

CSE/ISE 312

Freedom of Speech (Part 3)

The Global Net: Censorship and Political Freedom

The Global Impact of Censorship

- Global nature of the Internet protects against censorship (banned in one country, move to another)
- Also considered a tool for increased political freedom
- The Net also makes it easier for one nation to impose restrictive standards on others
- May impose more restrictive censorship (block everything in an attempt to block one thing)

Tools for Oppression

Censorship in Other Nations:

- Attempts to limit the flow of information on the Internet similar to earlier attempts to place limits on other communications media
- Some countries own the Internet backbone within their countries, block at the border specific sites and content
- Some countries ban all or certain types of access to the Internet

Aiding Foreign Censors

- Companies who do business in countries that control Internet access must comply with the local laws
- What are trade-offs between providing services to the people and complying with the government's censorship requirements

Examples

- Google initially refused to censor, reversal in 2006 with google.cn, withdrew in 2010, now increased operations that are not subject to censorship
 - Google once argued that some access is better than no access

Selling Surveillance Tools

- Repressive governments intercept citizen's communications and filter Internet content
- Companies in Western democracies sell tools to filter, block, hack, collect and analyze, monitor and track
 - The companies say the tools are for criminal investigations and do not violate the local laws

Shutting Down Communications in Free Countries

- Combating coordinated violence or disruptive activities using mobile devices and Internet
 - to communicate about the location and number of police
- US and British cities considered laws to authorize the government agencies to shut down, block communications

Net Neutrality Regulations or the Market?

- *Common carriers* were prohibited from providing own content, and from discrimination based on content or source, called line-sharing (open-access) requirements
- It was argued that line-sharing/inflexible prices reduced incentive for investment to improve broadband capacity and innovation
 - FCC eliminated line-sharing requirements (2003-2005)
- Net Neutrality refers to a variety of proposals for restrictions on how telephone and cable companies interact with their broadband customers and set fees for services

Net Neutrality or De-regulation? (cont.)

- Should companies be permitted to exclude or give special treatment to content transmitted based on the content itself or on the company that provides it?
- Should companies be permitted to provide different levels of speed at different prices?
- Net Neutrality
 - Argue for equal treatment of all customers
- De-regulation
 - Flexibility and market incentives will benefit customers

Net Neutrality Issues

- “A **neutral broadband network** is one that is free of restrictions on content, sites, or platforms, on the kinds of equipment that may be attached, and on the modes of communication allowed” – Wikipedia
- Large content providers (e.g., eBay, Google, Amazon) are at risk to pay higher rates
- Special treatment based on content or content providers?
- Levels of Internet service at different price levels

Net Neutrality

Pros

- Equal treatment of all customers, content
- Not enough competition among network providers to ensure fairness
- Consistent with other common carrier practices

Cons

- Flexibility and market incentives will benefit customers
- Companies should be permitted to provide different levels of speed at different prices
- Companies should be permitted to exclude or give special treatment to certain content

FCC Net Neutrality Order (2010)

- **Transparency.** Fixed and mobile broadband providers must disclose the network management practices, performance characteristics, terms and conditions of their broadband services
- **No blocking.** Fixed broadband providers may not block lawful content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices; mobile broadband providers may not block lawful websites, or block applications that compete with their voice or video phone services
- **No unreasonable discrimination.** Fixed broadband providers may not unreasonably discriminate in transmitting lawful network traffic
- Court challenges still on-going