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[Back to: http://toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081024/NEWS04/810240326](http://toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081024/NEWS04/810240326)

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BGSU fights online music piracy

Students can lose access for illegal sharing of files



By **MEGHAN GILBERT**
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BOWLING GREEN - Bowling Green State University is attempting to curb illegal music downloads by taking away students' Internet access when they do it.

The punishment can range from 24 hours to a semester off line if the new technology detects the student pirating music or other copyrighted material.

It stops them in the act and a message will pop up on their computers about what they were trying to download, their Internet suspension, and information about legal file services.

A first offense draws 24 hours with no Internet. The second time, it's two weeks, and if there is a third offense, the student could lose Internet access for the rest of the semester.

Matthew Haschak, left, director of information technology security and networking at Bowling Green State University, and Bruce Petryshak, chief information officer, have turned to a high-tech device to detect and discourage piracy of copyrighted material online.
(THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH)

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"We're doing this as a protection for the students," said Matthew Haschak, BGSU's director of information technology security and networking.

"A lot of them just did not understand," Mr. Haschak said. "There's been a cultural understanding of sharing music for free because they've been able to get away with it."

But not anymore.

The Recording Industry Association of America sent out notices in the spring informing universities there were violations of the federal Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

Their vendor had increased its software and hardware capabilities and now can better find such offenders.

BGSU received 658 such letters during the 2007-08 school year.

The University of Toledo received 398 and the University of Dayton got 487.

Ohio State University led the country with 2,336 such notices. BGSU ranked 55.

John Waynick, 20, a BGSU junior studying accounting and finance, said he knows several people who have been caught and had their Internet taken away for a day.

The technology has been up and running since Oct. 10.

"Our generation, for the most part, never really thought too much about it being illegal because a majority of the population did it," said Mr. Waynick, president of the university's undergraduate student government.

"Now that the recording industry is cracking down, it's good the university is trying to catch it ahead of time," Mr. Waynick said.

While it's not fun to lose Internet privileges, it's better than a large fine or criminal charges, he said.

Bruce Petryshak, BGSU's chief information officer, said the university has had publications and events about it and that this was the next step.

"We've tried many ways to help communicate the proper behavior and there were still all these letters," he said.

The university paid \$75,000 for Audible Magic's CopySense Network Appliance system.

"It's a good investment to help protect our students and be good citizens," Mr. Petryshak said.

The RIAA is encouraging universities to take illegal file sharing on their campuses seriously. It recommends an approach that includes a strong campus policy, consistent enforcement, education about alternatives, and preventive technology, said Liz Kennedy, a spokesman for the association.

"Universities that have successfully implemented anti-piracy technology tools have reported seeing fewer copyright infringement notices," she said.

Some of the peer-to-peer file sharing systems used by BGSU students include LimeWire, Gnutella, FrostWire, and BitTorrent.

To deter students from using those systems, BGSU is letting students know of legal alternatives such as Ruckus, which is a free and legal sharing network for college students.

It's better to get caught by the university than the recording industry, which sends out prelitigation letters to those found pirating music calling for settlements that could be \$3,000 a song, Mr. Haschak said.

At UT, when the recording industry sends a notification, the university disables the offending computer from the network and waits for the student to call about the problem, said Bob Hogle, UT's director of information security.

Then the university does do a consultation with the student, which seems to work because Mr. Hogle said he's never had a second offense after such a conversation.

"We explain that peer-to-peer music is oftentimes illegal and that fines and jail time can be imposed - basically help them understand how significant this can be on their life," he said.

The student then has to commit to cleaning the machine.

If there were to be a second offense, the matter would go through the student judicial system if it was a student or through human resources if it was a faculty or staff person.

Most offenses are by students living on campus, he said.

"We really find that a number of people that get caught in this are very illiterate on what they're doing," he said, adding that you can tell the difference between someone who is actively pirating or didn't know about it.

"I think this is something a lot of people throughout the world on the Internet are doing," he said. "Students are part of that group. They hit the right type of demographic for the type of individual who would do it."

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