

I applaud the FTC for having this open discussion on the use of DRM. This is something that I feel very passionate about.

My first experience with DRM was as a college student in 1992. When I was living in a dorm room my freshman year, many of my dorm mates had computers, and all of them had computer games. Very few of these games had been purchased, since everyone was a poor student. Instead they downloaded them from bulletin boards or File Service Protocol. Most games had some sort of DRM. Often a game would randomly prompt for a word on a certain page of the game manual. If you failed to enter the right word, the game would exit. If you had bought the game, you would have the manual, and could answer the question. Software pirates easily managed to bypass this type of security and everyone I knew had unhindered copies of these games. This DRM proved to be very annoying to people who had purchased the game, so often I saw many people use pirate hacks just to not be annoyed by software they bought. It was in college that I discovered my love of computer gaming and my distaste for the annoyance of DRM. It didn't seem to stop anyone from piracy, and just punished me as the consumer.

Skip forward 17 years and I've amassed a computer game collection in the thousands, with every one of them purchased. My collection dates back to early 80's and I still play many of the older games. By now, almost every company that made my old games has either been bought by another company or has gone out of business. There is no support for software this old, but I can usually figure out a way to get my old games to run. The games have changed a lot over the years, sometimes for the better, sometimes not... but DRM has progressively gotten more invasive and restrictive. Online activation, limited installations, hidden services, rootkits, encryption, or some combination of all of these is what I can expect when I install a game today. What was a mild annoyance now can prohibit me from playing a game at all, or at its worst, make my computer unstable and force me to reinstall windows and lose data. If DRM existed like this years ago, what would be the result if I tried to install one of my old games? The companies that made them are long gone, so there would be no way for me to use any kind of online activation. I bought this software, I own it, and yet now I'm being treated like I'm only renting it.

Because of the DRM being imposed on games, I'm forced to either put up with this poor treatment, or not buy the game. I'd be fine with not buying the game and buying other games instead, but Electronic Arts has been acquiring every game development company in existence and all EA games come with this draconian DRM. Because of the monopoly EA has been allowed to build I have no choice as a consumer. I don't feel this is right.

DRM does absolutely nothing to stop software piracy. It didn't stop it in 1992 and it doesn't today in 2009. Every game with DRM has been easily available for download DRM free. A year ago I purchased a game titled Bioshock, and discovered the DRM as I tried to install the game. The online activation failed, and I received no help from the publisher Electronic Arts. This was when I discovered just how bad DRM had become. I tried to return the game to the store, since I couldn't install and play it. The store wouldn't take the game back as I had opened it. Left with a game I had paid \$50 for, that I couldn't activate, I couldn't return, I couldn't resell, and couldn't get help from the publisher from; I was left with

no choice but to go out to the internet and download a hacked version of the game. And this version played fine.

I speak as a victim of EA and DRM. They were the pirates of my money, and I was left with something useless. Where is my justice? What if I could put DRM on the money I paid EA for a game that didn't work? How much do you think they would enjoy that?

The answer is about as much as I enjoy it on their games.

Sincerely,

Damian J Mills

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