

CYBER CENSORS & GLOBAL MUCKRAKERS:

International Investigative Reporting on the Internet

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines how the Internet has changed investigative reporting around the world both as a newsgathering tool and as a means of evading government censorship. As a tool for data collection and cross-border journalistic collaboration, the Internet has offered modest positive changes for investigative reporters. As a means of combating state suppression, the Internet has on occasion allowed journalists to disseminate censored stories on-line. Nonetheless, the overall impact of the Internet on investigative reporting worldwide has so far been limited. In particular, many governments and some corporations have found ways to punish or prevent on-line investigative journalism. To date, optimistic visions of an Internet revolution in global muckraking have not been realized.

Introduction

Ten years ago, while working as a correspondent for CNN, I first became interested in the revolutionary potential of international investigative reporting. At the time, I was producing a television documentary about waste and corruption of U.S. foreign aid money in many Third World countries. While I was on assignment in Cairo, Egyptian police suddenly seized my CNN crew and confiscated our videotapes in an effort to censor my reporting. Our detention by authorities made headlines, reported in Arabic throughout Egypt and the Mideast. Soon, dissident Arab journalists began passing on news leads to me, telling me stories of corrupt Cabinet ministers and systematic police torture of dissidents. These Mideast journalists were unable to report such scandals themselves in their own publications because of state censorship, but they hoped that I would report these abuses on CNN. Why CNN? Because as an international news outlet no single country could effectively censor our reports, which were beamed into Egypt and the rest of the world by satellite.

The revolutionary potential here was undeniable and extended well beyond Egypt and the Mideast. CNN had the ability to go over the heads of political and military leaders straight to the people. We could expose ruthless dictators in their own countries—maybe even topple them from power. By exporting investigative reporting abroad, CNN could show the rest of the world by example the true meaning of a free press. It was the ultimate dream in watchdog journalism, using the power of the media for good.

But for a variety of reasons that will later become apparent, this did not happen. Still, the dream lived on in my heart. Maybe the real difficulty wasn't my lofty ambitions, I decided later, just the way I was trying to achieve it—a problem of means not ends. Perhaps profit-minded multinational corporations like CNN were the wrong vehicle for bringing such radical watchdog journalism to undemocratic countries. Maybe such muckraking would have to come not from the top down but the bottom up.

A few years later, the rise of the Internet seemed to be precisely the kind of bottom-up communication that could indeed bring about such revolutionary journalism. After all, the Net's worldwide instantaneous reach to an audience of millions is open to anyone, regardless of their geographic location. "Because of the Internet, anybody who has a computer and a modem can be a publisher—a digital Gutenberg," one civil liberties group enthused. ". . . To a degree that no other technology can, it . . . eliminates barriers to the free flow of information."¹ Creating and disseminating this information is intrinsically inexpensive, and the Internet has essentially unlimited capacity to store it. "The World Wide Web is power to the people with a vengeance," British scholar Gordon Graham wrote, since "unlike the rather passive medium of television [the Web's] interactive character presents ordinary citizens with the possibility of exercising an unprecedented influence on the social and political events that determine their circumstances and prospects."² Most important of all for free expression, Internet technology requires no censoring "gatekeepers" who get in the way. "Put another way," American writer Andrew L. Shapiro noted, "if

¹ Global Internet Liberty Campaign, "Regardless of Frontiers: Protecting the Human Right to Freedom of Expression on the Global Internet," www.gilc.org, 4-6.

² Italics in original. Gordon Graham, *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 38.

information is, as some claim, our most important commodity, what could be more egalitarian than placing the means of production in the hands of individuals?"³

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the Internet's revolutionary potential is currently affecting international investigative reporting, and how it might do so in the future. Because the Internet essentially performs two key tasks—sending and receiving information—the impact of the Internet on global muckraking will be examined through the prism of these two technological functions. Specifically, this paper will investigate two interconnected issues:

- **Receiving Information (Input)**—How has the Internet changed the *newsgathering* of investigative reporting around the world? How might this change affect the future?
- **Sending Information (Output)**—How has the Internet changed the *dissemination* of investigative reporting worldwide? What are the implications of this change for the future?

These issues are potentially significant not only for investigative reporters but for society as a whole. They involve the important issue of whether the Internet can realize its democratic potential—spreading freedom of expression throughout the globe, allowing journalists and dissidents to bypass the censorship of repressive governmental regimes or the different tyranny of corporate control.

It should be noted at the outset that this paper is descriptive and interpretative, not quantitative. It is based not on polling, focus groups, or other new data but on the author's interviews, website searches, analysis of previously published studies, and integration and extrapolation from media theory. Like all discourse on this brave new digital world, it must be intrinsically tentative, since the rapid pace of technological change can make even the most seemingly safe predictions obsolete.

Literature Review

Surprisingly little seems to have been published on either the current or the potential impact of the Internet on international investigative reporting. However, a number of excellent relevant works have been written about the Internet and other, related subjects: globalization,⁴ political democracy,⁵ privacy,⁶ and

³ Andrew L. Shapiro, *The Control Revolution: How the Internet is Putting Individuals in Charge and Changing the World We Know* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 43.

⁴ Jerry Everard, *Virtual States: The Internet and the Boundaries of the Nation-State* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000).

⁵ Peter Ferdinand, *The Internet, Democracy and Democratization* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000); and Lawrence K. Grossman, *The Electronic Republic: Reshaping Democracy in the Information Age* (New York: Viking, 1995).

⁶ Electronic Privacy Information Center, "Filters & Freedom: Free Speech Perspectives on Internet Content Controls," www.epic.org. Other good websites on this topic are the Internet Free Expression Alliance, www.ifea.net; and Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, www.cpsr.org.

obscenity.⁷ As for scholarship in the field of journalism, several useful how-to books give practical instruction for using computer technology in the U.S. newsroom; but they do not discuss the larger issues of international reporting or the possibilities for using the Internet to thwart government censorship.⁸ Similarly, books on international journalism have also tended to miss this issue, although one recent work was notable for describing several instances in which foreign reporters used the Internet to defy government censorship.⁹

Appropriately enough, some of the most specific and up-to-date information on the Internet and global muckraking can be found only on the Internet itself. Numerous non-profit advocacy groups in North America and Western Europe have established websites to promote free expression on-line. Several reports prepared by these non-profit organizations documented cases in which the Internet was used to get around government censorship.¹⁰

Finally, several general works on investigative reporting offered definitions of this journalistic genre which are useful for this paper. In its classic form in Western democracies, investigative reporting is the journalism of the exposé; the reporter acts as a watchdog alerting the public to misconduct by those in power—"uncovering something somebody wants to keep secret," in the words of America's premier investigative reporting organization.¹¹ Northwestern University journalism professor David Protess calls investigative reporting "the journalism of outrage . . . a media specialty that involves time-consuming methods and potentially high-impact results." According to Protess, it is "a form of storytelling that probes the boundaries of America's civic conscience. Published allegations of wrongdoing—political corruption,

⁷ Jonathan Wallace and Mark Mangan, *Sex, Laws, and Cyberspace* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1996); American Civil Liberties Union, "Fahrenheit 451.2: Is Cyberspace Burning?," www.aclu.org. See also National Coalition Against Censorship, www.ncac.org; and Peacefire, www.peacefire.org.

⁸ The original, and classic work, is Philip Meyer, *Precision Journalism: A Reporter's Introduction to Social Science Methods* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973). See also Brant Houston, *Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999); Margaret H. DeFleur, *Computer-Assisted Investigative Reporting: Development and Methodology* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum, 1997); Eliot Jaspin, "The New Investigative Journalism: Exploring Public Records by Computer," in John V. Pavlik and Everett E. Dennis, eds., *Demystifying Media Technology* (Mountain View, C.A.: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1993), chp. 24; Mike Berens, "Computers Help to Transform Statistics Into Stories," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 2000), 57-9; and Mark Tatge, "Taking CAR for a Spin: Conventional News Gathering Goes High-Tech," Marilyn Greenwald and Joseph Bernt, eds., *The Big Chill: Investigative Reporting in the Current Media Environment* (Ames: Iowa State University Press: 2000), chp. 11.

⁹ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire: Independent Journalists Who Challenge Dictators, Druglords, and Other Enemies of a Free Press* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ "Regardless of Frontiers," a report by the Global Internet Liberty Campaign, gives an overview of the Internet and free expression around the world; www.gilc.org. "The Great Firewall," a report by the Committee to Project Journalists, is an account of China's Internet censorship; www.cpj.org. Two reports by Human Rights Watch, "Silencing the Net: The Threat to Freedom of Expression On-Line" and "The Internet in the Mideast and North Africa: Free Expression and Censorship," also offer good background, www.hrw.org.

¹¹ Investigative Reporters and Editors, *The Reporter's Handbook* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), vii-viii.

government inefficiency, corporate abuses—help define public morality . . . [and] promote democracy, efficiency, or social justice.”¹²

In the context of international journalism, however, the definition of investigative reporting needs to be broadened. In many countries—especially undemocratic ones—American norms of professional journalism simply do not apply; the line separating an investigative reporter from a political dissident or activist-intellectual is blurry. For the purposes of this paper, investigative reporting should be considered any writing that criticizes the power structure—political, religious or corporate—regardless of whether it is written by a “professional” journalist.

Methodology

To research this topic, all relevant literature written between January of 2000 and August of 2001 that could be located was reviewed.¹³ At the same time, the author searched more than 30 websites—primarily of non-governmental organizations—that deal with censorship, investigative reporting, and international journalism; each website’s archives was in turn thoroughly searched for relevant material.¹⁴ Finally, the

¹² David L. Protess, *et al*, *The Journalism of Outrage: Investigative Reporting and Agenda Building in America* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1991), 4-6. Other useful books on this subject are Peter Benjaminson and David Anderson, *Investigative Reporting* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990); and Hugo de Burgh, ed., *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000).

