

# Fighting Online IP Crime

28<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Intellectual property (IP) crime (piracy) is a massive challenge not just for publishers, but for all economies which depend on their creative industries. It hurts publishers' revenues, authors' incomes, employees' jobs and governments' tax revenues.



A generation of consumers has grown up with peer-to-peer websites and the ability to find, share and download free, illegal copies of songs, movies, TV shows and e-books. In an environment where electronic files can be created and widely spread within short time periods, protecting copyright, enforcing the rule of law and punishing pirates are all highly difficult.

In the United Kingdom, the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU), run by the City of London Police was launched in September 2013 to tackle online IP crime, with funding from the Intellectual Property Office (IPO), part of the government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The IPA spoke to Detective Chief Inspector **Andy Fyfe**, Head of PIPCU, about the unit's work.

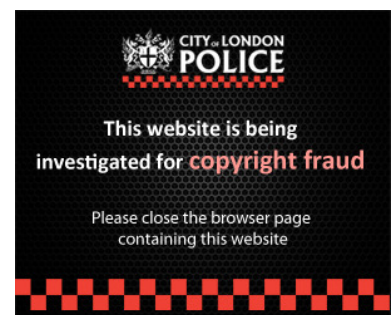
## **IPA: When PIPCU was created, what was the thinking behind it?**

**Andy Fyfe:** There was a growing recognition of the threat posed by online IP crime, and of the need both for a centralised response and for a dedicated police unit to lead it.

City of London Police already had experience in coordinating responses to fraud and economic crime so we were put in charge of the new unit, which now has 21 staff in a range of roles (detectives, researchers, analysts, education, communications etc) including two secondees; one from the IPO and one from the music industry.

## **IPA: On a practical level, how does PIPCU operate to tackle online book piracy?**

AF: We work with the UK Publishers Association, providing them with a method to submit complaints about websites which are actively engaged in copyright violation, which is known as Operation Creative. The PA provides PIPCU with a full evidential package, which we check thoroughly and verify whether the site is infringing or not. If the website is deemed as copyright infringing, in the first instance we will engage with the website owner to try and get them to cease and desist from any illegal activity.



As part of Operation Creative, we also look at suspending the domain name by contacting the domain registrar, disrupting advertising with our Infringing Website List (IWL) also replacing advertising on illegal sites, with official police banners that warn the user that the site is illegal and under investigation by City of London Police and to hopefully dissuade them from using it.

The goal is to disrupt pirates' businesses and to cut off their revenues. It's important to note that pirates' funding doesn't come from users paying for files but rather from advertising. It is difficult for advertisers to know whether a site is illegal, which is why PIPCU's IWL is designed to help advertisers avoid advert placement on copyright-infringing websites.

**IPA: Since Operation Creative was launched with the Publishers Association, how many submissions have you received?**

AF: Operation Creative went live in April 2014 and we have already received about 120 referrals from our partners. A lot of work needs to go into investigating and responding to each claim. A particular challenge is that the infringing websites are based all round the world.

**IPA: Given the scale of the problem, how can the international community pull together to combat the threat of online IP crime effectively?**

AF: We've worked hard on developing a model for best practice. Now that we have a workable system, we're trying to sell the concept to law enforcement agencies around the world and are hoping that other countries will adopt similar approaches.

The European Union's Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (**OHIM**) will be hosting a conference on this topic in November and PIPCU has been invited to share our experiences with other countries. Hopefully this will help robust, national approaches to develop across Europe.

More details of PIPCU's work can be found at [www.cityoflondon.police.uk](http://www.cityoflondon.police.uk)

