



USACM

U.S. Public Policy Committee of the Association for Computing Machinery

### USACM Statement on Digital Rights Management

Future innovations in computing are being shaped by today's policy decisions involving Digital Rights Management (DRM). The challenge to policymakers is particularly complex because technology, law and economics converge when DRM, backed by broad anticircumvention protection, is used to control how digital content is downloaded, printed, passed across a network, or viewed.

As computer scientists and engineers, we are concerned that DRM mandates built into personal computers, operating software, and other digital devices would interfere with many legal, non-infringing uses of digital computing. Such interference threatens the overall security of our nation's information infrastructure, competitiveness of the U.S. IT industry, and continued innovations in software and digital computing. In deliberations over DRM legislative and regulatory proposals, policymakers should consider that:

- a single DRM mandate or standard might be compromised making systems and works more vulnerable to unauthorized circumvention;
- DRM could be used to prevent reverse engineering for the purpose of developing new techniques to protect computer systems and networks against attacks;
- IT products designed for the U.S. market with DRM mandates would likely be inferior in price and performance to others produced elsewhere in the world that do not have similar requirements, reducing the usefulness of IT products for U.S. consumers and threatening overall economic growth; and,
- interjecting government as regulators or gatekeepers of new technologies will politicize the standard-setting process, retard innovation, and could sacrifice our technological advantages and future advances in software and digital computing.

In conclusion, while proponents imply that DRM mandates and further restrictions on computing are necessary in part to "keep honest people honest", please be advised that legislating constraints on the technology developed, purchased, or used by law-abiding citizens has the potential to cause widespread and severe damage to society at large.

About USACM:

USACM is the U.S. Public Policy Committee of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). With 75,000 members, ACM is the leading professional society of computer scientists, educators, and other computer professionals.

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