The Multiplicity of Copyright Laws on the Internet:
Proposed Solutions, Objections to the Solutions, and the Realities of Cross-Border Copyright Enforcement

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From the early days of the Internet commentators have warned that it would be impossible for those who act on the Internet ("Internet actors") to comply with the copyright laws of all Internet-connected countries if the national copyright laws of all those countries were to apply simultaneously to Internet activity. A multiplicity of applicable copyright laws seems plausible - at least when the Internet activity is ubiquitous, i.e. unrestricted by geoblocking or by other means - given the territoriality principle that governs in international copyright law and either the *lex loci delicti* or *lex loci protectionis* choice-of-law rules that countries typically use for copyright infringements. Commentators have submitted various proposals to eliminate this multiplicity of applicable national copyright laws; the proposals range from creating a single uniform copyright law for the Internet to adopting a choice-of-law approach that would enable courts to apply a single country's law to an infringing act with worldwide effects. This article posits that the multiplicity of applicable national copyright laws on the Internet is not as significant a problem for law-abiding Internet actors as some commentators fear. What makes the multiplicity workable for Internet actors are the realities - or inefficiencies - of cross-border copyright enforcement that de facto limit the number of potentially applicable national copyright laws. This article reviews the solutions that have been proposed to address the multiplicity problem and examines the objections to the proposals that have already been or could be raised. The article then analyzes the current realities of copyright enforcement on the Internet and contrasts the realities with the workings of the proposed solutions.

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