¹³ Specifically, the author examined numerous books written about the Internet and free speech, censorship, journalism, and democracy; searched numerous databases, including Academic Universe, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), JSTOR, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service International (PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index, and Sociological Abstracts. The author also reviewed back issues of more than two dozen academic and professional journals housed in the University of North Carolina’s Park Library in Chapel Hill, including *American Journalism Review*, *Brill’s Content*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Committee to Protect Journalists Update*, *Fairness and Accuracy in Media’s Extra*, *First Amendment News*, *Freedom Forum Weekly*, *International Journalist*, *International Press Institute Report*, *Internet Research*, *Internet World*, *Investigative Reporters and Editors Journal*, *Journalism Communication Monographs*, *Media Monitor*, *Muckraker*, *New Media*, *Nieman Reports*, *Pew Research Center News Release*, *Poynter Report*, *Wired*, and *World Press Review*.

¹⁴ These websites included: American Civil Liberties Union (www.aclu.org); Better Government Association (www.bettergov.org); Center for Democracy and Technology (www.cdt.org); Center for Investigative Reporting (www.muckraker.org); Committee to Protect Journalists (www.cpj.org); Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (www.cpsr.org); Cyber-Rights and Cyber-Liberties (www.cyber-rights.org); Declan McCullagh’s politechbot.com (www.politechbot.com); Digital Freedom Network (www.dfn.org); Electronic Frontier Foundation (www.eff.org); Electronic Privacy Information Center (www.epic.org); Freedom Forum (www.freedomforum.org); Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org); Global Internet Liberty Campaign (www.gilc.org); George Soros Open Society Institute (www.soros.org); Human Rights Internet (www.hri.ca); Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org); International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (www.icij.org); International Journalists’ Network (www.ijn.net); International Press Institute (www.freemedia.at); Internet Democracy Project (www.internetdemocracyproject.org); Internet Free Expression Alliance (www.ifea.net); Investigative Reporters and Editors (www.ire.org); National Coalition Against Censorship (www.ncac.org); Newspaper Association of America (www.naa.org); Nieman Foundation (www.nieman.harvard.edu); Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (www.pcij.org.ph); Poynter Institute; Religious Tolerance (www.religioustolerance.org); Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (www.rcfp.org); Reporters Without Borders (www.rsf.org.uk); Voice of America (www.rferl.org); and World Association of Newspapers (www.fiej.org).

author conducted telephone and email interviews with international investigative reporters and representatives of the most active of these non-profit organizations.

Findings

I. Receiving Information (Input)

So far, the Internet seems to have influenced international investigative *newsgathering* in mostly positive although not revolutionary ways. At its most basic level, journalists from countries across the globe are learning to use many different kinds of computer technology, including the Internet, to probe more deeply beneath the surface of events. For example, Mexican reporters statistically demonstrated malfeasance by the country's police force after building a database from judicial records which revealed that only five percent of all of drug arrests resulted from police investigations.¹⁵

In Third World countries, especially, even the most basic newsgathering can be difficult. As a result, says an African Internet editor, "it is the humble e-mail service that is proving to be the most powerful modern tool for journalists. This fast and effective communication tool, with its low bandwidth and basic hardware requirements, makes it an ideal solution for infrastructure-poor environments like Africa. Add to that the benefits that free Web-based e-mail services can offer—accessibility and the security of being relatively untraceable with no incriminating copies harbored on your hard drive—and these offer journalists here a winning option."¹⁶

More importantly, perhaps, the Internet can allow reporters in undemocratic countries to gather information banned by their own government. For example, when the Honduran military used the pretext of "national security" to keep secret how much aid it received from the United States, a reporter from Honduras easily found the information on a U.S. government website.¹⁷ The Internet can also help journalists outwit repressive regimes. In Nigeria, an editor whose critical reporting led the country's dictator to cut off his newspaper's telephone lines discovered that he could get around this newsgathering censorship by plugging his laptop into the phone lines of his friends; the editor simply switched to on-line interviews to keep his newspaper afloat.¹⁸

At the same time, the Internet's role in newsgathering has also strengthened cooperation between journalists in different countries, providing reportorial collaboration and psychological solidarity in what can often be a lonely and isolated undertaking. The University of Missouri's National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting has trained journalists from Venezuela, Russia, Bosnia, Mexico, Finland, Sweden, New Zealand, Argentina, the Netherlands, Norway, Brazil, and Canada.¹⁹ In addition, since 2000 more than 300

¹⁵ Brant Houston, "When Numbers Talk, Journalists Help People Listen," *The IRE Journal*, (July 1999), 15.

¹⁶ Tanya Accone, "Digital Dividends for Journalism in Africa," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 2000), 67-9.

¹⁷ Brant Houston, "When Numbers Talk," *IRE Journal*, 15.

¹⁸ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 177.

¹⁹ Brant Houston, "When Numbers Talk," *IRE Journal*, 14.

journalists from 47 nations have attended annual Global Investigative Journalism conferences in Copenhagen, getting hands-on training in computer assisted reporting techniques as well as swapping story ideas with journalists from other countries.²⁰ "The number of ways journalists can exploit the new technologies and gather information beyond nation-state borders is substantially increasing," said investigative reporter Charles Lewis, one of the speakers at the conference. "We can use computers, the Internet, encryption, wireless and other technologies to make the world much, much smaller. And we can network with each other like never before."²¹

Perhaps the most innovative of all attempts to use this technology for global muckraking began in 1997, when Lewis formed a non-profit group called the International Consortium for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ). Nearly one hundred of the world's best investigative reporters, from 45 countries, now belong to ICIJ, which directs and funds their joint global investigative projects.²² "In an increasingly frontierless yet complex world, there is a need for in-depth information that transcends national boundaries," the ICIJ website declares. "We believe that the presence of an effective networking mechanism for investigative reporters will lead to a better-informed populace, as well as an enhanced civil society and greater accountability among governments worldwide."²³

The consortium's first piece of collaborative international investigative reporting appeared on its website last year. In an ambitious three-part series that ran more 23,000 words, ICIJ's team of reporters exposed a worldwide, multi-billion dollar scheme by several huge international tobacco companies that used organized crime rings to smuggle cigarettes and swindle governments out of taxes. The story was laboriously pieced together by ICIJ reporters on three continents who analyzed 11,000 pages of internal corporate documents that had been made public in various lawsuits but had been overlooked by other media outlets. The series also included interviews from around the globe with high-level corporate insiders who admitted their complicity in the complicated scheme. ICIJ's website included links in which readers could see for themselves—by double-clicking with their computer mouse—the actual internal documents that so clearly implicated the tobacco giants in wrongdoing, including a "smoking gun" memo from British American Tobacco which instructed that incriminating evidence be destroyed by "a good quality safe and shredder."²⁴

²⁰ *IRE Journal* (July/August 2001), 5.

²¹ Charles Lewis, "World's Journalists Should Collaborate in Age of Globalization," remarks at the Global Investigative Journalism Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark (26 April 2001), 3, www.public-i.org/commentary.

²² With an annual budget of \$680,000, ICIJ pays its international coterie of reporters approximately \$10,000 apiece to work on its projects. At least one of its foreign reporters has requested that ICIJ not disclose his identity out of fear of retaliation by local authorities. Author's telephone interview with Maud Beelman, ICIJ, Washington, D.C. (25 Aug. 2001). ICIJ must also contend with the complications of international libel law, which is very restrictive in some countries and may apply to anything posted on the world wide web. Bob Burton, "Journalism's New Standard Bearers," *The Australian* (19 July 2001).

²³ ICIJ also hands out an annual \$20,000 reward for "outstanding international investigative reporting" and posts advice on filing Freedom of Information Act requests on its website. The group is underwritten by various foundations but does not accept money from corporations, labor unions or governments. David Leigh, "Global Disclosure," *The Guardian* (31 Jan. 2001); Bill Birnbauer, "Reporters Without Boundaries," *The Age*, <http://magazine.walkleys.com/vol 12/birnbauer.html>; and ICIJ website, www.icij.org.

²⁴ Maud S. Beelman, Maria Teresa Ronderos, and Erik J. Schelzig, "Major Tobacco Multinational Implicated In Cigarette Smuggling, Tax Evasion, Documents Show," Part I, ICIJ website, 31 January 2000; ICIJ, "Global Reach of Tobacco Company's Involvement in Cigarette Smuggling Exposed in Company Papers," Part II, ICIJ website, 1 February 2000. ICIJ continued to

Subsequent muckraking by ICIJ painstakingly reported on how U.S. aid to several Latin American countries during the past decade—ostensibly to combat drugs—was also used to prop up repressive military regimes linked to human rights abuses. In a six-part, 30,000 word series, the international reporting team revealed that the CIA had funneled at least \$10 million in cash to Peru's notorious intelligence chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, even though CIA officials themselves acknowledged that Montesinos pocketed much of the money. Furthermore, the story reported that the Peruvian intelligence chief used the CIA's high-tech surveillance equipment to spy not on drug kingpins but on journalists and domestic political opponents.²⁵

More recent ICIJ reports have been published in book form: *Making a Killing*, an 80,000-word investigation of corporate mercenaries—private military companies and arms dealing firms that are traded on public stock exchanges—involved a team of 36 different ICIJ reporters across the globe. *Water Barons*, an in-depth look of international water privatization, involved research over a twelve-year span.²⁶

