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RIAA steps up bid to force BC, MIT to name students

By James Collins, Globe Correspondent, 8/8/2003

The Recording Industry Association of America this week asked judges in both Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., to order the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston College to release the names of students who are accused of sharing copyrighted music files over the Internet.

The schools have refused to comply with subpoenas that the organization issued last month to obtain the information. Jonathan Lamy, a spokesman for the industry group, did not say when the organization would begin filing lawsuits based on the information it is seeking, but the organization previously threatened to begin suing illegal music sharers this month. Under federal copyright law, the group could seek penalties of up to \$150,000 for each illegally shared song.

The industry group has filed at least 900 similar subpoenas against other schools and Internet service providers to determine the identities of computer users it accuses of music piracy. The recording industry group's lawyers argued in a countermotion this week that the schools' objections do not invalidate the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, the law under which the subpoenas were issued. A hearing has not been scheduled in either case.

Meanwhile, this week officials at MIT determined that a student accused of sharing hundreds of copyrighted music files there lives in the school's Theta Delta Chi fraternity house. James Bruce, the school's vice president for information services, said the school notified the student, but is not releasing his name to the public or to the industry association.

Columbia University, which also received at least one subpoena from the organization, has filed a similar objection in court in New York. Officials at Columbia could not be reached for comment last night.

Comcast Corp., which received at least 100 subpoenas, has complied fully with the organization, but Pacific Bell Internet Services, a unit of SBC Communications Inc., has challenged the crackdown in court. Verizon Communications Corp., which received about 150 requests from the organization, has also challenged the legality of the subpoenas, but the company is releasing the information because it says it has no choice.

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