

# **New system will help computer users avoid illegal file-sharing**

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The University of Michigan will launch a new educational service to help students avoid unintentionally infringing copyright law.

Be Aware You're Uploading (BAYU) is a new automated system that detects when computers on residence hall networks upload files using peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing technology.

"The University is launching this educational service because many people who use peer-to-peer file-sharing technology do so in ways that may result in copyright infringement or other risks," said Jack Bernard, assistant general counsel in the Office of the Vice President and General Counsel. The service begins Oct. 30.

BAYU is part of U-M's long-standing educational campaign to help students use computing and network resources effectively and lawfully. Peer-to-peer file-sharing, itself, is a lawful activity and is used increasingly for important instructional activities and research. But, it is what and how users file-share that may be unlawful, Bernard said. Many users who intend to use the technology lawfully are infringing unwittingly.

Last year, the University received hundreds of notices from copyright holders who alleged that users were uploading copyrighted content using P2P technology. Many users reported they had not intended to upload, thought they had turned off the uploading feature on their computer or only had uploaded files that were lawful to upload.

The new service will help users avoid unknowingly uploading copyrighted material; help users who are consciously uploading to do so responsibly; and help individuals who use peer-to-peer file-sharing be mindful of the risks associated with the technology.

When BAYU notices P2P uploading, it will send an e-mail with a link to educational information and University resources to the person associated with that computer. BAYU also will help users avoid accidentally exposing themselves to computer viruses and violations of their privacy through P2P uploading.

"We hope that BAYU will help alert students to the possibility that they are uploading unintentionally so they can avoid violating the law," Bernard said. "BAYU does not look at the content being uploaded or content on a computer's hard drive. It simply notifies individuals that a computer associated with them is engaged in uploading. The decision about whether or not to continue uploading rests with the individual."

Many people use peer-to-peer file-sharing technology without understanding how it works, Bernard said. Some P2P applications come configured to upload, so if users do not reconfigure the application to prevent uploading, they may end up uploading accidentally. Even if students have configured their computer software not to upload, the uploading feature may be reengaged when the software is restarted, updated, or through some other mechanism.

Students can mitigate their risks by monitoring their use of P2P technology, understanding how the technology works, and learning about the laws and policies that govern its use, said Bernard. As long as P2P technology is on a computer there is some risk.

The Recording Industry Association of America is cracking down nationally on the illegal swapping of songs. It is seeking settlements with

people at 19 universities, including U-M, which has recently received notice of 20 such settlements.

The University is working on ways to expand the benefits of the program to the broader campus community.

Source: University of Michigan

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