Not only did the wrongdoing exposed by these muckrakers span the globe; so, too, did the media outlets and the journalistic resources that were necessary to uncover the scandals. The ICIJ series was simultaneously published or picked up by more than 40 print and broadcasting media outlets in at least ten countries around the world; several governments began investigations as a result of the disclosures. On-line technology was crucial to this success. The group's reporting team communicated with each other almost exclusively by e-mail that was encrypted to protect sources and sensitive information. Story memos and drafts were also downloaded on the Internet. And the final work product premiered on-line. "The Internet has given us a virtual newsroom in terms of newsgathering and data collection," says Peter Eisner, one-time managing editor of the project "These are all cyber-reports. We simply could not have done this work without this technology."²⁷

The encrypted Internet communication also made it easier for otherwise suspicious, lone-wolf investigative reporters to feel comfortable sharing information on such a sensitive group project. Indeed, America's most famous previous joint investigative reporting project foundered twenty-five years ago when there was no Internet technology to help the collaborative process along or guarantee publication of the

follow-up on its story over its website in the classic tradition of crusading journalism. ICIJ, "Tobacco Companies Linked to Criminal Organizations in Lucrative Cigarette Smuggling," 3 March 2000; Maud S. Beelman, "Philip Morris Accused of Smuggling, Money-Laundering Conspiracy In Racketeering Lawsuit," 23 July 2001; Duncan Campbell, "U.K. Considering Formal Investigation Into Cigarette Smuggling," 23 July 2001; all at www.icij.org. Additional follow-up reports were subsequently generated when whistleblowers contacted ICIJ with additional information. Duncan Campbell, "The Multi-Million Dollar Trade Route," "Whistleblower Who Asked Too Many Questions Faced Company's Wrath," "Clarke Company Faces New Smuggling Claims," and "How Clarke Defended Company," *The Guardian* (22 Aug. 2001), www.guardian.co.uk/bat/article.

²⁵ Angel Paez, "CIA Gave at Least \$10 Million to Peru's Ex-Spymaster Montesinos," 28 June 2001; ICIJ, "U.S. Military Aid to Latin America Linked to Human Rights Abuses," 12 July 2001; ICIJ, "Narcotics and Economics Drive U.S. Policy in Latin America," 12 July 2001; ICIJ, "Fighting One Half of the Drug War," 12 July 2001; ICIJ, "U.S.-Trained Forces Linked to Human Rights Abuses," 12 July 2001; ICIJ, "U.S. Shrugged Off Corruption, Abuse in Service of Drug War," 12 July 2001; and ICIJ, "Drug War Replaces Cold War," 12 July 2001; all at www.public-i.org.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Author's telephone interview, Peter Eisner, ICIJ, Washington, D.C., 19 July 2001.

journalistic results.²⁸ With the Internet, however, the ICIJ itself can guarantee world-wide dissemination of its reporting on its website, at whatever length is necessary, even if no other media outlets pick up on the story.

Ironically, says ICIJ founder Charles Lewis, the same technology that furthers global muckraking is also used by the tobacco companies and other international miscreants to further their wrongdoing—reinforcing why such international investigative reporting is necessary in the first place. “Dramatic, almost incomprehensible new technologies are making borders irrelevant and regulation by governments almost impossible,” Lewis observes. Global issues that transcend geography, he says, include cloning, genetic engineering, lethal new viruses, uncontrolled multinational corporations that exploit labor and weaken the environment, and international crime rings “creating banks on their personal computers and using sophisticated encryption technologies to hide their tracks. . . . Conventional journalism simply cannot investigate or explain these and other complex, global subject adequately. The typical one-country perspective is too narrow and misleading, and frankly, a disservice to the public.”²⁹ Lewis’ international muckraking team is the first step in trying to address that problem.

II. Disseminating Information (Output)

While global muckrakers have had positive if not revolutionary success when it comes to *newsgathering*, the picture is more complicated when it comes to news *dissemination*. Here, the data is mixed, with both optimistic and pessimistic indications in terms of free expression. Perhaps the best way to analyze the results is by breaking it down into positive and negative indicators.

A) Optimistic Indicators

The nature of Internet technology seems to be at the core of most positive assessments about the future of digital free speech. From its earliest phases, the Internet was designed for the U.S. military to keep communication alive in the event of nuclear war. As a result, the system’s decentralized “open architecture” was deliberately constructed so that individual computers could function independently of each other even if particular transmission stations were knocked out. “The Net interprets censorship as damage and routes around it,” says Net pioneer John Gilmore. Indeed, the architecture of the system was specifically designed to prevent any centralized global control. To make interception more difficult, computer routers did not even retain the information about the packets they sent out—a further obstacle to

²⁸ The assassination of *Arizona Republic* investigative reporter Don Bolles in 1976 led to the then-unprecedented collaborative journalistic investigation called the “Arizona Project.” A team of reporters from across the U.S. descended on Arizona to turn the state upside down to try and expose why Bolles was murdered—thereby avenging Bolles’ murder and sending a message to organized crime that killing a reporter is counter-productive. In the end, many newspapers balked at publishing the reporters’ collective efforts, even the *Arizona Republic*. However, the project led to the formation of Investigative Reporters and Editors, an important step in training and institutionalizing investigative reporting in the U.S. Martin Tallberg, *Don Bolles: An Investigation into His Murder* (New York: Popular Library, 1977). Unlike ICIJ, which is composed of elite reporters by invitation only, the aptly named IRE is open to all; while IRE trains investigative reporters, ICIJ uses their content. Author’s telephone interview with Maud Beelman, ICIJ, Washington, D.C. (25 Aug. 2001).

²⁹ Charles Lewis, “Age of Globalization,” 1.

would-be censors.³⁰ Yet while this structure was created for military reasons, one Pentagon official realized early on its political implications:

The Internet is clearly a significant long term strategic threat to authoritarian regimes, one that they will be unable to counter effectively. News from the outside world brought by the Internet into nations subjugated by such regimes will clash with the distorted version provided by their governments, eroding the credibility of their positions and encouraging unrest. . . . Information about violations of human rights and other forms of oppression will be increasingly conveyed to the outside world by the Internet, helping mobilize external political forces on behalf of the oppressed.³¹

Other technological aspects also seemed to bode well for a democratic Internet. It was accessible to anyone with a computer and modem, regardless of location. It was decentralized but global, relatively inexpensive, and utterly instantaneous. It had unlimited capacity to store data without any need for a gatekeeper. And it allowed two-way, interactive communication. “[T]he Net’s interactivity works against top-down attempts to control the information to which people are exposed,” one author observed. “If the TV remote control posed a challenge to television programmers and their advertisers, imagine the problems presented by the web, where users can, in theory, start where they like and go anywhere.”³² Unlike television or radio, whose broadcasts disappear after being played, the Internet stores its material so that it is continuously available anytime unless and until it is removed.³³

All of this, of course, could be an enormous boon for free speech in general and investigative reporting in particular. The Internet has “no restrictions on what can be discussed, or who can take part in those discussion, and to a large extent it operates without being controlled by either politics or the market,” notes one British journalism professor. “. . . [I]t has the *potential* to return journalists to the pamphleteering days of early journalists like Thomas Paine.”³⁴ No less an old-media publisher than Arthur O. Sulzberger, Jr. of the *New York Times* enthused in a speech that “there are now millions of electronic printing presses in cyberspace. . . . [D]igital technology might be the true agent of political transformation.”³⁵ Even an

³⁰ Howard Rheingold, “A Case Against Censorship,” *The Australian* (21 June 1994), as cited in *Internet Research* (No. 1, 1997), 60; James T. Perry, et al, *New Perspectives on the Internet*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Thompson Learning, 2001), 1.08. “The fact that messages on the Internet will be broken up into separate ‘packets’ of information as they leave the sender, directed across various telecommunications routes, and only reassembled at the computer of the receiver, means that it is impossible for outsiders like governments to intercept them en route without destroying most of the efficiency gains such a technology can bring,” one scholar wrote. Peter Ferdinand, ed., *The Internet, Democracy and Democratization* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 11-12.

³¹ Peter Ferdinand, *The Internet, Democracy*, 12.

³² Andrew L. Shapiro, *Control Revolution*, 85.

³³ Gordon Graham, *The Internet*, 80-81.

³⁴ Italics in original. Carole Fleming, “Journalism and New Technology,” in Hugo de Burgh, *Investigative Journalism*, 193, 179.

³⁵ Arthur Sulzberger, “Preserving Our Reputation,” remarks to the IPI World Congress, Boston, Massachusetts (1 May 2000), www.freemedia.org.

advocacy group devoted to warning of the dangers of Internet censorship is optimistic about its revolutionary possibilities:

While the mass media usually responds to the economic and political interests of those who control it, such controls do not presently exist on the Internet. Here, citizens from the most repressive regimes are able to find information about matters concerning their government or their human rights records that no local newspaper may dare print, while denouncing the conditions under which they live for the world to hear. . . . This power to give and receive information, so central to any conception of democracy, can be truly achieved on the Internet, as nowhere before.³⁶

Indeed, in recent years, numerous investigative reporters across the globe have successfully used the Internet to defy state censorship:

- In at least half a dozen countries in the Mideast and Northern Africa, Arab newspaper reporters have been able to thwart censors by posting their banned stories on the Internet.³⁷
- In Russia, the state took over the opposition magazine *Itogi* in April and fired its top editors to stop their criticism of the government. Undaunted, the journalists simply distributed their dissident views on a website that they named "*The Real Itogi*."³⁸
- In the West Bank, Palestinian journalist Daoud Kuttab established his own website to get around the censorship he had previously suffered at the hands of both Israeli and Palestinian authorities. Kuttab's Arab Media Internet Network (www.amin.org) reported exposés that other media dared not run—including alleged torture by Israelis and Palestinians as well as corruption within the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The website averages more than 50,000 hits a day.³⁹
- In Malaysia, the prime minister and his allies owned or controlled all of the country's main newspapers and broadcast stations while banning foreign publications as well. So Malaysian journalist Steven Gan, who had previously been imprisoned for his anti-government reporting, started a website called Malaysia Now (www.mayalsiakini.com). The Internet site publishes investigative articles "that could never appear in Malaysia's tightly controlled press," according to an international media group. Although the prime minister banned the website's reporters from access to government news conferences and official functions—"these people really behave like traitors," he declared—the website

³⁶ GILC, "Regardless of Frontiers," 33.

