

# Educator Complexity

PREPARE. COPYRIGHT, COPYWRONG.<sup>1</sup>

*Details* Siri Driscoll is an adult education teacher for the local technical college whose job it is to teach relevant skills and technologies to the area's adult population. Unfortunately, the recent budget cuts undertaken in local towns have compelled the teachers to stretch the budget; they were asked to teach computing without adequate resources.

The only way they could make an impact was to teach the skills that sell, such as word processing and spreadsheet development, using the most current and popular software. However, the licenses for these products were too expensive for their limited budget. Driscoll knew a viable alternative: single-copy versions of decent, though less popular, software packages, some freeware. However using these alone would not prepare their students to have that extra skill<sup>2</sup> which would give them the edge in looking for jobs. Both were needed.

Driscoll disagreed with using only freeware. They believed that they had a moral right - even an obligation - to make multiple copies of the licensed software to distribute to as many educators as might find it useful, whether or not it has been paid for.<sup>3</sup>

No one<sup>4</sup> believes the software developer's claims that unpurchased copying causes them to lose money on potential sales to schools. Besides, by exposing our students to the software, Driscoll reasoned, we're training a large pool of potential future customers. Driscoll saw it as their moral duty to give their students the best possible training with the most up-to-date tools. <sup>5</sup>. Driscoll made enough copies of the licensed software to put it on each computer in the computer lab.

However, there was one teacher, Derek Kamm, that believed the law was the law was the law. It had to be obeyed even if it was unjust. They reported the illegal copying to the software developer.

The software developer's lawyer, Marsha Anderson, took Driscoll to court, citing copyright violation. Driscoll lost, was fined ten years salary, declared bankruptcy, and is now working from home.<sup>6</sup> Kamm was shunned by all the teaching staff, dejected and disillusioned they quit teaching and is now a para-legal.

<sup>1</sup> This case was related to me personally. It is similar to Kalman, E. and Grillo, J., 1996, *Ethical decision making and information technology : an introduction with cases*, p.91-92

Cast	Role
Marsha Anderson	lawyer
Siri Driscoll	Teacher
Derek Kamm	Teacher
Frances Parfit	course administrator

Table 1: E<sub>1</sub> Cast

<sup>2</sup> Being able to evaluate and recommend software.

<sup>3</sup> Even the course administrator, Frances Parfit, turned their head at the practice. Without copied software, the students would not learn the leading-edge software, learn to compare and contrast products, and would stop coming to class. Without training on this particular software their students would be at a disadvantage compared to others who did. Ultimately, Driscoll believed, they would be out of a job.

<sup>4</sup> Probably not even the developers themselves.

<sup>5</sup> To help out, many civic groups donate software (single licence) and hardware. They know the good job Driscoll and other teachers are doing, and know that they couldn't do a proper job without some degree of unpurchased software copying.

<sup>6</sup> Still teaching but now without institutional support.