

COMMENTS & LETTERS

bruns.editor@gmail.com • February 14, 2007

Thoughts on Jobs' thoughts on music



Apple.com / The Internet

MUGWUMP

by Tony von Richter

With the phenomenal success of the various models of the iPod, Apple is the undisputed king of digital music. So when Apple CEO Steve Jobs releases an essay on Digital Rights Management, the industry tends to stand up and listen.

As head of a large corporation you'd think that Jobs would be all for

DRM and its restrictive properties. Well you'd be wrong.

In his essay, Jobs claims that the only reason Apple sells DRM-equipped music is that the record companies require it, and if given the choice, Apple would sell only DRM-free music.

Jobs states that DRM's raison d'être (to prevent piracy) has been wildly ineffective, mostly due to the music industry itself.

While most songs sold online (just under two billion in 2006) contain DRM, over 20 billion songs were sold without DRM on CDs. So if

the music industry itself sells more unlicensed than licensed music, why are they so intent on protecting such a small percentage of their sales?

Could it be that music executives see that the future of music sales is online and that they want to get their copy protection schemes in on the ground floor? Or is it just another case of top executives stuck in the past, not understanding the way the world is changing?

If forced to choose, I'd guess that is was more of the latter than the former.

Although DRM is here right now,

will it be around in the coming years? Jobs sees three possibilities for the future: one without DRM, one continuing on the current course, and one where a single DRM scheme is licensed to many stores, so that the same song could be played on an iPod, a Zune or any other player that licensed the DRM technology.

So with these possible futures, is Jobs right and DRM-free music the way to go? Or could Steve Jobs be wrong? (Oh -- that sound you just heard was thousands of Apple fanboys fainting at the thought of their prophet making a mistake.)

Well, worry not Apple fans: Jobs isn't necessarily wrong. DRM-free music should be the way the industry moves. However, convincing the recording companies that it's the best way to go will take a Herculean effort from retailers.

Unless governments step in and do something about DRM-free music, the music industry is unlikely to change its practices unless someone like Apple states that they will only sell open music.

Of course the odds of Apple or another company making such a bold stand range from slim to none since they also have shareholders to consider, who might not want to take such a serious risk.

Although it seems obvious that music, and later all media, will become DRM-free, it'll probably take a few years for that to be the case, unless Jobs and Apple force some kind of change.

No water at this fountain

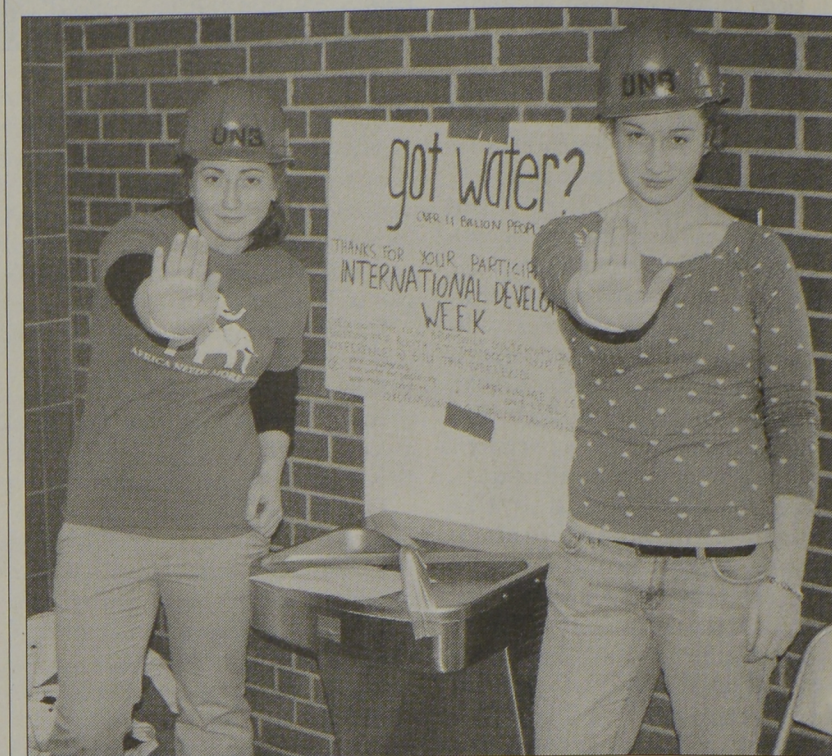
by Jennifer McKenzie

Head Hall was not the place to go for a drink of water last Wednesday afternoon. Concerned Engineering students staged an event to draw attention to the situation of those living in the Third World.

Starting at 1:30, they stationed themselves at the water fountains in Head Hall and turned away students looking to get a drink. The volunteers

then explained to people why they can't use the fountain, where they can go to get water (the fifth floor), and where they can go to find out more about access-to-water issues in developing nations.

The events organizer, Anita Naidu, explained her reasons for getting the 33 volunteers involved and for staging the event: "The exercise was to create a smaller scale version of the daily lives of third world denizens and the encourage conservation of water."



Jonathan Hudon / The Brunswickian

Rage against uncaring profs

GRINDS MY GEARS

by Courtenay Courrier

Once again, a beastly bug is circulating in Fredericton. I happened to be one of the many unfortunate victims and was doctor-ordered home for a week of recovery. Naturally, I emailed my professors before I left for said R&R to tell them about my current situation, when I would be back, and to ask if they could inform me of anything I needed to know -- because falling a solid week behind sucks. Then I headed off, feeling somewhat better, just knowing things were taken care of.

Upon my return, I was nearly recovered and ready to dive into school

once again. Some of my professors were sympathetic to my situation, and thus allowed me extensions on assignments. Things were good again. However, when I emailed one professor about an assignment that we have due in two weeks -- as I thought I may have missed his explanation of it while I was out -- I got the simple reply that yes, he did go over the assignment while I was out, but no, he does not feel like going over it again, and that I will simply have to find out about it elsewhere.

Needless to say, I was angry. Especially since I don't know anyone else in the class. But I decided to just ignore it for the time being and get ready to head off for my night class. Figuring I would feel better once I got there since I could direct my attention elsewhere, I went in and waited for class to begin. However, I was the only one there. It seems this professor -- whom I have other classes

with and have talked to, even about that particular class that evening -- just didn't tell me that the class was cancelled. It might have been simple forgetfulness, but, nevertheless, I was enraged by that point.

The centre of my frustration is that these professors simply can't seem to be bothered with me. I wondered if maybe it's because there are too many people (and I know a lot) who pretend to be sick to get out of tests and assignments. I figured my doctor's note would have proven otherwise.

While I have heard of "worse" professors than these two, this is my personal experience and it's more than enough to make anyone angry. With so many people out sick, how many others are suffering because their professor just doesn't believe them?

Sadly, it's not just illness that can make professors seem uncaring. Some professors abuse their positions, using

arrogance to prove themselves superior. Some test us on minor details, having little to do with the particular subject, creating opportunity to walk away with good grades and without actually learning anything.

Of course, not all professors act this way. I have had many profs who have been amazing influences and many profs who I have learned a lot from. But for those obvious few who seem to care so little for our academic achievement, those who care about nothing more than a paycheck, those who I've seen not only ruin transcripts but ruin people, they need to be dealt with. We don't accept mistreatment in other situations, why are we willing to pay thousands of dollars a year for it? And if professors ask so much of us, shouldn't we really ask more of them? It's time to learn that students are here for a reason, and the least a professor could do is meet us half way.

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