

NECESSITY OF INVASIVE DRM SYSTEMS

Homework 4

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CMSC 325

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February 17, 2013

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Introduction

Today, most of the companies dealing with digital contents in video game industry, music industry, movie industry, and recently e-book industry are introducing DRM to protect their intellectual properties from abusive copies.

However, there are a lot of users who are opposed to DRM because of loss of usability. For example, users are locked in specific execution environments or hardware devices, and in some PC games, users can play the games only online.

Although this issue might be controversial, DRM is necessary for making game publishers' business a success. In other words, it is crucial to the success of game platforms and their steady service provision.

Necessity of Protection of Digital Contents

Before DRM technology developed to the current level, large numbers of pirated digital contents were generated illegally. Those contents or software were called Warez which are copies of infringed copyrighted works with any copy protection mechanisms removed (Eric Goldman, 2005). To make matters worse, with the advent of file sharing software such as Napster, many of the contents were distributed via file sharing. Such piracy and distribution not only affected the content providers' bottom lines, but also brought the spread of computer viruses. Even though users temporarily enjoy commercial digital contents for free, they finally cannot enjoy the contents any more in case providers cannot continue to provide their service due to the damage from the piracy.

On the other hand, some popular online games such as SimCity which adopted always-online DRM currently seem to receive lots of complaints because the DRM seriously compromises availability and convenience of the game (Tim Cushing, 2013).

However, by such an authentication process, game service providers can strengthen their monitoring system, so that the process will facilitate early detection of game balance breakers who can harm other users by cheating which can be as simplistic as adding ammunition to a gun, or increasing a character's health, or changing the character to a completely different character (Jason Rybka, n.d.). In addition, since the providers who use the DRM easily can get users feedbacks via the network, they will improve the game based on the feedbacks in a short period.

Most Successful Case by Using DRM

Apple's iTunes Store is the most successful case by using DRM. Its own DRM called FairPlay is very user-friendly but surely protects the rights of music labels. The DRM contributes to build the platform which labels securely provide their songs.

As a result, Apple achieved 25 billion song downloads over decade and now offers 26 million songs in 119 countries (Reed Stevenson, 2013).

In 2009, all iTunes music became available as DRM-free, but users still have to pay additional fees to update songs in iTunes Library to DRM-free. Therefore, users who have used iTunes Store may continue to use the store.

Conclusion

DRM is important to build a sustainable game platform; however, to provide what users want is a mission as companies essentially. They should interact with users and consider more user-friendly DRM to improve their service.

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