

# Internet censorship

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Name: Course: Tutor: Date: Internet Censorship Introduction The Stop Online Piracy Act, mostly referred to as SOPA, has provoked mass actions, the scrutiny of the big organizations and the public, and the concern of many users who profit from the use of the content, which is at a threat of undergoing censorship. Such large organizations as Google, Wikipedia, Mozilla, Reddit, and Twitpic amongst others threatened to block the access of their sites as a way of demonstrating against this act. Internet censoring refers to the suppression or the control of accessing or publishing the internet information (Carter, 2011). Internet censorship has been a topic dominating the government unit, but it also dominates other users inclusive of the average internet users.

The main debate surrounds whether allowing internet censorship should take place or not. Whilst others, such as the SOPA sponsor Lamar Smith, the Texas representative, strongly emphasize on the internet censorship, other parties, especially the big organizations, emphasize that the bill will ‘kill’ the internet. In this discussion, a discussion of the advantages and the importance of discarding internet censorship in China will take place.

Discussion Censoring the internet will deprive people off their freedom. In China, people advocate for freedom at all levels. Organizations, the government and individuals are constantly emphasizing on the freedom of expression, speech, amongst other kinds of freedoms and rights. The internet allows one to access almost anything.

By the years 2010, statistics showed that 73% of the population in China uses the internet (Nakaya 5). Over two billion two hundred million people use the internet globally. Censoring the internet would deprive all these people

their right to access what they want. During one of the act's hearings, librarians in China explained that the laws contained in the act warrants for their arrest because of doing their job. The big organizations such as Google explained that the laws left them with almost nothing to convey. Although this might have meant that the organizations would loose a lot of revenue, internet censorship still deprives the majority of Chinese users the right to access what they would wish to access. In the current internet access ability, there are barriers that prevent people from accessing all the content, especially the copyrighted content, if the censorship was to be put in place, then information to be accessed would be very limited. The majority of those arguing for internet censorship state that most of the organizations have misused the power of the internet and thus freely made available such materials as books, movies, songs, poems and other materials even though they are copyrighted materials (Bambauer 493).

This further means that the owners of the works fail to get their due compensation of their works. It is true that this is a valid argument. However, these works are mostly available in parts.

For example, books are only available as previews. Art works are available freely online as they are available freely at the local museums. Additionally, the internet should be of help to those with the money as well as those without. Freely availing such important information as the information available in books enables this information to reach as many targeted people as possible.

Furthermore, accessing the internet is not free so one pays for a part of the benefit. The availability of pornographic content online is one of the main reasons that trigger the discussion of internet censorship. Children as young as five can access these pornographic materials as long as they know how to access the internet. A high percentage of the teenagers in China have accessed pornographic content at some point in their lives and the number of adults addicted to pornography has raised the concern in the departments of social affairs and the departments of psychology (Morozov 26). All these are valid concerns. However, it is not yet proved that censoring the internet will solve this problem. The internet is one of the main areas where pornographic content can be accessed but it not the only place. The number of magazines displaying pornographic pictures and information is on the rise.

The rate at which pornography DVDs and CDs are circulating is alarming. Individuals and companies dealing with pornographic materials and content are as many. The authorities can shut down the internet but if they leave these other sources open, the government will have done little about this issue. Children can access these materials as easily as they can access the DVD and the CD players. Adults have a choice to make. Although most of these pornographic content flashes on most of the websites, it is important to know that one makes the choice of clicking on the content. The organizations in support of internet censorship may succeed in censoring the internet but they will have done little to solve the majority of the problems leading to the censoring. In the cases of the adult content, the concerned organizations should design sites that ask for a proof of the user's age before he/she is allowed to view the content.

Asking for the driver's license number, or other document numbers that verify the users age is one way of designing these websites. Such practices may work. Just like the way people have a choice of choosing their sexuality (Lloyd 312), people should watch what they want. Shutting down internet access as far as some of these materials are concerned may not work unless the sources are shut down, which is impractical. Security is always at the forefront. One must appreciate that the internet poses a security threat to both individuals and countries. Terrorist activities, riots, internet fraud amongst other forms of insecurities have taken great advantage of the internet.

Such social sites as Facebook, Twitter, messages posing as advertisements and other easily accessible sites have served as a means of passing terror information, or rioting messages as what happened in Britain in the year 2011. Although censoring the internet may close one way of passing this kind of information, there is no evidence showing that the public will be protected if censoring takes place. In the 9/11 attack, the internet may have served as a means of making the attack possible, but it was not the only way used. The attack may have still taken place were the internet not available (Zuchora-Walske 50). Censoring the internet is not practical.

As earlier mentioned the actions involved in internet censorship are as extreme as closing down some of the sites. This means the censorship may discontinue the availability of book previews, movies, songs, just to mention but a few. This further interprets that some reasons leading to the internet demand, stand elimination. Censoring the internet may create more

problems than bring a solution. A server may not control all the illegal information going through it (Nunziato 1140).

However, other adjustments are necessary in order to restrict the availability of information. Cooperating with the writers of the books, the film producers, the singers, the poets and the playwrights so that they are compensated for the content display is a more practical solution than shutting down the sites. It is important to remember that unlike the traditional media such as the magazines, the games and the films, which are tangible, the content in the internet is intangible. This means that the films should go through particular authorities before releasing them and the books pass through the publishers before publishing them. The content viewed through the televisions and other media sources goes through censorship before airing it. However, some internet information comes from unknown organizations. Additionally, the internet traffic is quite heavy that detecting all the information is quite cumbersome and almost impossible.

These are other reasons making internet censorship impractical. The internet is one of the main means as far as marketing is concerned. Film and play producers have used the internet to advertise upcoming movies and plays, and authors have used the same to advertise books they have written. It is through previewing a particular book or a given movie that one gains the interest of watching the whole movie. Additionally, big movie productions, books and songs have grossed large profits due to the internet advertising (Burns 65). Furthermore, the movies watched freely online are not available until they have reached the theatres. It is important to note that piracy is

another problem that is threatening some of these organizations in support of internet censorship.

Other forms of piracy have taken place and thus stopping the internet piracy will only have solved a section of the problem. The IWF (Internet Watch Foundation) eliminates over 5, 800 items annually (Zuchora-Walske 55). This is the organization in charge of censoring the internet, which means that internet censorship has been taking place for approximately five years if the content available on the internet today has already been censored to some level, then it means completely censoring the internet will be impossible. People, organizations have the right to access information. Censoring would only limit people's freedom and not solve the problem already in existence. Conclusion Censoring the internet in China is not the solution and it is only full of disadvantages rather than the anticipated advantages. It is important to view those against internet censorship as people who are concerned about the repercussion of this action, rather than viewing them as people in support of immorality and the insecurities that come with the internet. There are other measures, which do not engage limiting the Chinese users' freedom.

Although some companies benefit from some of these illegal materials, other ways of measuring this content should be innovated. The government, amongst other organizations may censor the internet; by they might not stop immorality and insecurity activities from taking place. The politicians cannot speak about democracy and freedom on one end and then do activities against the same on the other end.

People should express themselves whether it is in writing, in speech or in actions. The main solution should be to such for the cause of the problems but not dealing with the consequences or the results of the causes. Works Cited Bambauer, Derek E. " Filtering in Oz: Australia's Foray into Internet Censorship." University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Economic Law. 31.

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