

## New Google data show Microsoft's piracy problems (Update 2)

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Google on Thursday began revealing details about requests for links to be removed from Internet search results on the grounds they lead to copyrighted material posted without permission. Google added a copyright section to the online transparency report it launched two years ago to provide information about how often government officials ask for material to be removed from its online venues.

(AP) -- Google's Internet search engine receives more complaints about websites believed to be infringing on Microsoft's copyrights than it does about material produced by entertainment companies pushing for tougher online piracy laws.

A snapshot of Microsoft's apparently chronic copyright headaches emerged in new data that Google released Thursday to provide a better understanding of the intellectual property abuses on the Internet.

Google has a good vantage point on the issue because it operates the Internet's dominant search engine with the largest index of websites. About 97 percent of the copyright removal requests sent to Google are found to be valid by the company, prompting the offending links to be blocked from its influential search results.

The new report includes a breakdown of all requests Google has received since July 2011 to remove copyright-infringing content from its search index. Google plans to update the information daily at <http://www.google.com/transparencyreport/removals/copyright> .

Google Inc. has logged more than 2.5 million requests to remove links believed to be violating Microsoft's copyrights in the past 11 months. That ranked well above second-place NBC Universal, the operator of several television networks and a movie studio, whose copyrighted content was cited in nearly 1 million removal requests during the same period.

The data doesn't identify the specifics of the reported infringements, but Microsoft Corp. has long complained about illegal downloads of its Windows operating system and other software.

Microsoft had no immediate comment Thursday.

Copyright-protected content owned by major music labels also spurred a high volume of removal requests.

The Recording Industry Association of America, which has railed against digital piracy since the rise and fall of Napster's music-sharing service more than a decade ago, was identified as the copyright owner in more than 416,000 requests. Other copyright owners on Google's Top 10 list of removal requests include Universal Music and Sony Music and an adult entertainment site, BangBros.com.

Google decided to share its insights on copyright abuse amid a loudening outcry for a crackdown against online piracy that media companies have claimed is collectively costing them billions of dollars each year. The backlash inspired a piece of get-tougher legislation dubbed the Stop Online Piracy Act, or SOPA, that had the backing of most major music and movie studios. The proposal caused dismay among major Internet companies who feared the law would stifle free speech and innovation. The bill was abandoned four months ago after fierce high-tech opposition that included a one-day blackout of popular websites such as Wikipedia and an online petition drive spearheaded by Google.

Microsoft also opposed SOPA, although it wasn't as strident in its criticism as other major technology companies. The Business Software Alliance, a group that includes Microsoft, initially supported SOPA before reversing its position as the backlash to the proposal intensified.

Online infringements in the U.S. are currently covered by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which requires the content owner to police sites for violation and then send requests to take down the material. Websites are required to respond promptly.

Google says it now responds to requests within 11 hours, despite a rising volume of complaints. Google sometimes receives more than 250,000 removal requests in a week, exceeding the total number sent to the company during the entire year of 2009. In the past month alone, Google received 1.2 million removal requests on behalf of 1,000 copyright owners who believe their content was being infringed upon at nearly 23,000 different websites, according to a Thursday blog post by Fred von Lohmann, the company's senior copyright lawyer.

In an interview Thursday, von Lohmann attributed the rising volume of complaints to more sophisticated tracking technology that has enabled copyright owners to pinpoint violations more quickly than in the past.

The websites most frequently targeted in the copyright complaints sent to Google were filestube.com (nearly 390,000 links requested for removal), torrentz.eu (more than 147,000 links) and 4shared.com (more than 132,000 links).

Google's new report doesn't include copyright removal requests sent to its popular video site, YouTube, or its Blogger service. But Google's search engine receives the most copyright complaints, accounting for about 60 percent of the 5.4 million removal requests the company processed last year, von Lohmann said.

## **Summary Box: Google opens window on online piracy**

**ONLINE PIRACY INSIGHTS:** Google has released data detailing the volume of complaints that the company's search engine has received about websites hosting content that violates copyrights.

**BIGGEST TARGETS:** There have been more than 2.5 million complaints sent to Google Inc. about websites believed to be infringing on Microsoft Corp.'s copyrights since July 2011, according to the report released Thursday. That's far more than any of the entertainment companies fighting for tougher laws against online piracy.

**BIGGEST OFFENDERS:** The websites spurring the most complaints logged by Google are: filestube.com (nearly 390,000 links requested for removal) and torrentz.eu (more than 147,000 links).

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