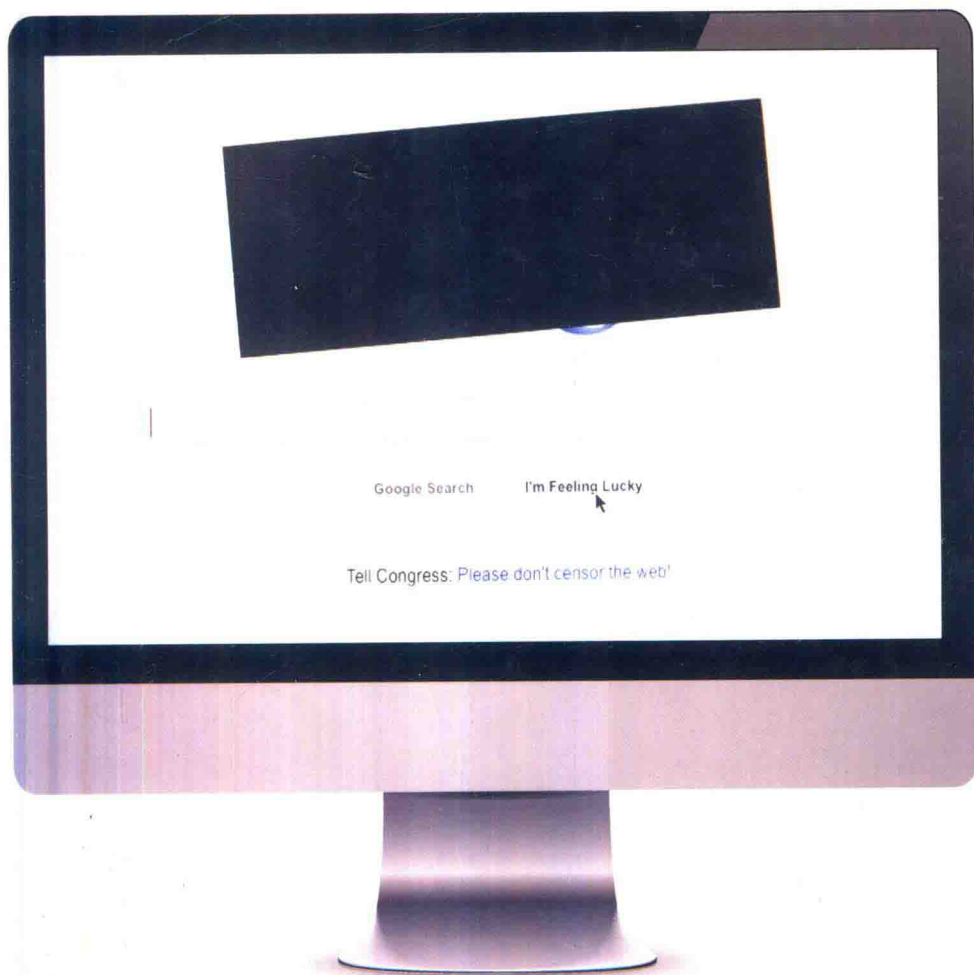


CONTEMPORARY WORLD ISSUES

Science, Technology, and Medicine

Internet Censorship

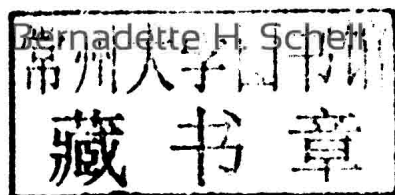
► Bernadette H. Schell



CONTEMPORARY WORLD ISSUES

Internet Censorship

A REFERENCE HANDBOOK



Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

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Preface

This book takes a novel approach to the presentation and understanding of a controversial topic in society: Internet censorship. When mainstream society heard about the Internet in the earlier stages of its development, there was much jubilation, because this “Information Superhighway” was supposedly created to help citizens around the world to have fast access to nearly an endless amount of information—without leaving their homes and just by clicking the mouse on their computers.

However, in recent times, there has been growing concern expressed by individuals in the online global society about Internet censorship—whereby governments are increasingly trying to control citizens’ online activities, restrict the free flow of information, and infringe on the rights of online users. Stated simply, the battle over maintaining Internet freedom is heating up. Moreover, the methods used to control Internet content by governments are also becoming increasingly sophisticated. At a time when about a third of the world’s people are actively engaged online, tactics previously employed by extremely repressive regimes are now being employed by governments once considered to be more open and supportive of Internet freedom. Some of these tactics involve causing premeditated connection disruptions or paying professional commentators to consciously manipulate online discussions.

