Web watch

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OPEN INFORMATION AND INTERNET ACTIVISM

The recent death by suicide of internet activist Aaron Swartz touched many people. Aaron was a talented programmer and innovative thinker. He had been influential in the development of many internet services and policies, and was due to face prosecution for downloading multiple articles from the JSTOR journal database.

Simon Sheikh (former National Director of GetUp!, Greens candidate for the ACT Senate and a friend of Aaron's) spoke to ABC radio (http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/01/14/3669278.htm?site=sydney) and on television on *The Project* (Network 10) about Swartz's life and death (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NmuLe55j9Y).

INTERNET INNOVATION

Aaron Swartz's achievements are listed at *Joho the Blog* (http://www.hyperorg.com/blogger/2013/01/13/aaron-swartz-was-not-a-hacker-he-was-a-builder) and in a 2007 speech Swartz had written entitled "How to Get a Job Like Mine" (https://aaronsw.jottit.com/howtoget).

- At age 14, Swartz was a member of the working group that authored the RSS 1.0 web syndication specification (http://web.resource.org/rss/1.0/spec; http://boingboing.net/2013/01/17/aaron.html). RSS allows people to easily access updates from news headlines, blogs and other online content.[1]
- Swartz served on the RDFCore working group at the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) (http://www.w3.org/2001/sw/RDFCore/members.html) and authored RFC 3870, defining the RDF/XML content type (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aaron_Swartz; http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3870).
- Swartz started the wiki platform Infogami, which was later incorporated into social news site Reddit (http://www.reddit.com) where Swartz also worked for a while.
- Swartz was the architect and first coder of the Open Library (http://blog.archive.org/2013/01/12/aaron-swartz-hero-of-the-open-world-rip), which aims to create one webpage for every book ever published. It is a project of the non-profit Internet Archive (http://openlibrary.org/about).
- Swartz co-created Jottit.com, which aimed to "make building a web site as easy as filling in a textbox" (https://www.jottit.com).
- Swartz was one of the early architects of Creative Commons. In his tribute statement, Lawrence Lessig (a professor at Harvard Law School) wrote "As a teenager, he [Aaron] helped design the code layer to our licenses, and helped build the movement that has carried us so far" (http://creativecommons.org/weblog/entry/36298). This webpage has a photo of a teenage Swartz with Lessig.
- Swartz founded Demand Progress (http://blog.demandprogress.org/mission), a group that campaigns against online censorship.
- Swartz was among the first board members of "Change Congress", which morphed into Rootstrikers (http://www.rootstrikers.org), a group dedicated to fighting corruption.
- Swartz had started working at Thoughtworks (http://www.thoughtworks.com) and "was the team lead for VictoryKit, an open source project he initiated to empower individuals to start their own internet-based movements around issues" (http://www.marketwatch.com/story/thoughtworks-mourns-our-beloved-colleague-aaron-swartz-responds-to-mits-statement-2013-01-14).

A long-term planner, a decade ago Swartz appointed a virtual executor to make content on his hard drives public and to keep his websites running in the case of his death – "if I get hit by a truck" (http://www.aaronsw.com/2002/continuity).

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* All websites viewed January 2013.

[1] Discussed in Browne B, "Web Feeds: RSS and Atom" (2010) 24 OLC 199.

INTERNET CRIME: THE CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION

Swartz was about to be prosecuted for wire fraud, computer fraud, unlawfully obtaining information from a protected computer and recklessly damaging a protected computer. These occurred when he allegedly broke into a computer wiring closet at MIT in 2010 and tapped into the university's computer network to get millions of paid-access scholarly articles from JSTOR, which he may have planned to make available for free (http://tinyurl.com/BostonGlobeSwartz).

Many people think the crimes with which Aaron was charged were negligible (http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2013/01/aaron-swartz), but others have pointed out the costs behind running a database such as JSTOR and believe that this information would probably not be pulled together if there was not someone paying for it (http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2013/01/14/aaron-swartz-reddit-hacker-debate.html?cmp=rss).

