WHAT IS P2P?

P2P refers to "peer to peer" file sharing networking. The term refers to a decentralized computing network in which users exchange files directly with other users.
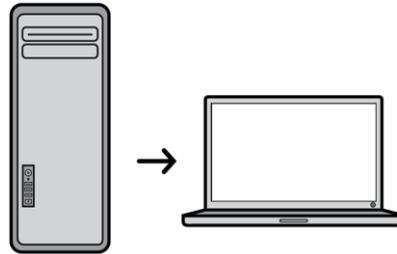
WHAT IS ILLEGAL P2P?

Although there are many legitimate uses of P2P technology, P2P has become associated with the illegal sharing of copyrighted materials - especially music, movies, videos and software - because P2P programs make it so easy to find and download content.

WHAT IS A P2P NETWORK?

P2P networks operate with the understanding that participants share in providing and maintaining the resources of the network. In exchange for being able to download files from the network, you are expected to make files available to other participants of the network.
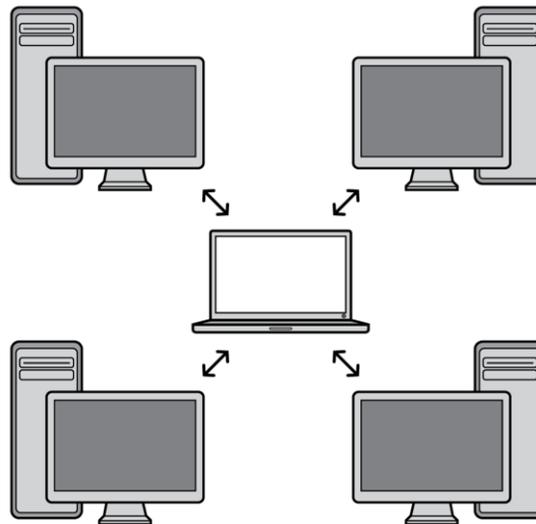
In a P2P networking structure, your computer may act as a server, providing content to the computers of other members.

Client-server model

In a client-server model, your computer receives files from a single, centralized server, such as the ITunes store.

p2p model

In the p2p model, your computer shares files by connecting to many computers on the Internet.

HOW DOES P2P WORK?

There can be significant differences in how P2P networks function and as with most technologies it is constantly evolving.

P2P applications allow you to search for, download and upload files through a desktop program instead of a web browser. In general, you begin by downloading a client, or program, for a particular P2P network. By installing the client, you agree to the terms of use of the network and designate a default sharing folder on your computer for use by the P2P program.

DOWNLOADING FILES

When you request a file through a P2P network, the file you have requested may be downloaded from any computer or computers in the network. A single song or movie may come from several different computers that just send parts, or packets, of the file from computers in different locations, which are then reassembled on your computer.

UPLOADING FILES

Because of the downloaded sharing folder, P2P programs allow the network to access and distribute files from your computer. You can violate copyright law not only from downloading materials but also from allowing other network users to download files from your computer, even if you obtained them legally. You have to pay attention to the default settings of the P2P network so you do not inadvertently share copyrighted files.

RISKS OF P2P SHARING

Like opening a file in your email from someone you do not know, downloading files from unknown computers in the P2P network can be risky. By accepting files from these unknown computers you can expose your computer to malicious computer viruses. By opening your computer to the P2P network it is possible a file could circumvent your firewall or other protection.

The RIAA and the MPAA are looking to find people that are breaking copyright law on P2P networks. One way they can accomplish this is by uploading content to the P2P network in order to identify users that are illegally downloading copyrighted materials. These organizations can also use the network to identify users who are making files available to upload.

COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT ON P2P NETWORKS

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) have sent out copyright infringement notices to students who have illegally exchanged copyright protected files like music or movies through peer-to-peer networks.

Some cases have resulted in lawsuits. Students who have illegally downloaded music or movie files can pay anywhere from $750 to $30,000 for each download. Many cases that are settled out of court are settled at a cost between $3000 to $5000 or more for an initial offense. In some cases people have legitimately purchased songs or movies but have broken the law by transferring them to a peer-to-peer network. Therefore it is important to know what peer-to-peer networks are and how they work.

For more information on college policies you can find the SJR State Student Handbooks at:

http://www.sjrstate.edu/catalog.html

For information on copyright laws you can find out more at:

http://libraries.sjrstate.edu/copyright

Questions?

Contact Andrew Macfarlane, SJR State Copyright Officer, for any copyright concerns at:

andrewmacfarlane@sjrstate.edu

Illegal Downloading & P2P

How much do you really know about P2P?