

file 4/6/84

INDUSTRY TO COUNTERATTACK

SOFTWARE PIRATES

Pirates are loose in the computer software industry, and it's costing software publishers and consumers billions of dollars.

"It's a serious problem now and could affect the future of our industry," said David Cole, president of Ashton-Tate and head of the Microcomputer Software Association (MCSA).

Cole said retail sales in the United States for software in 1983 reached a record \$2.1 billion, but industry sources estimate between two and 10 unauthorized copies are made for every software package sold, adding up to potential losses of billions of dollars to software publishers.

Pirates can be grouped into two main categories, says Cole. First are the professional pirates who copy programs and sell them for profit. Second are the everyday computer users, at home or at work, who make copies for friends and co-workers.

"The everyday user is our biggest problem," Cole said. "It's so easy to do and most people don't know they are committing a crime when they copy a software program for a friend or co-worker."

According to Cole, software programs are covered by existing copyright laws. When someone is "sold" a software package, he is actually buying a license agreement which states that making copies for someone else is illegal.

Cole says the consumer is hurt most by software piracy.

"Piracy drives up the cost of software to the consumer," Cole said. "Additionally, pirated software is an inferior product because it doesn't receive the service, support and documentation that comes with the license agreement."

Under the direction of Cole and other industry leaders, a four-pronged attack is being launched against software pirates.

"We have a need for a concerted effort in four areas: education, visible enforcement, technical protection and government activity," Cole said.

Already, software publishers have created the Software Protection Fund to research the scope of the problem and develop educational and enforcement programs. At their charter meeting at the Softcon trade show last February more than 60 major software companies attended, pledging over \$500,000 to the organization.

Additionally, the MCSA will focus on assisting the industry in the development of technological protection for software and seeking government support in the areas of enforcement and legislation.

"Our current situation is similar to storing a product in an open warehouse," Cole said. "People are just walking in and taking our programs. It is now time for the industry to put a lock on the warehouse door."

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