³⁷ These countries include Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Tunisia, and Turkey. At least one of the Internet sites used by these journalists is safely located in London. Human Rights Watch, "Internet in the Mideast and Northern Africa," www.hrw.org; and Tom Regan, "Technology Is Changing Journalism," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 2000), 8.

³⁸ Freedom Forum, "Shut-Down Russian News Magazine Resurfaces on the Internet," (24 April 2001), www.freedomforum.org.

³⁹ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 177-80; and "International Press Freedom Awards," Committee to Protect Journalists, www.cpsj.or/awards96/daoud.html

has continued to produce hard-hitting journalism. "The government had a complete monopoly on information," Gan says, "until the emergence of the Internet."⁴⁰

- In Indonesia, independent journalists used the Internet to expose the corruption of president Suharto after the dictator shut down the country's most important news magazines. Working out of an underground safe house, the reporters also filed encrypted reports about the regime's human rights abuses. Although the on-line audience was the relatively small Indonesian elite, protesters blanketed the streets and bus stations with photocopies of the Internet stories. "There is little doubt that the Internet had given opposition groups in the closing years of the Suharto regime the ability to control and direct their message internationally and domestically with far greater precision, through 'broadcast' to news groups and chat groups, or through 'narrowcast' to specific targeted individuals, within split seconds," two scholars concluded. "There is also little doubt that there was some overlap between the students who used . . . [the Internet] at their universities in Jakarta and those who stormed the parliament on the eve of Suharto's resignation."⁴¹
- In the former Yugoslavia, one-time dictator Slobodan Milosevic imprisoned or shut down all opposition journalists—except for two radio stations whose staff defiantly re-routed their broadcasts so that they could be heard on the Internet. The intrepid broadcasters transmitted uncensored news reports from a secret location in Yugoslavia, using a mirror website in the Netherlands and an Internet service provider in Amsterdam that was beyond Milosevic's reach. "At 9 a.m., the regime shut down our transmitter," the activist-scientist who rerouted the radio signal later remembered. "By sunset, [we were] back on the air, not just in Yugoslavia but all around the world." Although few citizens in the war-torn region had access to the Internet, the website received more than one million hits a day from an international audience. Equally important, sympathizers across the world re-broadcast the reports back into Yugoslavia on the BBC, Radio Netherlands, and short-wave radio. "The technologies were not necessarily cutting edge," one study later concluded, "or even that technically difficult to use . . . e-mail, audio streaming, digital broadcast, satellite transmission." Nonetheless, another study found, "the existence of the Internet was the single factor that allowed certain oppositional groups in the former Yugoslavia to maintain [contact] with the outside world." The journalists themselves called it "the Internet revolution."⁴²

⁴⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Acceptance Speeches of the 2000 International Press Freedom Awardees," www.cpj.org/awards00/awardee_speeches.html; Freedom Forum, "Malaysia Bans Internet Newspaper From Official Events," 7 February 2001, www.freedomforum.org; Freedom Forum, "Malaysian Prime Minister Accuses Malaysiakini.com of Treason," 7 March 2001, www.freedomforum.org; Committee to Protect Journalists, "Malaysia: Government Blocks International Magazines," 7 March 2001, www.cpj.org/news/2001/Malaysia07_march01na.html.

⁴¹ Andreas Harsono, "Journalists' Use of the Internet Bubbled Up From Underground," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 2000), 74-6; and David T. Hill and Krishna Sen, "The Internet in Indonesia's New Democracy," in Peter Ferdinand, *The Internet, Democracy*, 119-36.

⁴² Drazen Pantic email to author, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 23 July 2001; Drazen Pantic, "Internet in Serbia: From the Dark Side of the Moon to the Internet Revolution," www.firstmonday.dk/issues2_4/pantic/index.html; Drazen Pantic, "The Case of B92," home.nyu.edu/~dp51/index2.html; Reporters Without Borders, "Serbia: September-October 2000," www.rsf.org; IPI, "Veran Matic," www.freemedia.org; Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 168-77; and Andrew L. Shapiro, *Control Revolution*, 9.

B) Pessimistic Indicators

Despite these Internet triumphs, however, many cyber-journalists experience censorship on a regular basis. "Governments around the world . . . are rushing to eradicate freedom of expression on the Internet," the non-profit advocacy group Human Rights Watch has complained. ". . . Restrictions on Internet access and content are increasing worldwide, under all forms of government . . . [in] an international trend toward censorship." Although all advances in communication technology have historically been greeted with censorship, "[t]he Internet, as the first truly 'mass' medium, is even more threatening than these earlier media," the watchdog group asserted. ". . . It is precisely because of the Internet's potential for increasing the political participation of the disenfranchised that governments are seeking to control it."⁴³

Governments use a variety of different methods, often in combination, to stop cyber-muckrakers from undermining their power. These tactics span the continuum from heavy-handed violence by the state to more subtle control through corporate intermediaries. In general, however, these varying methods fall into one of two categories: After-the-fact *retaliation* against the trouble-making journalists; and before-the-fact *prevention* to keep such dangerous reporting away from the public in the first place.

1. Retaliation

Retaliation against troublesome Internet muckrakers can include shutting down websites, lawsuits, prison, and even violence.

A) Violence

- In the Ukraine, the decapitated body of Georgy Gongadze, editor of a muckraking website that frequently criticized the country's president, was discovered buried in a shallow grave. The Ukrainian president himself was ultimately implicated in the assassination by tape recordings in which he personally ordered a henchman to take the cyber-reporter and "drive him out, undress him, fuck, leave him without his pants."⁴⁴
- In Nigeria, when authorities learned that local journalists had purchased state-of-the-art computers to begin on-line reporting, police set their newsroom on fire and destroyed all of their digital equipment.⁴⁵
- In Tunisia, on-line journalist Taufik Ben Brick was beaten up for his cyber-criticism of the government.⁴⁶

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, "Silencing the Net: The Threat to Freedom of Expression On-Line," (1996 May), www.hrw.org.

⁴⁴ Sean Ransom, "Murder Threatens Kuchma Regime," *IPI Report* (No. 1, 2001), www.freemedia.org; and Adrian Karatnycky, "A Death In Kiev: Secret Tapes, Missing Reporters," *Wall Street Journal Europe* (8 Dec. 2000), www.freedomhouse.org/media/120800wsj.html.

⁴⁵ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 8.

⁴⁶ Tanya Accone, "Digital Dividends," *Nieman Reports*, 68.

B) Prison

- In China, authorities have jailed 14 people in the past three years for distributing information on the Internet. Half of those imprisoned were cyber-journalists, including investigative reporters who exposed government corruption. All of them had criticized the government on-line. Some were beaten while being interrogated by police.⁴⁷
- In Cuba, reporter Mario Veira Gonzalez was charged with "slander" for criticizing the Cuban judicial system on a Miami-based website. Another Cuban cyber-journalist, Jesús Joel Díaz, Hernández was sentenced to four years in prison for "dangerousness" after his reports were posted on still another Internet site.⁴⁸
- In Turkey, the moderator of a cyber forum on one of the country's main Internet access providers was sentenced to more than three years in prison for "insulting and mocking institutions" by allowing stories critical of Turkey's human rights record to be posted on-line.⁴⁹
- In Zambia, two editors were jailed for "possessing state secrets" after their website revealed corruption and repression by the government.⁵⁰
- In Sierra Leone, two troublesome journalists were arrested for "illegal online activity."⁵¹

C. Shut Downs

- In Russia, the government closed down a website called Media-Most, which was run by independent journalists who had battled president Vladimir Putin.⁵²
- In Kazakhstan, officials shut down an independent on-line news service for what was called "technical reasons."⁵³

⁴⁷ Committee to Protect Journalists, "China: Internet Essayist Jailed for 'Subversion,'" (25 June 2001), www.cpj.org/protests/01/ltrs/China25jun01pl.html; A. Lin Neuman, "The Great Firewall," CPJ Briefings, www.cpj.org/Briefings/2001/China_jan01.html; and Freedom Forum, "China Sentences 'Internet Dissident' to Four Years in Prison," (30 April 2001), www.freedomforum.org.

⁴⁸ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 181.

⁴⁹ Reporters Without Borders, "Turkey: The Press Still Under A Stranglehold," (17 April 2001), 2, www.rsf.org/uk.

⁵⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Zambian Editors Arrested After 10 Days in Hiding," (13 March 1996), www.cpj.org; Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 182-3.

⁵¹ Tanya Accone, "Digital Dividends," *Nieman Reports*, 68.

⁵² Freedom Forum, "Moscow Court Orders Liquidation of Gusinsky's Media Empire," (31 May 2001), www.freedomforum.org.

⁵³ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Europe: Press Freedom Facts 2000," www.cpj.org/attacks00/europe.html.

