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SOFTWARE PIRACY TARGETED BY SENATE BILL

BOSTON

■ Hoping to stop a problem before it gets out of hand, Senator Orrin Hatch (R) of Utah has introduced legislation which would prohibit commercial firms from renting or loaning computer programs.

"The overwhelming rationale for renting a computer program is to make an unauthorized copy," Senator Hatch told the Senate Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights, and Trademarks when he introduced similar legislation last year.

He argues that software "cannot be enjoyed for an evening's entertainment and then returned," like a videocassette. Computer programs take more than an evening to learn how to use, he says.

Software is more expensive and easier to copy than record albums, says Mary Jane Saunders, general counsel for the Software Publishers Association, a trade organization.

"If we have a very tight lid on the number of groups that are authorized to lend or rent software, we diminish the opportunities for piracy," she said.

According to some estimates, this illegal copying of software costs the computer industry \$3 billion per year in the United States and \$10 billion worldwide.

While the bill's chief target is commercial software rental, it would also bar some nonprofit organizations from renting or lending software - even internally. This is in direct contrast to the Record Rental Act of 1985, the legislation on which Hatch's bill is based.

But the senator accepted an amendment to the bill which will exempt libraries at nonprofit organizations.

"Almost every academic institution that has a computer lab loans software," says Jean Armour Polly, a member of the technology committee of the Public Library Association, who organized support for the amendment.

- **Simson L. Garfinkel**