

## **Unauthorized Distribution of Copyrighted Materials**

The unauthorized copying and distributing of copyrighted materials, including, but not limited to peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, is a violation of United States copyright law and may result in civil and criminal liability and prosecution.

Copyright infringement is the act of exercising, without permission or legal authority, one or more of the exclusive rights granted to the copyright owner under section 106 of the Copyright Act (Title 17 of the United States Code). These rights include the right to reproduce or distribute a copyrighted work. In the file-sharing context, downloading or uploading substantial parts of a copyrighted work without authority constitutes an infringement.

Penalties for copyright infringement include civil and criminal penalties. In general, anyone found liable for civil copyright infringement may be ordered to pay either actual damages or "statutory" damages affixed at not less than \$750 and not more than \$30,000 per work infringed. A court can, in its discretion, also assess costs and attorney's fees. For details, see Title 17, United States Code, Section 504 and 505.

Willful copyright infringement can also result in criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to five years and fines of up to \$250,000 per offense. For more information, please see the website for the [U.S. Copyright Office](#) and their [Frequently Asked Questions](#). West Georgia Technical College Library provides resources for students and faculty to prevent a violation of copyright.

Technical College System of Georgia Policy II.C.4 prohibits the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted materials via systems or networks owned by the Technical College System of Georgia and its affiliate technical colleges. Maximum penalties under Georgia law are a \$50,000 fine and 15 years of imprisonment plus civil liability in addition to the potential federal penalties described above.