- In Zambia, police ordered a newspaper to eliminate from its website specific stories that had angered the country's president.⁵⁴
- In China, authorities have repeatedly shut down news websites and Internet forums that criticized Chinese censorship and other human rights violations.⁵⁵
- In Tunisia, authorities not only shut down an Amnesty International website that criticized Tunisian censorship; the government also set up its own bogus site designed to look like Amnesty International's but which praised Tunisia's human rights record instead of criticizing it.⁵⁶

C) Lawsuits

So far, there have been relatively few libel or other lawsuits against cyber-journalists and their websites; the international legal system has apparently not kept pace with the rapid evolution of communications technology. But it would seem to be only a matter of time before the targets of Internet muckrakers realize the unique advantages such lawsuits would enjoy. Especially in authoritarian countries, where libel laws are extremely unfriendly to journalists, Internet reporters face genuine legal exposure. "The Internet, because it is global, will allow the laws of the most repressive nations to influence the conduct of journalists in the freest ones," observes the senior counsel for the *New York Times*. "[Although] a foreign lawsuit is only truly worrisome if the defendant has assets at risk . . . global [media] companies have assets everywhere, and a victorious libel plaintiff can probably collect his money not only where he won it but also in scores of other countries that will unthinkingly honor the libel judgments as a matter of international comity."⁵⁷

2) Prevention

Governments can prevent watchdog journalism on the Internet by using surveillance and threats, and by directly or indirectly limiting, blocking or banning access to selective websites, ISPs, or the entire world-wide-web itself.

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Silencing the Net," 20; and Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 182-3.

⁵⁵ Associated Press /Freedom Forum, "China Closes Internet Forums Critical of Government," (25 June 2001), www.freedomforum.org; Reporters Without Borders, "China: New Wave of Censorship on Internet," (2 July 2001), www.rsf.org/uk; and Reporters Without Borders, "China Internet: A Chronicle of Repression," www.rsf.org/uk.

⁵⁶ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 183; and Joel Campagna, "Overview of the Middle East and North Africa," (1999), www.cpj.org/attacks99/mideast99/mideast.html.

⁵⁷ Adam Liptak, "The Internet, the Law, and the Press," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 2000), 13-15.

A) Surveillance

According to Human Rights Watch, direct government monitoring of the Internet is common in many countries and poses "potentially deadly consequences for those who would expose abuses of state power."⁵⁸ Among the known cases:

- Tunisia uses government-approved ISPs to spy on Internet users by requiring the companies to inform authorities once a month who their customers are and what they wrote on line.⁵⁹
- Pakistani authorities directly monitor Internet communication themselves and have even forced private ISPs to have their customers sign a contract agreeing to the surveillance.⁶⁰
- In China, security forces have installed monitoring devices on ISP servers to track individual email accounts. They also route all international phone calls through gateways controlled by the government.⁶¹
- In Singapore, authorities made a public display of searching 80,000 computer files of customers from a local Internet Service Provider (ISP). "Censorship can no longer be 100 percent effective," the minister of information told reporters, "but even if it is only 20 percent effective we should not stop censoring."⁶²

B) Complete Ban

- In Burma, authorities literally outlawed the Internet. The only exceptions are for a few select military, government, and government-approved corporate leaders, whose computers and modems must first be registered with the regime.⁶³
- In Afghanistan, the Taliban banned the Internet in order to "control all those things that are wrong, obscene, immoral and against Islam."⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Internet in the Mideast," www.hrw.org/wr2k/Issues-04.html.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Silencing the Net," 2, 12, 20; and Tanya Accone, "Digital Dividends," *Nieman Reports*, 67.

⁶⁰ David Tortell, "Internet Censorship Report," (April 1998), Executive Summary, 3, Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists, www.cjfe.org/publications/internet/sum.html.

⁶¹ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 187-8.

⁶² Garry Rodan, "The Internet and Political Control in Singapore," *Political Science Quarterly* 113, (No. 1, 1998), 187, 193.

⁶³ David Cozac, Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists, "Internet Censorship Report: The Challenges for Free Expression On-Line," (1998 April), chp. 1, 2-3; and Jerry Everard, *Virtual States*, 32-3.

- In Libya, military strongman Mu'ammr Gadhafi has kept the Internet completely out of his isolated country.⁶⁵
- In Liberia, the government ordered the "cessation . . . of all broadcast and newspaper postings on the Internet." The only exception is if journalists register with authorities and provide logs of all information that is put on-line.⁶⁶

C) Blocking

- Many regimes—Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, China, Germany, India, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Arab Republic, Vietnam, Yemen—block specific media websites deemed dangerous. Proxy server filters censor writing about religion, sex, and politics, using computer technology to search for such dangerous key words as "democracy" or "human rights."⁶⁷
- In China, *all* media websites are banned. Non-media website are forbidden from carrying news from foreign media without government permission. In addition, all portal sites must carry propaganda put out by the state.⁶⁸
- In Syria, authorities went even farther by blocking all Yahoo and Hotmail websites to prevent any sort of email communication whatsoever.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ R. Frank Lebowitz, "Taliban Ban Internet in Afghanistan," Digital Freedom Network, <http://dfn.org/focus/afghanistan/internetban.html>.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Rights Group Surveys Online Freedom of Expression in the Region," (8 July 1999), 2, www.hrw.org/press/1999/jul/mena-int0707.html.

⁶⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Liberia Bars Media From Posting on Internet," (27 October 1998), www.cpj.org/protests/98ltrs/liberia/27oct98html.

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Freedom of Expression on the Internet," (1999), 2, www.hrw.org; Human Rights Watch, "Silencing the Net," 3, 14, 16; Committee to Protect Journalists, "Syria," (2000), www.cpj.org; Committee to Protect Journalists, "Saudi Arabia and Other Members of the Gulf Cooperation Council," www.cpj.org/attacks97/mideast/saudi-arabia.html; Reporters Without Borders, "Morocco: Protest Letter," (19 April 2001), www.rsf.org/uk; Roger Parkinson, World Association of Newspapers, "Challenges to Press Freedom in East and Central Europe, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States," (25 September 2000), 3, www.fiej.org/pf/eastern_europe/warsaw.html; R. Frank Lebowitz, "South Korea Moves to Censor Internet," Digital Freedom Network, <http://dfn.org/focus/skorea/micbill.html>; Andrew L. Shapiro, *Control Revolution*, 67, 183; and Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 187.

⁶⁸ A. Lin Neumann, "The Great Firewall," 4.

⁶⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Syria," (2000), www.cpj.org.

D) Limiting Access

- In Cuba, citizens must file a petition with the government giving a “valid reason” why they want to go on-line.⁷⁰
- In Iran, authorities closed more than 400 cybercafés to “eliminate” those that did not “comply” with its “national culture.”⁷¹
- In China, Internet users are required to register with security forces, supply detailed personal information about themselves, and swear not to “read, copy or disseminate information that threatens state security.” For added measure, Chinese officials recently closed more than 8,000 cybercafés.⁷²

E) Controlling ISPs

- In numerous countries—including Azerbaijan, Botswana, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Vietnam and Zimbabwe—the state exerts direct control over the Internet by outlawing private service providers so that only the government can provide on-line connection. (In case that wasn’t enough, Iraq’s government also banned all modems and officially denounced the Internet as “the end of civilizations, cultures, interests and ethics.”)⁷³
- Other regimes—like China and Singapore—maintain control over private ISPs by requiring them to be licensed by the state. In Tunisia, ISPs are required to have “constant oversight” of ISP servers “to insure” that nothing “contrary to public order” is ever posted on-line.⁷⁴

F) Threats

- In Laos, authorities threatened to prosecute or expel journalists who “use the Internet in the wrong way” by writing “misleading news stories to create . . . doubts among the public, at home or abroad.”⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Reporters Without Borders, “Cuba: Cyber Dissident Sentenced to Two Years’ Imprisonment,” (14 June 2001), www.rsf.org.

⁷¹ Freedom Forum, “400 Cybercafés Closed in Tehran,” (15 May 2001), www.freedomforum.org.

⁷² Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire*, 187; and Reporters Without Borders, “China Internet: A Chronicle of Repression,” www.rsf.org/uk.

⁷³ Leonard R. Sussman, “Digital Time for Censors,” *Presstime* (October 2000); Human Rights Watch, “Silencing the Net,” 20; David Cozac, “Internet Censorship Report,” chp. 1, 3; CPJ, “Press Freedom Facts 2000,” “Asia 1999,” “Europe 2000,” “Turkmenistan 2000,” “Iraq 2000,” “World Report 1998,” www.cpj.org; and Roger Parkinson, “Challenges to Press Freedom,” 3.

⁷⁴ Tanya Accone, “Digital Divides,” *Nieman Reports*, 67; and Human Rights Watch, “Internet in the Mideast,” “Silencing the Net,” 2, 12, 20, www.hrw.org/hrw/advocacy/internet/mena/liability.htm.

⁷⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists, “Laos: Government Issues Strict New Internet Regulations,” (27 October 2000), www.cpj.org/protests/00ltrs/Laos27oct00pl.html.

- In Turkey, the state has threatened to fine websites up to \$85,000 for posting “untrue news, insults and similar material.”⁷⁶
- In Senegal, journalist Daniel Bekoutou received death threats after posting an on-line article about government involvement in torture. He had to flee to France for safety.⁷⁷

Analysis

All of these methods of censoring Internet journalism, however troubling, must be viewed in context. So far, the evidence suggests that these various obstacles to cyber-muckraking have actually been no more restrictive—and in a number of cases have been *less* restrictive—than what non-Internet journalists have also suffered in these countries.⁷⁸ Indeed, most of the regimes that have clamped down on on-line reporting regularly engage in torture and other, far worse human rights violations.⁷⁹ More to the point, despite this cyber-censorship, the Internet overall has increased rather than decreased free expression throughout the world—even in the most authoritarian of regimes.

China, for example, has imprisoned more on-line journalists than any other nation, part of an Internet crackdown that has often been compared to its ancient, unsuccessful attempt to block barbarian invasion by erecting the “Great Wall” around its borders. Yet even the Committee to Protect Journalists acknowledges that “China with the Internet is certainly a freer place than China without the Internet,” if only

⁷⁶ Freedom Forum, “Turkish Parliament Passes Laws Restricting Internet, Broadcast Freedoms,” (8 June 2001), www.freedomforum.org.

