only applies to the medium that the work was intended for, e.g. a song may be adapted to a television show and receive an independent copyright. The copyright also does not apply to factual information contained within that work, so any adaptation that includes only the factual portions of the work can be copyrighted in itself. It is possible to copy the ideas of the story, e.g. two siblings walking somewhere are taken captive by someone, but unique verbiage and some situations are protected such as Hansel and Gretel, or using DNA to grow dinosaurs. A number of methods of copy or interpretation have been upheld by courts under fair use, but even as some works have been adapted and copyrighted, others certainly have been found to be illegally copied without the proper permissions granted under copyright law. Derivatives of work, such as translations, are subject to copyright and cannot be made without the expressed consent of the original author.

"I can copy anything as long as it doesn't have a copyright notice." False, the copyright notice is no longer required to copyright a piece of work according to the Berne Convention, adopted in March 1, 1989; copying a piece of work without a notice may break the law. It is highly probably that the work one is attempting to copy has already been published, an act that "generally secured [the work] by the act of publication" and "copyright is secured *automatically* when the work is [fixed in copy]" (USCO, 2000).

"I can make copies of anything as long as I don't make money in doing so."

False. Section 107 does attempt to provide relief for the use of information in many circumstances that the average person would deem acceptable, but they are not clear cut and simply citing your source does not substitute the receipt of permission. Even while most of the information retrieved from the US Copyright Office is public domain, paid for by this student in taxes, and available for replication through the copyright laws themselves, the average person would agree that unique ideas should be protected. Recently, Bell (1998) found that a number of court decisions were reversing the trend of "fair use" and could endanger the use of copyrighted information even when no profit is intended. The non-profit intent of use does not constitute permission.

"Copyright is simply too costly to bother."

False. The United States Copyright Office posts current fees, as of 2002, range between $30 for basic registration and $580 for the special handling of services. These fees are astonishingly low when comparing the initial fee $.50 (USCO, 2002) for basic registration in modern currency and the current fee of $30 over the more than 130 year span since the Office's inception. Only in 1942 did the US Copyright Office require any governmental assistance, for until then, it was entirely self-sufficient from the receipt of copyright revenues. Basic fees only had to be raised 7 times in nearly 150 years, even though the actual amount for the basic registration has tripled in the past 10 years, and the fees remain exceedingly low when compared by percentage to the base US Post Office rate increases over the past 25 years. In 2002, the USCO budgeted to remain independent of governmental financial assistance, proposing no increase for basic registration and the highest associated fee of $580, a special handling change, was without increase (USCO,

2002). Even with a decline in filings, the basic rate, at only $30, “accounts for 76.6% of Copyright Office business” (USCO, 2002, p. 9), quite a bargain for the protection provided.

"I can repost someone's email to me without violating copyright."

False. Understanding the difference between ownership and intellectual copyright quickly provides an answer to this question. Purchasing an album affords the purchaser the right to listen to the copyrighted music, not the rights to disseminate it freely. Just because you received an Email from someone does no imbue the right to distribute the information contained within.

"I can't get arrested for copyright infringement as long as the value of what I am copying is $500 or less."

False. Copyright infringement and theft are two different things where theft already has a value, infringement can have an implied value which is civil. If a song is written by an unknown artist and published on their web site (copyrighted material) and a successful artist than infringes on the authors rights by using those lyrics, or music, in a song, the potential value of the song can range from $50 to $5,000,000. The government cyber crime division lists the following legislation with regard to copyright infringement violations:

> "(b) Any person who commits an offense under subsection (a) of this section-
>
> > "(1) shall be imprisoned not more than 5 years, or fined in the amount set forth in this title, or both, if the offense consists of the reproduction or distribution, during any 180-day period, of at least 10 copies or phonorecords, of 1 or more copyrighted works, with a retail value of more

than $2,500;

"(2) shall be imprisoned not more than 10 years, or fined in the amount set forth in this title, or both, if the offense is a second or subsequent offense under paragraph (1); and

"(3) shall be imprisoned not more than 1 year, or fined in the amount set forth in this title, or both, in any other case.".

Additionally, the legislation provides that the act is required to have been conducted willfully and with intent to profit before it constitutes a criminal offense.

"I don't have to worry about copying and distributing copyright materials for educational purposes. Such materials are exempt under U.S.copyright law's 'fair use doctrine'."

False. While this may have been true only a decade ago during the late 1990's, recent court decisions noted by Bell (1998) have shown that the courts are interpreting the laws differently, changing perhaps due to the transformation of the economy from manufacturing to more service oriented where intellectual information is highly valued. Even though the intent of professors is simply education, the copyrighted information presented without permission purely for the sake of scholarly research may now require explicit information from the author including methods of delivery. "Fair use" used to apply to parodies, news reports, and illustration of points through educational instruction, but the courts are finding some of this use violates the spirit of the copyright laws. In a time of sweeping laws suits, over-sensitization, and rampant disregard of

fiduciary duty, perhaps the tightening of “fair use” will provided an incentive for more research and independent thought and less “sound bites” or instant, while copyrighted, information.

"I have placed a copyright on my name."