The US Prosecutor has defended the handling of the case (http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/prosecutor-defends-handling-of-swartz-case-20130118-2cwxz.html). Lawrence Lessig (http://mashable.com/2013/01/18/lessig-responds-to-aaron-swartz-prosecutor), James Boyle (professor at Duke University School of Law) (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-boyle/prosecution-aaron-swartz_b_2508242.html), Jennifer Granick (http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/blog/2013/01/towards-learning-losing-aaron-swartz) and Orin Kerr (law professor at George Washington University) (http://www.volokh.com/2013/01/14/aaron-swartz-charges) have commented on legal aspects of the case.

Alex Stamos, the expert witness for the Swartz defence, has written on the nature of Swartz's alleged "hacking" (http://unhandled.com/2013/01/12/the-truth-about-aaron-swartzs-crime).

Deepa Kurup, in *The Hindu* newspaper, wrote on the importance of open-access journal articles in developing countries such as India. He described the #PDFTribute, whereby academics were encouraged to put PDF copies of their copyrighted articles online in honour of Swartz, but said that few Indian academics had participated, although *Economic and Political Weekly* had released eight articles from behind its paywall. Apart from government schemes such as Infiblibnet (http://www.inflibnet.ac.in) that allow university students to access various journals, most academic content is still inaccessible in India (http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/of-aaron-swartz-open-access-and-pdf-tributes/article4307697.ece).

JSTOR

JSTOR (http://www.jstor.org) is a not-for-profit company that maintains a full-text archive of leading scholarly journals, especially older material.[2]

JSTOR published an open letter saying "It was the government's decision whether to prosecute, not JSTOR's. As noted previously, our interest was in securing the content. Once this was achieved, we had no interest in this becoming an ongoing legal matter" (http://about.jstor.org/news/jstor-statement-misuse-incident-and-criminal-case).

JSTOR's policies have changed since Swartz's actions. Meredith Schwartz in *Library Journal*[3] has reported that: "The archives of more than 1,200 journals are now available for limited free reading by the public, JSTOR announced today. Anyone can sign up for a JSTOR account and read up to three articles for free every two weeks."

Nancy Sims has written about the case from the point of view of libraries managing licensed resources.[4] She says: "the terms we impose on our own networks' use, and the terms we agree to in contracts with vendors, may be able to serve as the basis of criminal charges against our users. This may happen even when we, and our vendors, might prefer to resolve any conflicts privately." Sims

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[2] Browne G, "JSTOR" (2009) 23 OLC 180.

[3] Schwartz M, "Many JSTOR Journal Archives Now Free to Public", *Library Journal* (9 January 2013), http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/01/academic-libraries/many-jstor-journal-archives-now-free-to-public.

[4] Sims N, "Library Licensing and Criminal Law: The Aaron Swartz Case" (2011) 72(9) *College & Research Library News* 534, http://crln.acrl.org/content/72/9/534.full.

points out that most users do not understand library contracts for use of licenced resources, and says: "Perhaps this means that we need to negotiate license terms that are more in line with user expectations for our services; perhaps it means that we need to better educate our users about what access our contracts really provide."

Jonathan Rothkind, in a lengthy blog post (http://bibwild.wordpress.com/2013/01/13/library-values-and-digital-divide-in-memoriam-aaron-swartz), discusses Swartz's work in the context of shared library goals, "the widespread and democratic dissemination of human knowledge, the minimization of inequality in information access".

DEPRESSION

Swartz had written about his health problems including depression (http://www.aaronsw.com/weblog/verysick), and his death has prompted discussion about this illness, especially in the technology industry, where people in start-up companies work long hours, and often feel unable to talk freely with funders and co-workers (http://money.cnn.com/2013/01/14/technology/swartz-suicide-depression; http://mashable.com/2013/01/15/aaron-swartz-tech-world-depression).