There is little doubt that most countries restrict access to content on the Internet at some basic level, such as restricting access to Web pages with offensive content or preventing children from viewing content that could result in psychological

or physical harm. According to Reporters Without Borders, an organization formed to promote free expression and the global safety of journalists who are committed to freedom of information, some countries such as Belarus, China, Cuba, Egypt, and Iran have very strong censorship policies, while other countries like the United States and Estonia are quite open to the concept of freedom of information.

This book explores the various levels of Internet censorship, from the usage of Web filters to national policies or laws aimed at preventing the flow of information. Also, two sides of the controversy over Internet censorship are explored in depth. First, there are those who believe that some amount or considerable amounts of censorship are acceptable. Second, there are those who believe in and actively play the role of information freedom fighter—with some being more credible in society's eyes than others.

This book has seven chapters, containing the following points of interest. Chapter 1 provides basic background and history on what is meant by Internet censorship, broadly speaking. The chapter opens with an interesting discussion on censorship versus national security—and why there will never be total freedom of the press or a total lack of press and Internet censorship. The discussion then moves to the controversies around adequate information release by governments versus Internet censorship, with a focus on the present-day headline-making cases of WikiLeaks, Private Manning, and Edward Snowden. The main differences between the Internet and intranets are then described. The remainder of the chapter details the growth of the Internet in the United States—from its rather humble beginning to its rapid growth in the 1990s and beyond. The chapter closes with present-day concerns about Internet censorship.

Chapter 2 outlines the unique problems, controversies, and solutions regarding information freedom fighters and Internet censorship. The chapter opens with a quote from Reporters Without Borders regarding the important point that freedom

of information is the foundation of any democracy, yet almost half of the world's population is still denied it. The discussion then moves to a more fulsome exploration of the countries generally having strong censorship laws and policies—and why they can justify doing so—compared to those countries advocating for a more open system of information sharing and disclosure, such as the United States and Estonia. Next, the discussion covers the important concept of cultural and legal jurisdictional factors influencing the digital divide, with a particular emphasis on criminal liability on the coincidence of four key elements. The chapter closes with a review of global trends in Internet censorship, with a summary of expert opinions on the factors that may be involved in the next phase of the Internet's evolution in terms of equalizing rather than emphasizing a universal digital divide.

Chapter 3 continues on this expert opinion discussion on Internet freedom and censorship, with views expressed by experts in the fields of criminology, political science, philosophy, and psychology.

Chapter 4 provides sketches on contributors to both the Internet freedom fighters and the Internet censorship sides of the debate. Concepts covered include the hacker cell Anonymous, WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange, the hearing and sentencing of U.S. private Bradley (a.k.a. Chelsea) Manning, and the activities of controversial whistleblower Edward Snowden. Also included are proponents of the freedom of speech in its many forms, including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Freedom House, the OpenNet Initiative, Reporters Without Borders, and The Censorware Project.

Chapter 5 provides a series of annotated tables, graphs, charts, and figures regarding the trends in types of Internet censoring that have occurred in the recent past and the present. There is also a discussion of the geographical differences in trends, such as those found in the United States, as compared

to those in China and Iran. Special topics in this chapter include an overview of Internet usage and penetration rates by region, a closer look at the *Freedom on the Net 2012* findings, tactics used by the highly censoring countries, and special forms of legislation passed in the United States and elsewhere for dealing with emerging trends in the Internet's evolution as they relate to critical privacy, security, trust, and censorship issues.

Chapter 6 provides an annotated bibliography of print and nonprint resources for further research, including books dealing with information freedom and censorship and the Internet's evolution shakers and movers, as well as short videos made in recent times to capture special events and topics pertaining to Internet censorship.

Chapter 7 summarizes some key events associated with the Internet's evolution, starting with its humble beginnings, moving into its adolescent years, and culminating in its adult years—from 1990 through to the present.

The book closes with a glossary containing brief definitions of key terms on Internet censorship, freedom fighting, and Internet evolution.

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