

A free culture is one in which content flows freely without undue restriction across the marketplace of ideas. I am not a dot communist. I am not advocating anarchy or endorsing theft. I think it is just and fair to pay for an MP3, or an ebook, or a movie, or a piece of software. Particularly if you are supporting a particular musician or writer or filmmaker, etc., that you admire. But once you purchase that chunk of media, it should be *yours*. No musician, writer, or corporation should be able to hang on to the content I paid for. That's what DRM does. It controls what *you* do with what *you* pay for. If I buy a copy of *The Secret*, I am then free to read it, give it away, resell it, or use it as kindling. That's my right. Why is an ebook or an MP3 any different?

Because, say the content providers, ebooks and MP3s can be copied infinitely, perfectly, on the web. Yes, they can. That's the nature of the beast. Things change, move forward, progress. No doubt the monks who spent years hand-copying Bibles in their monasteries ranted piously about Mr. Gutenberg's invention. History wasn't on the side of the monks, and it's not on the side of today's adherents to outmoded, outmaneuvered, and outdone institutions, er, corporations. If you listen closely, that's the collapse of a thousand business models you can hear in the distance.

Things are simply going to have to get done in different ways. How? Who knows? Not my department, as they say. But they will. Someone, many someones, will (continue to) capitalize on the opportunities. But you can't lock up a free culture.

-- Court Merrigan