⁷⁷ Tanya Accone, “Digital Divides,” *Nieman Reports*, 67.

⁷⁸ In the Mideast, for example, Human Rights Watch found that “[m]ost countries that have allowed Internet access have tolerated freer expression online than is permitted in the local news media. Kuwait, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon have all permitted relatively unfettered online speech for the thousands of users in each country, even as they enforce press laws against print periodicals that publish ‘objectionable’ material.” Human Rights Watch, “A Cautious Start,” *The Internet in the Mideast*, 2, www.hrw.org. A study by Freedom House of 131 countries worldwide reached a similar conclusion: “Perhaps surprisingly, many traditionally authoritative countries now permit relatively unrestricted use of the Internet by citizens, while several of the most democratic states attempt to impose restrictions on the Internet in the name of protecting national security and public decency.” However, these Internet restrictions in democratic countries as a rule are far less draconian than in authoritarian ones, whose uncharacteristic hands-off policy toward the Internet may be less a function of liberalism than elitism; in poor countries, the Internet isn’t even an option for the overwhelming majority of the population. See Appendix for a worldwide breakdown of Internet access. Leonard R. Sussman and Kristen Guida, “How Free? The Web and the Press,” Freedom House, www.freedomhouse.org.

⁷⁹ For example, in the Mideast, even Human Rights Watch acknowledges that “in a region where torture is commonplace and free elections the exception, the issue of Internet speech may seem low on the human rights agenda. It may also appear to be an elitist concern in countries where illiteracy is rampant and the cost of a personal computer and perhaps even a telephone is beyond the reach of most households. But it is arguably in less-developed and more repressive countries that the Internet can have the greatest impact.” Human Rights Watch, “Introduction,” *The Internet in the Mideast*, 1, www.hrw.org.

because the total amount of information available is still greater than it was before the Internet, whatever the new technology's limitations might be.⁸⁰

Why has free expression increased even in countries that have cracked down on the Internet? In part, because there are limits to what any of the most authoritarian regimes have been able to do to stop it. China's "Great Firewall" against the Internet, for example, has been easily penetrated by many Chinese who gain access to forbidden websites by dialing into servers located in other countries, thus avoiding Chinese proxy servers and their censoring software.⁸¹ Other creative strategies abound: using a pseudonym to send e-mail anonymously from a randomly chosen Internet café; using encryption to create special untraceable "tunnels" to banned websites; having foreigners establish "mirror sites" that are untouchable to local authorities; using pay telephones or wireless technology, which are more difficult for the government to trace; and changing website addresses to confuse the bureaucrat-censors.⁸²

Of course, the technology can cut both ways. Repressive governments can use it to create new ways to spy on citizens, to spread fear and intimidation, stifling dissent and free expression.⁸³ Less overt censorship is already taking place by corporations using search engines that systematically exclude specified websites; so-called "stealth" filters surreptitiously block access to certain sites while falsely blaming the censorship on technical difficulties.⁸⁴ As Internet scholar Gordon Graham points out, whether the censors or the public will win in the end

must turn in part on factual questions—questions about what is and what is not technically possible. These are not questions that can be answered once and for all, however. We know that what is technically impossible, even inconceivable, at one time, can become utterly commonplace at another. It would be foolish therefore to let anything important turn on a question of technical possibility. This is especially true of the Internet which . . . is only at the start of its development. Who knows what means may develop by which states, alone or in concert, or society more generally perhaps, are enabled to control and regulate the activities of the individual on the Internet?⁸⁵

⁸⁰ A. Lin Neumann, "The Great Firewall," 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸² GILC, "Regardless of Frontiers," 10; and Philip J. Cunningham, "Coffee and Copy at Asian Internet Cafés," *Nieman Reports*, (Winter 2000), 73.

⁸³ "[W]hile journalists can use [technology] to track others down," one British writer noted, "it can be used to keep track of journalists. Every time anyone goes online they may give away information about themselves, where they are and what they are accessing." Carole Fleming, "Journalism and New Technology," Hugo de Burgh, *Investigative Journalism*, 193. See also Gary Rodan, "Internet and Political Control in Singapore," *Political Science Quarterly*, 74-6, 89.

⁸⁴ David McGuire, "Civil Liberties Groups Oppose 'Stealth' Web Blocking," *Newsbytes*, (18 May 2001), www.newsbytes.com; and Lucas D. Introna and Helen Nissenbaum, "Shaping the Web: Why the Politics of Search Engines Matters," *Information-Society* 16 (Summer 2000), 169-85.

⁸⁵ Gordon Graham, *The Internet*, 101.

Still, says Graham, no matter what new technologies the censor may create, “the invention of every such device provides a stimulus to the invention of another device which will circumvent it.” Like America’s failed war on drugs, there is little reason to believe that “the policing of illicit material on the Internet . . . would be any different.”⁸⁶

Yet there is another, equally important reason why repressive governments have not censored the Internet more effectively: their desire for economic growth. “Authoritarian regimes are attempting to reconcile their eagerness to reap the economic benefits of the Internet with maintaining control over the information inside their borders,” notes Human Rights Watch.⁸⁷ China, once again, is an instructive example. Despite president Jiang Zemin’s crackdown on cyber-journalists, the Chinese leader enthusiastically acknowledges “the tremendous power of information technology” which he wants to “vigorously promote” as an “engine for the development of the [Chinese] economy.”⁸⁸ For the leaders of other developing countries as well, the Internet’s threat of political upheaval must be balanced against its promise of economic modernization.

This conflict between competing economic and political desires mirrors the larger, inherent conflict between the Internet and the nation-state itself. After all, if the Internet is “the ultimate globalisation,” as one scholar put it, “[t]he state on the other hand depends on borders. . . . The more isolated and less penetrated the state is, then the more it remains a sovereign, independent entity.”⁸⁹ Or, as another Internet scholar has pointed out:

The internationalism of the Internet lies not merely in the fact that it connects people across nations, for many human devices and activities do this. The point is rather that the use and exploration of the Internet is wholly *indifferent to* international boundaries. People who are otherwise strangers are linked by common interests which have nothing to do with nationality. . . . [W]hat this means is that there is a burgeoning sphere of contact and collaboration over which states, *even in concert*, exercise little or no control . . . [creating] the potential for the Internet to diminish the power of the state by creating spheres of activity indifferent to it. . . . By subverting national boundaries it calls into question the power of the state as the dominant force . . . around which human life has largely been structured for centuries.⁹⁰

But if the Internet poses such a threat to national governments, why haven’t they done more to control it? Perhaps the long-term political consequences appear relatively unthreatening. So far, the Internet has served largely as the plaything of an affluent elite rather than a weapon of the discontented

⁸⁶ Ibid., 114, 113.

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Silencing the Net” (May 1996), 1-2.

⁸⁸ A. Lin Neumann, CPJ, “Great Firewall,” 2.

⁸⁹ Michael Taladay, “Preface,” in Jerry Everard, *Virtual States*, ix.

⁹⁰ Gordon Graham, *The Internet*, 86-7, 38.

masses. After all, 80 percent of the world's population have never even made a phone call, let alone explored the global information super-highway.⁹¹ "The twentieth century is full of technological breakthroughs that have yet to reach much of the world's populace," one scholar has noted, "from telephones to air conditioners, jet planes to laser surgery."⁹² But once again, the past need not be prologue. "We know from other instances that popular technology can spread very quickly and make its appearance in even poor places with surprising rapidity and extent," Gordon Graham points out. "There was a time, for instance, when expense limited the technology of the transistor radio to small areas of the globe. Now, transistor radios are ubiquitous."⁹³ The same could one day be true of the Internet.

Perhaps the real reason authoritarian governments do not seem to have more fear of the Internet's (politically) revolutionary potential may be a belief that the technology will inevitably be tamed by corporate control. After all, as one scholar has noted, "the greatest impact of the Internet so far has not been in politics. Until now it has rather been upon business and commerce."⁹⁴ In the same way that the economic ambitions of governments have tempered their political temptation to ban the Internet, so, too have the economic ambitions of multinational communications firms tempered their desire to allow their new technology to be used for political purposes.

Yet again, China is a good example. After authorities in Beijing complained, Yahoo agreed to censor the Chinese language version of its popular website to eliminate critical news coverage by such mainstream news outlets such as the Associated Press and Reuters.⁹⁵ Similarly, media baron Rupert Murdoch had to censor his news network's coverage of China to insure access to its enormous—and enormously profitable—audience.⁹⁶

Such "voluntary" self-censorship by media corporations—working in tandem with the governments whose approval they need to gain lucrative market access—is most likely the real future of the Internet. One watchdog group calls this "privatised censorship" in which governments essentially outsource to corporations the task of suppressing free speech: "It's a more sophisticated means of achieving the same goal. The backing is still state power and government threat, but the actual implementation and mechanics of the suppression of material is delegated" to the corporation.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Jerry Everard, *Virtual States*, 42.

⁹² Richard Parker, *Mixed Signals*, 1.

⁹³ Gordon Graham, *The Internet*, 70.

⁹⁴ Peter Ferdinand, *Internet, Democracy*, 2.

⁹⁵ Philip J. Cunningham, "Coffee and Copy at Asian Internet Cafés," *Nieman Reports*, 73.

⁹⁶ Murdoch kow-towed to Chinese authorities who thought the BBC too critical of China by entirely eliminating BBC news coverage from his broadcast signal in China. Murdoch also arranged business deals with Chinese partners—including an Internet joint venture with China's *People's Daily* newspaper—and had his publishing company print what one critic called a "fawning biography" of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, written by Deng's daughter. Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, (New York: The New Press, 1999), 99, 115-6.

