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# Search engines urged to fight copyright abuse

## SOFTWARE

By Maija Palmer in London

Search engines such as Google must do more to help the fight against copyright abuse on the internet, according to a report to be published today by an influential European think-tank.

The Stockholm Network, a London-based institute spe-

cialising in intellectual property issues, argues that internet mediators, such as search engines, news aggregation sites and music download services, now have such great influence on consumers' internet usage, that they need to take responsibility in policing illegal material.

Current copyright legislation, such as the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998, largely exempts search engines and internet directories from liability if they link to pirated material.

"The concept is that they have no responsibility or liability for protecting intellectual property. That may have been true 10 years ago, but today their huge influence means the balance has shifted," said Meir Pugatch, director of research at the Stockholm Network.

"You cannot expect content producers to police the internet without asking internet mediators to share the burden."

More than 750m people aged 15 and older – or 95 per cent of the worldwide internet audience – use a search engine each month, conducting an average of 80 online searches each, according to figures from ComScore, the internet research company.

Mr Pugatch argued that if search engines blocked links to sites containing illegal material, it would dramatically cut piracy.

"Search engines should not link to websites that sell counterfeit medicines or peer-to-peer filesharing sites where 90 per cent of the business is illegal downloads," he said.

The report comes just days after Google announced the release of a video-fingerprinting system to detect copyrighted material on its YouTube video-sharing website.