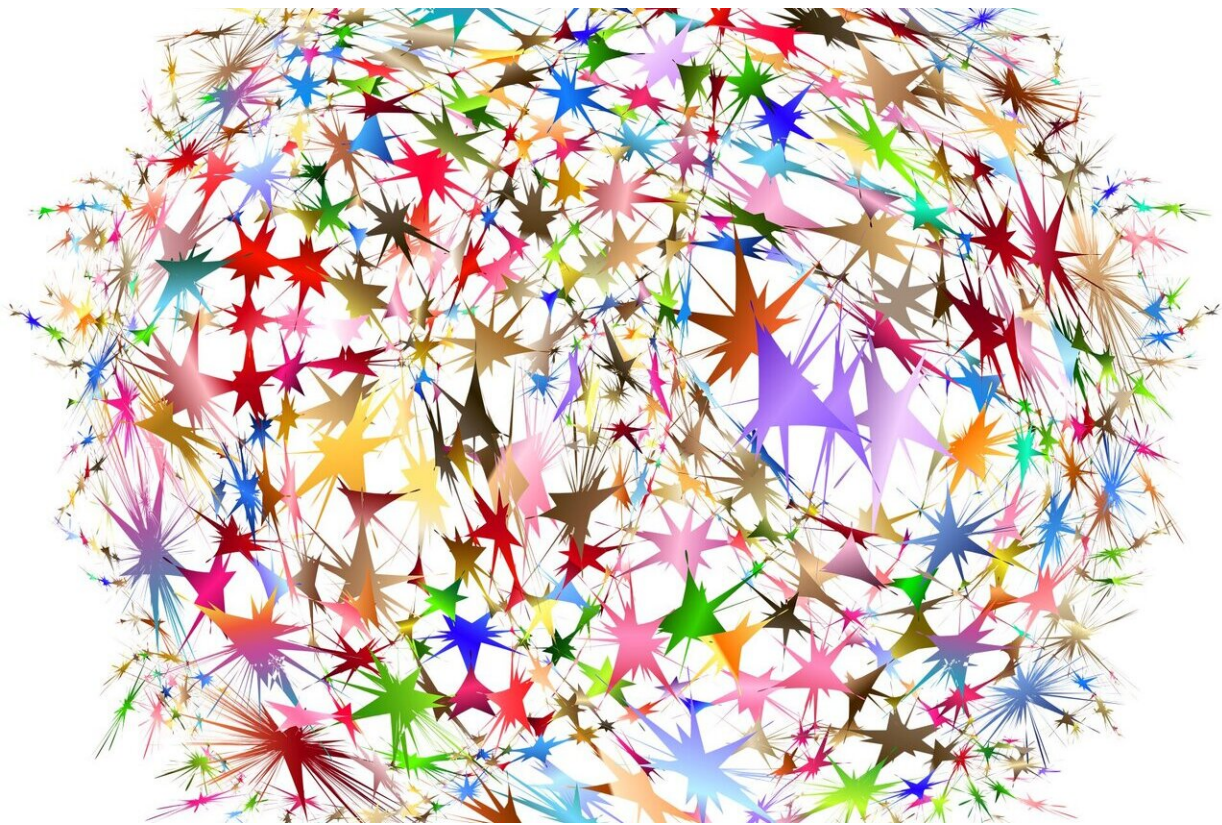


Microsoft says it will protect customers from AI copyright lawsuits

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Microsoft Corp. says it will defend buyers of its artificial intelligence products from copyright infringement lawsuits, an effort by the software giant to ease concerns customers might have about using its AI

"Copilots" to generate content based on existing work.

The Microsoft Copilot Copyright Commitment will protect customers as long as they've "used the guardrails and content filters we have built into our products" Hossein Nowbar, [general counsel](#), corporate legal affairs and corporate secretary at Microsoft, said in a blog post Thursday. Microsoft also pledged to pay related fines or settlements and said it has taken steps to ensure its Copilots respect copyright.

"We believe in standing behind our customers when they use our products," Nowbar said. "We are charging our commercial customers for our Copilots, and if their use creates [legal issues](#), we should make this our problem rather than our customers' problem."

Generative AI applications scoop up existing content such as art, articles and programming code and use it to generate new material that can simplify or automate a range of tasks. Microsoft is baking the technology, developed with partner OpenAI Inc., into many of its biggest products, including Office and Windows, potentially putting customers in legal jeopardy.

Artists, writers and [software developers](#) are already filing [lawsuits](#) or raising objections about their creations being used without their consent. In one complaint, lawyer and computer programmer Matthew Butterick accused Microsoft's GitHub partner of allegedly violating open-source software development licenses. A group of anonymous individuals seeking class action status also has filed suit against OpenAI and Microsoft, claiming they're stealing "vast amounts" of [personal information](#) to train AI models in a heedless hunt for profits.

News organizations are mulling their own complaints, comedian Sarah Silverman has filed suit against OpenAI and Meta Platforms Inc., and artists are suing AI image generators Stability AI and Midjourney in a

San Francisco court, although the judge has expressed skepticism about aspects of the case.

Generative AI could raise novel questions about the fair use of copyrighted materials, a legal defense that allows the use of content in certain cases. Fair-use doctrine itself has been further complicated by a May Supreme Court ruling in favor of a photographer who accused the Andy Warhol estate of improperly using her work to create 16 images of the late musician Prince.

It's not the first time Microsoft has deployed a legal shield to keep customers loyal. In the 2000s, the company offered indemnification to partners and later customers using or reselling its software, a bid to differentiate Microsoft from Linux and other open-source software makers. In 2017, Microsoft, by then a seller of open-source software itself, offered to protect customers of its Azure cloud products from legal claims.

The company in June announced a program to help customers ensure the AI programs they run on Microsoft platforms meet global laws and regulations. Earlier this year, Adobe Inc. also offered subscribers of its AI tools legal protection against copyright infringement.

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