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## Censorship is never good

Attempts to cut down on available content are turning the Internet into a "filternet".

By Staff Writer, ITWeb  
Johannesburg, 12 Apr 2013

### Learn more

Runa Sandvik, developer, security researcher and translation coordinator at the Tor Project, will discuss Internet censorship in more depth at ITWeb Security Summit 2013. The Security Summit will be held from 7 to 9 May, at the Sandton Convention Centre. For more information, click [here](#).

Censorship is an invasion of privacy and its claimed aim of protecting children can be thwarted, as these measures can be circumvented.

Andrew Lewman, executive director of the Tor Project, says that to censor content requires watching all Internet traffic. "Surveillance is the first step towards censorship. Once you can see everything someone is doing online, you can learn their patterns and details in mere seconds."

Tor, which released the first version of its software in 2002, aims to provide an anonymous transport layer that gives people the opportunity to manage their privacy. "In the early days, it was not yet clear how important circumvention tools and research would be in helping those facing censorship in controlled infrastructures across the world," it says.

The Tor Project aims to be the global resource for technology, advocacy, research and education in the ongoing pursuit of freedom of speech, privacy rights online, and censorship circumvention. It works across scientific, charitable, civic and education sectors.

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Censorship is turning the Internet into a "filternet", says Lewman. "Each country selectively blocks information from its citizens and, therefore, the larger Internet community."

Lewman says that what John Gilmore said in 1993 is still true today: "The Net treats censorship as a defect and routes around it." However, this is becoming less true as information is eradicated from the majority of the population due to censorship, he adds.


Censorship is detrimental, because people can only see what those in power determine is acceptable, says Lewman. "Your personal opinions and desires may differ from theirs."


Lewman adds that claiming censorship protects minors is not the case in reality. He says it sounds good to talk up how someone is protecting the children, but this does not do any good in reality.


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"As soon as a domain name or IP address makes it through the bureaucracy to get on a censorship list, the perpetrator has already moved the content elsewhere. You end up with a list of 'where content we want to block used to exist' rather than a list of actual content someone wants you to not see."

Lewman adds that children are being trained to circumvent the censorship with ease and can bypass any technology the school puts in place to protect them.

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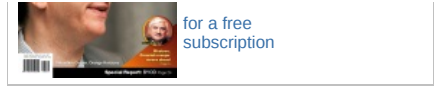
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