

Online pirates police themselves

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(PhysOrg.com) -- People who illegally download music, films and TV episodes do not believe they are doing anything wrong, said a Queensland University of Technology researcher.

Media and communication researcher Dr Stephen Harrington is conducting a study to find out what people who illegally downloaded files thought of their behaviour in an effort to discover how best to police it.

He said the interim findings revealed some interesting trends, chiefly that downloaders did in fact police their behaviour.

"I wanted to find out how they rationalised it - why they did this when they knew it was illegal," Dr Harrington said.

"During interviews, these 'pirates' all said they didn't believe what they were doing was wrong."

Dr Harrington said the downloaders justified their behaviour by having their own rules and limits.

"They said 'I will download some things but I will not download an album from an artist I really like'," he said.

"They said they would not illegally download the music of small-time or Australian artists - they would buy those albums.

"Some also said they downloaded music just to sample it before committing to purchasing an album, or they may download episodes from a TV show not available to watch or buy in Australia."

Dr Harrington said the results proved illegal downloading activity was far more complex, and less sinister, than previously thought.

"There are ads which equate illegal downloading with stealing handbags and cars, but the people I interviewed did not think that copying an item online was comparable to stealing a physical object from someone," he said.

"There are statistics on what piracy costs [record labels](#), but these are only estimates which may be based on the flawed assumption that if people were not downloading files for free they would be buying them instead.

"That is not necessarily true. In fact, there is evidence that people who download spend more money on media than other people."

Dr Harrington said there were more effective ways to deal with illegal downloading than suing individuals.

"We need a system to give people more legal access to the files they want," he said.

"A suggestion has been for internet service providers (ISPs) to funnel some of the money they make through people using their monthly download bandwidth back to the artists whose work is being downloaded."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology ([news](#) : [web](#))

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