False. Names, family symbols or designs, and lettering are some of the items that are specifically not available for copyright, unless your name consists of a pictorial or graphic that is unique in nature (aka Prince). Even in this instance, a team of lawyers could probably argue a compelling case for either side of the law.

"My website only has links to other materials on other websites. One is not in violation of copyright simply by using links.”

A link contains a URL (uniform resource locator) that is similar to a telephone number, a factual item. In *Feist Publications, Inc. v. Rural Telephone Service Co.,* 499 U.S. 340 (1991), it is established that to qualify for copyright protection, a work must be original to the author, but a compilation of facts can also be protected. The difference is that even compiled facts require a minimal degree of difficulty in creating, “even a slight amount will suffice” (499, p. A.10). The links to an Internet site are composed of public information and similarities could be drawn between the compilation of links to other sites and a telephone book, so not only would the links be not in violation, but may in themselves copyrightable. The result is not from copying and even though it appears that “sweat of the brow” does not apply, it is indeed copyrightable when the information compiled is a result of the author’s selection and arrangement of the facts themselves.

"My use of someone else's original document is serving as a free advertisement for their publication and is not in violation of copyright laws."

False. Without obtaining the authors permission, it is unknown whether the author would like free advertisement or dissemination of the original document. Physical ability to copy and distribute the work does not convey the rights afforded to the author.

Task 3

Should e-commerce be exempt from sales tax? Why/why not?

E-commerce should not be exempt from sales tax.

Starting with the following scenario, where every company has a company that only sells goods through the Internet, is physically located in only one state, and all of their revenue comes from purchases outside of their state. With a moratorium on state and local Internet-based sales tax, the amount of available capital lost for 2003 would be $1.28 trillion (Bruce & Fox, 2004). State governments rely heavily on sales tax to provide a number of social benefits that otherwise would probably not be available: streets and highways, hospitals, public safety, and utilities to name a few (USDOT, n.d.). This scenario may seem extreme, but Bruce & Fox low-growth research scenario for 2004 will yield a loss in *new* Internet tax revenue of almost $9 billion and almost $17 billion in total; the high-growth scenario projects that figures will be more than 10% higher. The National Governors Association (2001) study, supposedly derived from the same Forrester Research numbers as Bruce & Fox, projects the losses for 2006 at $45.2 billion, compared with $26.6 billion Bruce and Fox projections. Using either numbers, it is easy to project potential uses for even low estimates of these figures with teachers paying $500 a year from their own pockets in order to purchase school supplies – not supplemental supplies, basic requirements (Nelson, 2004).

The United States citizens no longer live in a microcosm of industry. Where a person would once hope to make a purchase in Paris or Italy, only by way of a dream vacation or windfall, they can now search for their favorite pair of shoes in a web browser and find them halfway around the world from the comfort of their living room. The purchase will arrive much

sooner than if the vacation had taken place and shipping insurance will ensure that even if their luxurious item is lost at the airport, a replacement will take the place of an apathetic airline employee from baggage claim. Because Italy is part of the European Union (EU); however, purchases may soon be taxed, even as the same item from a different state in our Union would not. The EU is about to tax U.S. purchases on digital products without representation that will probably range from 15-25% (Thibodeau, 2002). Some states are pushing Congress to repeal the Internet tax moratorium, a position with support (Thibodeau, 2002; National Governors Association, 2001; Bruce & Fox, 2004) and justifiable considering that the only difference between making the purchase twenty years ago and today is the location of transaction initiation. The amazing boom of catalog sales did not excuse sales tax, nor did purchase by facsimile. Why should the Internet be any different?

Bruce and Fox (2004) depict a spiraling loss of revenue, over $27 billion in 2008 that may cripple state and local governments. The United States Treasury (n.d.) states that the Federal government relies mainly on personal income tax for its revenues and county and city governments remain funded by property taxes. Some suggest (Harrington, 2004) that the Internet would collapse if people had to pay sales tax for purchases made online. It is understandable that the U.S. wanted to encourage people to use the Internet during a time of explosive economic growth, but the current and future losses that the economy will sustain may damage local governments beyond repair. Americans are accustomed to paying sales tax. Some states, such as Texas, Tennessee, and Florida rely most heavily on sales tax for revenue (Bruce & Fox, 2004), but even those least impacted, Virginia and Massachusetts at 2.2%, are beginning to feel the pinch. It is possible that mergers and acquisitions will take care of the problem since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1992 that only stores of local physical presence are required to collect

Internet sales tax (National Governors Association, 2001). But states cannot wait that long, nor should they be required. As the Internet and global economy mature, old laws must be retired and new one crafted to support and enhance our innovations and achievements. Maintaining the moratorium on E-commerce tax will only hurt the states, local government, and U.S. citizens.

Task 4

How does one balance the United States' traditions of "freedom of information" and the apparent growing concern over individuals' perceived right to privacy?

