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CS 162
Fall 1988

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Mini-Sermon #3: Information as Property?

- Lots of recent attention given to computer break-ins, such as the 414 Club in Milwaukee, Chaos Computer Club in West Germany.

- Typical reactions:
  - It's funny. Those kids sure did make those adults look dumb.
  - It's just part of growing up. Leave 'em alone, they'll grow out of it (every kid should be allowed to transfer 3 billion dollars out of B of A on his way through puberty).
  - It's a sign of brilliance.
  - They didn't hurt anything, they were just looking around.
  - People didn't protect their accounts properly, so they deserved what they got.

- Describe Yale cheating case, which was thrown out because only copied, didnt' steal, and because prof ''didn't adequately protect'' stuff.

- Why is information different from other property?
  - Is it OK for someone to enter your house if you leave a window open, and rummage through all your personal belongings, as long as they put everything back where they found it?
  - Is it OK for someone to hot-wire your car and take it for a joy-

ride, as long as they fill the gas tank when they return it?
    - Is it OK to break into a bank vault and examine contents of all safety-deposit boxes, as long as nothing is stolen?
    - If that's OK, then what if only .01% is stolen? Is that OK too? Where is the line to be drawn?

- Information is property, and must be protected as such. Need to do three things:
    - Make systems more secure.
    - Change societal attitudes. This isn't funny anymore.
    - Establish laws to protect information in a reasonable way.

- Copyright and patent laws have enhanced free flow of information by providing protection. Without laws, everyone must resort to secrecy, paranoia ensues.

- Until recently, computer stuff fell in between copyrights and patents. However, computer programs are now copyrightable, and so are mask designs.

- Legal definition of program: ‘‘A set of statements or instructions used directly or indirectly in a computer to bring about a certain result.’’

- Recent example: NEC microcode copyright case.