⁹⁷ Global Internet Liberty Campaign, "Member Statement on 'Impact of Self-Regulation and Filtering on Human Rights to Freedom of Expression,'" 3, www.gilc.org/speech/ratings/gilc-oecd-398.html.

This indirect censorship is already taking place in North America and Europe, where corporate cyber-censors use content filters to screen out pornography or otherwise “uphold public safety and morality.”⁹⁸ In Western Europe, this has led to censoring right-wing websites for distributing “hate speech.”⁹⁹ In New Zealand, a site for cigars was banned because of the country’s law against tobacco advertising.¹⁰⁰ Compared to more brutish censorship in many authoritarian regimes, such “voluntary” restrictions by corporations is relatively tame. But it is a disquieting counterpoint to the hope of an Internet “revolution” in freedom of expression.

Equally discouraging are the apparent historical parallels to the Internet. According to Robert McChesney’s seminal work, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, the inventions of radio and television were also once heralded as revolutionary breakthroughs with staggering implications for democracy and free speech; but in the United States, each medium was eventually taken over by commercial interests, the idealistic dreams of earlier days smashed on the rocks of corporate takeovers and the next quarter’s earnings statement.¹⁰¹ Indeed, it appears that over time all new forms of communication have been met with censorship by corporations and governments, Kings and Popes. Even the dramatic breakthrough of Gutenberg’s printing press in the fifteenth century, which helped undermine the Roman Catholic Church and arguably helped usher in the Enlightenment, led to a Papal index banning the works of more than 500 authors.¹⁰² Perhaps the Internet will ultimately prove to be as notable a breakthrough as the printing press and will be able to realize its revolutionary potential. But it would be premature to conclude that such an end is inevitable.

Indeed, some experts fear that this new technology could eventually narrow rather than expand human thought. “The danger of the Internet,” wrote one Internet scholar, “is that it threatens to overwhelm us with so much information—too much information—so as to give the appearance of democratizing and enriching our political lives while actually drowning us in irrelevancies.”¹⁰³ While the Internet may expand quantity in the marketplace of ideas, its ultimate effect may be to diminish the diversity of those ideas that actually reach citizens. “Even as new technology gives individuals the ability to speak without fear of institutional censorship,” Andrew Shapiro observes, “it gives all of us a new ability to avoid speech we don’t want to

⁹⁸ Andrew Shapiro, *The Control Revolution*, 62, 67

⁹⁹ Anthony Gauthier, “World Wide Worry,” *News Media and the Law*, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, www.rcfp.org.

¹⁰⁰ Kim Griggs, “Modify Site or No Cigar,” *Wired* (29 May 2000), www.politechbot.com/p01193.html.

¹⁰¹ Robert McChesney, *Rich Media, passim*.

¹⁰² Andrew Shapiro, *Control Revolution*, 5; Human Rights Watch, “Silencing the Net,” 6.

¹⁰³ Or, as Neil Postman argued in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, it is the difference between the differing dystopian nightmares of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley: “What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared that the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.” Beth Simone Noveck, “Paradoxical Partners: Electronic Communication and Electronic Democracy,” in Peter Ferdinand, *Internet, Democracy*, 23.

hear. The result, in the aggregate, is that the speech of certain individuals—especially marginal speakers—may well be lost in cyberspace.”¹⁰⁴

If the freedom to speak is not coupled with the ability to be heard, then freedom of speech may be effectively neutralized by freedom *from* speech. As the U.S. Supreme Court noted more than fifty years ago, “[t]he right of free speech is guaranteed every citizen that he may reach the minds of willing listeners and to do so there must be opportunity to win their attention.”¹⁰⁵ But winning the attention of an Internet audience—with literally millions of competing websites—may be an almost impossible feat. Robert McChesney has even argued that by providing the appearance but not the reality of being heard, the perverse result may be that dissidents who are ignored can simply be dismissed with the argument that “they should shut up and start their own website or visit any one of the millions of obscure websites.”¹⁰⁶

Even if Internet access could be guaranteed to all—a big *if*, clearly—equality of on-line *opportunity* should not be confused with equality of *condition*. As Gordon Graham observes, “equal freedom of expression for all citizens does not imply equal influence. The impact of . . . relative wealth shows itself on the Internet as much as in any other medium.”¹⁰⁷ Despite the equalizing promise of the Internet, the fact remains that a sophisticated website established by a wealthy media corporation like AOL/Time Warner—with jazzy visuals and multiple links to other sites—will inevitably draw more audience than a primitive website put up by a lone independent muckraker. “Having a website does not mean many people will know of its existence and therefore seek it out,” Robert McChesney points out.¹⁰⁸ Even if the Internet could guarantee everyone the ability to say everything they want on-line, the actual impact for freedom of expression might still be negligible—no different, really, than the freedom to stand on a street corner and hand out fliers one-by-one, only to see them automatically tossed in the trash without even being read. “This leads to an interesting ‘If a tree falls in the forest...’ question,” Andrew Shapiro notes: if an on-line dissident “speaks and everyone sets their filters so that they don’t hear him, is he speaking freely at all? Certainly, such a situation does not help us, as a society, to achieve the broad democratic aims of free speech.”¹⁰⁹

In the long run, then, it would seem almost inevitable that only corporate media, with its requisite deep financial pockets, will be able to have any real journalistic impact on the Internet. “And here,” notes Robert McChesney, “the prospects are not encouraging,” especially for investigative reporting.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Shapiro, *Control Revolution*, 126.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁰⁶ Robert McChesney, *Rich Media*, 183.

¹⁰⁷ Gordon Graham, *The Internet*, 78-9.

¹⁰⁸ Robert McChesney, *Rich Media*, 176.

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Shapiro, *Control Revolution*, 128.

As a rule, journalism is not something that can be done piecemeal by amateurs working in their spare time. It is best done by people who make a living at it, and who have training, experience, and resources. Journalism also requires institutional support (and protection from commercial and governmental attack) to survive and prosper. The corporate media giants have failed miserably to provide a viable journalism, and as they dominate the journalism online, there is no reason to expect anything different. Those who argue that the Internet may revolutionize mainstream journalism for the better tend to downplay the commercial pressures that have produced the present deplorable situation. They present no plausible explanation for why corporate media's Internet journalism will be qualitatively superior for democracy than what they currently produce elsewhere. . . . At present the trend for online journalism is to accentuate the worst synergistic and profit-hungry attributes of commercial journalism, with its emphasis on trivia, celebrities, and consumer news. One observer characterized the news offerings on AOL, drawn from all the commercial media giants, as less a 'marketplace of ideas' than 'a shopping mall of notions.'¹¹⁰

It is perhaps telling that the most famous example of on-line "investigative reporting" has been cyber-gossip Matt Drudge's scoop of President Clinton's affair with a White House intern. Drudge, who "spares himself the drudgery of fact-checking," in the words of the *Economist*, is viewed with derision by most journalists. "The Drudge factor," as Andrew L. Shapiro calls it, "—that is, the extreme disintermediation of our information environment—means that responsibility for determining truth rests as much with those who consume information as with those who produce it."¹¹¹ It is the ultimate corporate philosophy applied to what once was the journalistic notion of a public trust: *caveat emptor*, let the buyer beware.

In the end, it is the very corporate nature of news media that more than anything else is likely to undermine any potential journalistic revolution on the Internet. "[A]t times the media giants generate first-rate journalism," McChesney has noted, "but it is a minuscule fraction of their output and often causes just the sort of uproar that media firms prefer to avoid." As we have seen, although Third World journalistic heroes have used the Internet and other forms of media to challenge authoritarian governments around the world

¹¹⁰ Robert McChesney, *Rich Media*, 176, 175. McChesney is hardly alone in his critique of contemporary American journalism. Martin Koughan, director of ICIJ's global media project, found that "[n]ews operations controlled by conglomerates are reluctant to rock the boat with investigative reporting because media increasingly functions as the marketing arm of the new world economy. These companies speak first and foremost to individuals as consumers, not as citizens." Another writer found that "[e]nterprising journalism is . . . rare at the sites of large news organizations. . . . Today's journalism has acquired a drive-by quality, as it hits on a hot topic one day, then runs away from it the next, before anyone can digest the meaning. . . . The Internet adds to the damage by creating drive-by news consumers who skip blithely from bulletin to bulletin while feeling they are keeping up with things. To be sure, the World Wide Web in total offers an ever-growing array of news and information. But its hot-button nature tends to emphasize the worst of journalism rather than the best." Martin Koughan, "The Global Media Project: A University of Southern California Annenberg School/Normal Lear Center Investigation of Declining News Standards Around the World," unpublished paper provided to author by Martin Koughan; and Arthur E. Rowse, "Taming Online News for Wall Street," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 2000), 21.

¹¹¹ Andrew Shapiro, *Control Revolution*, 136. "Of course," as Shapiro also rightly points out, "even without Drudge, news of Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky would eventually have broken." *Ibid.* 135.

only in rare instances are these murdered and imprisoned journalists in the direct employ of the media giants. . . [perhaps because] they lack what it takes to become successful in the brave (new) world of commercial journalism. . . . [While] the global media system can be at times a progressive force, especially as it enters nations that had been tightly controlled by corrupt crony media systems . . . this progressive aspect of the globalizing media market should not be blown out of proportion; the last thing the media giants want to do anywhere is rock the boat, as long as they can do their business. The global commercial media system is *radical*, in the sense that it will respect no tradition or custom, on balance, if it stands in the way of significantly increased profits. But it is ultimately *conservative*, because the media giants are significant beneficiaries of the current global social structure. . . . While the Internet is in many ways revolutionizing the way we lead our lives, it is a revolution that does not appear to include changing the identity and nature of those in power.¹¹²

Conclusion

So what does all of this add up to? In terms of receiving information (input), the Internet seems to have made positive but not revolutionary changes for investigate reporters—both as a newsgathering tool and as an instrument for journalistic collaboration across borders. In terms of sending out information (output), the impact of the Internet is less clear. Certainly the *potential* exists for a global revolution of free expression in general and investigative reporting in particular. Cyber-muckrakers in a handful of countries (Indonesia, Serbia, Malaysia, and several Mideast nations) have used the Internet to get around censorship and make brave, important contributions to truth-telling. But based on the available literature reviewed by the author, far more countries (41) have found ways to punish or prevent on-line investigative reporting. So far, any visions of an Internet revolution in global muckraking must be based more on hope than experience.