"I want to hear what (white supremacist Tom Metzger) has to say, how he got his views. I may not like them, but I can't deny that people like him exist" – Whoopie Goldberg

"Privacy is a fundamental human right" – Serge Gutwirth

While Whoopie Goldberg's comment was made regarding the freedom of speech, many similarities can be drawn with the freedom of information. This paper will explore the topic "freedom of information" in a very limited scope that will remain confined to personal information such as address, financial data, and the specifics of healthcare and how electronic data transfer has enabled a new level of access and methods of abusing private information (Lewis, 2001). Personal information may include marital status, voting, or religious preference and this information can be used in a number of different ways: to gain trust, financial reward, or social leverage. The disclosure of bankruptcy might lead to professional dismissal or prejudice that can have widespread ramifications beyond the annoyance of collection agencies. The proliferation of healthcare information can be both embarrassing and damaging to reputations, relationships, and even marriages. The protection afforded information is in direct conflict with the massive U.S. initiative to make living in this age, an information age, more efficient, integrated, and instantly accessible. The advent of the Internet has created a new set of tools and technologies that businesses can leverage to help ensure client information privacy, but "it is helpful to remember that privacy is at all times about real people with real lives" (Lewis, 2001, p. 1).

U.S. citizens can only protect their personal information with "opt-out" measures, unlike the European Union's opposing "opt-in", with many Americans unaware that corporations are using their personal information for profit. EU-based companies, even those with U.S. ownership, are barred from piping information back home to the United States unless they promise to accommodate European standards (Anonymous, 2004). Some American laws exalt the notion of privacy while creating an ensemble of information in a mega-database like the "Total Information Awareness" program, or "Carnivore" and establishing commercial interests that outweigh individual privacy (Olson, 2003). Stahl (2004) believes that information should be approached as a moral directive that extends beyond utility, where most corporations seem to derive their ethical direction, that approaches Kantianism, where anyone handling information must be a moral agent, capable of determining appropriate use; bound by the sense of duty. Personal privacy dates to 1890 when Warren and Brandeis questioned the right to take a personal picture without permission, yet searching through Yahoo's "people search" will automatically direct the user to a database, PeopleData.com, that offers birthdates, background checks, and even satellite photographs for the small fee of $10. Stahl argues that while privacy requires security, the detection and elimination of risks would be best accomplished by completely eliminating privacy. Untouched in this discussion are the electronic footprints, or "clickstream", that are left behind by a computer when a person browses through the Internet that companies use to collect and compile personally identifiable data (Regoli, 2002). Tighter polices need to be developed or better surfing tools that allow anonymity should be widely distributed to place more protection on this new avenue of spying.

Over $1 billion a year is lost through identity theft according to the FTC, not including the damaged credit reports and ratings that can be costly and time consuming to repair, yet Olson

(2003) quips that people concerned with identity theft are the very same people who "routinely trade personal information for cents-off coupons at the grocery store" (p. 1). The 2001 terrorist attacks have opened a floodgate of unfettered access to private information in order to determine security risks (Anonymous, 2004) and yet access to public, government information is more difficult (Halstuk, 2002; Mills, Yao, & Chan, 2003) even as the Freedom of Information Act has made more documents available to the press. Transmitting online banking information in the age of wireless communications can be unsafe, especially when people are more concerned with the ease of use than with the level of security. It is easy to find open wireless networks by simply walking through a neighborhood, making the financial data transmitted between the home and bank much less private. The interception of private online communications may assist law enforcement, but would violate internationally respected privacy rights that have been enforced by the U.S. Supreme Court (Strossen, 2000). Strict encryption standards and laws that protect the Internet information from one's home should be enforced as strongly as wiretap laws; although terrorism has also eased the restrictions on obtaining wiretaps.

Personal health information may be the most difficult challenge as balancing the inter-institutional transmission of information in order to facilitate better health care and the protection of that information has proven challenging. Canada's Personal Health Information Privacy Act failed over concern for information sharing without individual consent, but they also have a very inefficient health care system because of the same reasons (Mills, Yao, & Chan, 2003). Many issues face healthcare professionals as technology begins its infusion into their practice: genetics, personal conversations, and "threats to our most intimate healthcare information (Verkerk, 1999, p. 304). The exposure of genetic information, if not protected, could pose a risk to an entire family tree. More personal, privileged conversations are being transcribed outside of the United

States where extortion is a possible outcome (Zink, 2004). If doctors begin using handheld devices, such as PDAs, to better serve patients, will the devices be equipped with Bluetooth, or another "always on" device that will constantly transmit confidential patient information? Policies and procedures may secure the information contained within the device, but what happens when the device is stolen, or misplaced?

Lewis (2001) notes that compliance is not the answer to privacy, it must be built into business strategy in order to be most effective. The U. S. Supreme Court has noted that freedom has limits in a constitutional democracy (Gostin, 2002) and hopefully those limitations will support the restriction of private information to authorized individuals who will make ethical decisions. Emerging technologies allow instantaneous access to personal information that may allow Americans to better integrate into the national network, but the current privacy laws are not even as strong as Europe, let alone strong enough to keep financial records from being published on the Internet, or medical histories from being mass Emailed (Lewis, 2001). The marriage of information and access demand security that will not restrict the value or availability of information and will instill a level of comfort that American's can depend upon.

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