The voluntary work that Aaron Swartz did has created important tools for librarians and library users, and the issues raised by this case are fundamental to the future of copyright law and access to information around the world.

BUSHFIRES AND VEGETATION

People living in bushfire-prone areas have to consider the location and nature of the plants in their garden.[5] In a recent article in *The Canberra Times* (http://www.canberratimes.com.au/opinion/the-burning-issue-native-gardens-a-killer-on-our-doorstep-20130118-2cyxh.html), Joan Webster argued against the planting of gardens full of native plants. Webster also provides information in her blog (http://bushfiresafety.blogspot.com.au) and has written a book *Essential Bushfire Safety Tips* (http://www.ebooks.com/988917/essential-bushfire-safety-tips/webster-oam-joan).

CSIRO has done research into bushfires. One webpage notes that Australian vegetation has evolved with fire and has developed characteristics that promote the spread of fire. It advises that hazard reduction is necessary to reduce fuel load in the undergrowth (http://www.csiro.au/en/Organisation-Structure/Divisions/Ecosystem-Sciences/BushfireInAustralia.aspx).

The Country Fire Authority's (CFA) *Landscaping for Bushfire* (available in PDF or Word formats) gives advice on planning and designing a garden, selecting plants, and maintaining the garden, while its online plant selection key helps you judge possible plants for a garden in a high-bushfire risk area by entering their characteristics (http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/plant-selection-key).

The Australian Native Plants Society Australia (ANPSA) in an article "Australian Plants for Fire Prone Areas" (http://anpsa.org.au/fire.html) provides advice for planting in bushfire-prone areas, along with lists of possible plants (rainforest trees, other trees, other small trees/shrubs, ground covers). This article was first published in the NSW region newsletter.

The ANPSA Garden Design Study Group has two articles reporting on plant losses in the Victorian drought in 2009, and highlighting those plants that survived.[6]

ALA ON EBOOKS

American Library Association President, Maureen Sullivan talks about the role of libraries in the ebook environment (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EIacd6vlvE; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHyKcw6eRO8).

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[5] For general natural disaster information, see Browne G, "Meteorology and Natural Disaster Websites" (2011) 25 OLC 243.

[6] Snape D, "Plants Surviving Extreme Weather Conditions", *Garden Design Study Group Newsletter*, No 66 (May 2009) p 17, http://anpsa.org.au/design/66.pdf#page=17; Rankin C, "Despair and Desire – A Short Diary" *Garden Design Study Group Newsletter*, No 66 (May 2009) p 19, http://anpsa.org.au/design/66.pdf#page=19.

TUMBLR

tumblr (http://www.tumblr.com)[7] is a free blogging platform that was started in 2007 by CEO David Karp. Users can start an account, and from their dashboard, post text, photos, links, music and videos. There is a huge variety of blogs to follow (over 77 million in fact) and you can like or reblog posts from the people you are following.

tumblr is mostly used by young people as a way to express opinions, and to share art, photography and writing. A large proportion of people use tumblr to enthuse about their respective fandoms (the subcultures formed by fans' love for a particular show, movie, book or band). Often tumblr becomes a favourite publishing platform for gifs, fan art and fan fiction.

With this user group, there tends to be an overlap in the content on tumblr and Facebook, with many of the same images being shared on both platforms.

UNDERWATER MUSIC

Swimmers and people who take long showers who do not want a minute without music will be happy to hear of the development of the water-repelling digital Walkman, the Sony NZW-W270. There is a review at http://mashable.com/2013/01/07/sony-waterproof-walkman.

ADJUSTING TO MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Enjoy gentle Norwegian humour in the video *Medieval Helpdesk with English Subtitles* about helpdesk support in the middle ages when paged books were first published (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQHX-SjgQvQ) and, from Germany, *Grampa Gets a New iPad* (http://www.ebaumsworld.com/video/watch/82311361).

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[7] Thanks to Jenny Browne for information on tumblr users.