Still, when it comes to the Internet, the temptation is to seize on its promise rather than its actual performance to date. To be sure, it is still very early in the Internet's evolution, and only a psychic could claim to know for sure where it is headed. But as Michael Schudson has argued, media scholars all too often adhere to a "technological determinism . . . a tendency to reduce complex social phenomena to a . . . technical cause."¹¹³ Certainly technology matters—from Gutenberg to the World Wide Web—but in the end, the Internet is only one more technological innovation among many, one more medium that, like all others, ultimately depends on the individuals who run them. As Edward R. Murrow once said of television, which was then the new cutting-edge technology upon which so many hopes seemed to ride: "This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to these ends. Otherwise, it is merely lights and wires in a box."¹¹⁴ Ultimately, the same must be said even of "this instrument" the Internet.

¹¹² Robert McChesney, *Rich Media*, 114, 117, 100, 182.

¹¹³ Michael Schudson, "Toward a Troubleshooting Manual for Journalism History," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (Autumn 1997), 467, 470.

¹¹⁴ A.M. Sperber, *Murrow: His Life and Times* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1986), 540.

Perhaps I should have been able to anticipate all of this from my experience with Egyptian censors ten years ago. Although I eventually found a way to smuggle our CNN videotapes out of Egypt—and although I was ultimately able to broadcast our story¹¹⁵—I did not fully understand then what my research now also suggests: the timidity of corporate media outlets like CNN. At the time, what surprised me most was not the heavy-handed censorship of the Egyptians but the reaction of my bosses who ran CNN. Rather than being outraged at the assault on their own staff and on free expression as a whole, they were mostly concerned about protecting their relationship with the Egyptian government, whose blessing they needed to maintain their news coverage in the country. The real focus of the corporate brass was ratings and profits, not censorship. It was a response that should have told me all I needed to know.

¹¹⁵ Mark Feldstein, "Profiting from Poverty," CNN documentary, Dec. 1991.

Appendix

Attempting to measure freedom on the Internet is at best an inexact science, but the non-profit group Freedom House compiled the following country-by-country rating system for 131 nations worldwide. Based on the number of ISPs and the per-capita use of the Internet during 2000—a somewhat crude although quantifiable measurement—Freedom House rated countries as Most Restrictive, Moderately Restrictive, and Least Restrictive in terms of freedom allowed on the Internet.¹¹⁶

FREEDOM ON THE INTERNET

Country	Number of ISPs	Number of Users	% Population	Rating
Albania	2	n/a	n/a	Moderately
Algeria	1	20,000	0.06	Most
Angola	2	12,000	0.11	Most
Antigua and Barbuda	n/a	2,000	5.5	Least
Argentina	217	900,000	2.44	Moderately
Armenia	3	30,000	0.9	Least
Australia	709	8.42m	43.94	Least
Austria	35	3m	36.9	Least
Azerbaijan	2	8,000	0.1	Most
Bahamas	3	15,000	5.09	Least
Bahrain	3	37,500	5.96	Most
Barbados	3	6,000	2.19	Least
Belarus	1	10,000	0.1	Moderately
Belgium	51	2.7m	26.4	Least
Belize	n/a	12,000	4.82	Least
Benin	n/a	10,000	0.16	Moderately
Bolivia	5	35,000	0.43	Moderately
Botswana	2	12,000	0.76	Moderately
Brazil	197	9.84m	5.7	Least
Bulgaria	20	20,000	2.57	Least
Canada	750	13.3m	42.8	Least
Chile	26	625,000	4.12	Least
China	3	16.9m	1.34	Most
Colombia	13	600,000	1.51	Moderately
Congo, D.R.	1	500	0.02	Most
Costa Rica	2	150,000	4.04	Least
Croatia	4	100,000	2.14	Least
Cuba	1	60,000	0.54	Most

¹¹⁶ Leonard R. Sussman and Kristen Guida, "How Free? The Web and the Press," www.freedomhouse.org.

Cyprus	5	80,000	10.55	Least
Czech Republic	35	35,000	3.4	Least
Denmark	12	2.58m	48.37	Least
Dominica	n/a	2,000	2.8	Least
Dominican Republic	1	25,000	3.5	Least
Ecuador	8	20,000	0.15	Moderately
Egypt	31	440,000	0.65	Moderately
El Salvador	1	40,000	0.65	Moderately
Estonia	6	309,000	21.59	Least
Ethiopia	1	7,200	0.01	Most
Fiji	2	7,500	0.9	Moderately
Finland	36	2.27m	43.93	Least
France	128	9m	15.26	Least
Georgia	5	20,000	0.4	Moderately
Germany	625	20.1m	24.28	Least
Ghana	2	20,000	0.2	Moderately
Greece	23	1.33m	12.42	Least
Grenada	1	2,000	2.24	Least
Guatemala	7	65,000	0.51	Moderately
Hong Kong (China)	49	3.46m	6.38	Least
Hungary	13	650,000	6.38	Least
Iceland	14	144,000	52.1	Least
India	3	4.5m	0.45	Moderately
Indonesia	24	410,000	0.18	Moderately
Iran	1	100,000	0.5	Moderately
Ireland	14	1.04m	27.5	Least
Israel	23	1m	17.12	Least
Italy	219	13.42	23.29	Least
Jamaica	6	600,000	2.26	Least
Japan	357	38.64	30.53	Least
Jordan	8	87,500	1.92	Least
Kazakhstan	83	70,000	0.42	Most
Kenya	47	45,000	0.16	Most
Korea, South	11	16.4m	34.55	Moderately
Kuwait	2	100,000	5.02	Moderately
Kyrgyz Republic	n/a	10,000	0.21	Moderately
Laos	n/a	2,000	0.04	Most
Latvia	11	234,000	9.73	Least
Lebanon	19	227,500	6.39	Moderately
Lesotho	1	1,000	0.08	Moderately
Luxembourg	13	95,000	21.72	Least
Macedonia	6	30,000	1.47	Least
Madagascar	3	8,000	0.05	Least
Malawi	8	10,000	0.1	Moderately

Malaysia	8	1.5m	6.88	Moderately
Maldives	n/a	2,000	0.06	Moderately
Mali	n/a	2,000	0.06	Moderately
Malta	4	40,000	10.21	Least
Mexico	167	2.5m	2.49	Moderately
Moldova	2	36,000	0.6	Moderately
Mongolia	n/a	3,000	0.11	Moderately
Morocco	27	120,000	0.4	Moderately
Mozambique	1	15,000	0.08	Moderately
Namibia	4	9,000	0.55	Moderately
Nepal	n/a	190,000	0.9	Moderately
Netherlands	70	7.28m	45.82	Least
New Zealand	60	1.49m	39.03	Least
Nigeria	5	100,000	0.08	Moderately
Norway	21	2.36m	52.6	Least
Oman	1	50,000	2.04	Least
Pakistan	26	1.2m	0.85	Moderately
Panama	3	45,000	1.6	Moderately
Papua New Guinea	2	2,000	0.04	Moderately
Paraguay	4	20,000	0.36	Moderately
Peru	15	400,000	1.5	Least
Philippines	93	50,000	0.62	Least
Poland	161	2.8m	7.25	Least
Portugal	20	700,000	6.97	Least
Qatar	n/a	45,000	6.22	Moderately
Romania	30	600,000	2.68	Least
Russia	83	219m	1.8	Most
Saudi Arabia	6	300,000	1.4	Moderately
Senegal	1	30,000	0.3	Moderately
Serbia (Yugoslavia)	6	80,000	0.07	Moderately
Sierra Leone	n/a	2,000	0.04	Most
Singapore	8	1.85m	44.58	Moderately
Slovakia	15	700,000	12.94	Least
Slovenia	6	460,000	23	Least
South Africa	58	1.8m	4.19	Least
Spain	49	5.49m	13.72	Least
Sri Lanka	4	65,000	0.34	Moderately
Sudan	1	10,000	0.03	Most
Suriname	1	10,000	2.32	Most
Swaziland	2	3,000	0.28	Most
Sweden	29	5m	56.36	Least
Switzerland	115	2.4m	33.05	Least
Syria	n/a	30,000	0.12	Moderately
Taiwan	15	6.4m	28.84	Least

Tajikistan	15	2,000	0.03	Most
Thailand	12	1m	1.65	Moderately
Trinidad and Tobago	5	30,000	2.55	Least
Tunisia	4	110,000	1.16	Most
Turkey	24	2m	3.05	Moderately
Turkmenistan	1	2,000	0.04	Most
Ukraine	35	500,000	0.1	Moderately
United Arab Emirates	1	400,000	17.06	Moderately
United Kingdom	364	19.98m	33.58	Least
United States of America	7,600	153.84m	55.83	Least
Uruguay	5	300,000	11	Least
Uzbekistan	1	7,500	0.03	Moderately
Venezuela	11	400,000	1.7	Moderately
Vietnam	5	100,000	0.13	Moderately
Zimbabwe	10	30,000	0.27	Moderately