

Web activism – sources collected by Beth Granter

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_activism

Internet activism (also known as **online organizing**, **electronic advocacy**, **cyberactivism**, **E-campaigning**, and **E-activism**) is the use of electronic communication technologies such as [e-mail](#), the [World Wide Web](#), and [podcasts](#) for various forms of [activism](#) to enable faster communications by [citizen](#) movements and the delivery of local information to a large audience.

<http://www.newtactics.org/node/6179>

Info-Activism is what happens when rights advocates turn information about their issue into action that will address it. Info-Activism involves the strategic use of tools and tactics for social change.

Background / history of the internet

<http://www.walthowe.com/navnet/history.html>

The Internet was the result of some visionary thinking by people in the early 1960s who saw great potential value in allowing computers to share information on **research** and development in scientific and **military** fields.

The Internet was designed in part to provide a **communications network** that would work even if some of the sites were destroyed by **nuclear** attack. If the most direct route was not available, [routers](#) would direct traffic around the network via alternate routes.

Since the Internet was initially funded by the government, it was originally limited to research, education, and government uses. **Commercial uses were prohibited** unless they directly served the goals of research and education. This policy continued **until the early 90's**, when independent commercial networks began to grow.

Broadcast vs Peer to peer

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Traditional media e.g. TV, newspapers, radio are broadcast mediums, from mainstream editorial teams acting under the influence of government and corporations, particularly those which show advertising. The communication is **unidirectional** from top down, with little opportunity to speak back or for the public to be heard.

Web 2.0/social media changed this – by making the publishing of content really easy and accessible to everyone with access to the internet, with no requirement for technical expertise. This meant anyone could write a blog, publish their own website, upload videos to video sharing sites (youTube), post on messageboards/forums (publicly or privately) and collaborate on user generated encyclopaedias (Wikipedia). The public was now able to describe and define the world in its own terms.

Peer to peer production is different: it is center-less and it is non-hierarchical.

<http://www.digiactive.org/page/2/>

Even if someone is organizing, that person has no more power than any other member of the project. There is no center and edge. There is only the network.

What would this mean in the political realm? Crowdsourced politics means that the center

benefits ultimately from the divided labor. The effects of crowdsourcing might be in the public interest, but even though execution of the task occurs at the edge, the ultimate decision of what the activity will be is decided at the center.

It is this form of political organizing, peer-to-peer not crowdsourced, that has the greatest potential to truly challenge existing institutions.

Groundswell / grassroots web activism

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When the public report on news stories, the mainstream media is unable to cover up world events, as people are talking directly to each other (peer to peer communication / many to many). This circumvention of the mainstream means **citizen journalism** puts pressure on mainstream media to be more transparent and democratic.

<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2005/03/11/17262451.php>

The **Indymedia** project was started in 1999, to allow participants in the anti-globalization movement to report on the protests against the WTO meeting that took place in Seattle, Washington, and to act as an alternative media source. By 2006, the Indymedia network had grown to what is now over 150 Indymedia outlets around the world.

However, in 2004 during anti-globalisation protests around the world, a US court order forced the firm hosting Indymedia to hand over two servers in the UK, so central governments can still take control when things get too contentious.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1905125,00.html>

Twitter is practically ideal for a mass protest movement, both very easy for the average citizen to use and very hard for any central authority to control. On June 13 2009, when protests started to escalate, and the **Iranian** government moved to suppress dissent both on- and off-line, the Twittersverse exploded with tweets from people who weren't having it, both in English and in Farsi. While the front pages of Iranian newspapers were full of blank space where censors had whited-out news stories, Twitter was delivering information from street level, in real time.

But just as emerging technologies bring new opportunities, they also present new challenges by introducing new methods for suppression, censorship and breaches of privacy.

But there are counter-countermeasures to this kind of **censorship**. Sympathetic observers outside Iran set up "proxies," servers that relay Twitter content into Iran through network addresses that haven't been blocked yet. When the Iranian authorities discover such a proxy, they block it too. Protesters are also organizing denial-of-service attacks against government websites — coordinated efforts to shut down their servers by flooding them with traffic.

Irrepressible.info – amnesty international anti censorship campaign

If you have a website or blog, help us spread the word and undermine unwarranted censorship by publishing censored material from our database directly onto your site. The more people take part the more we show that freedom of expression cannot be repressed.

Bahrain - The country's Internet filtering regime focuses on political Web sites that are critical of the Bahraini government and ruling family but also targets content related to

pornography, gays and lesbians and content that is critical of Islam. In August 2006, Bahrain banned access to Google Earth for three days. Soon after the blocking of Google Earth, cyberactivists circulated via e-mail a PDF file with annotated Google Earth screenshots of Bahrain highlighting what they claimed as the inequity of land distribution in Bahrain.³⁷ The file can be found at <http://www.ogleearth.com/BahrainandGoogleEarth.pdf>.

Geo-bombing

Tunisian activists linked tens of video testimonies of Tunisian political prisoners and human rights defenders to the Tunisian presidential palace's location on Google Earth. Now, as you fly over the Tunisian presidential palace on Google Earth you will see it covered with the very same videos about civil liberties which Ben Ali was trying to prevent Tunisian Netizens from watching by blocking Youtube.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Chanology

Project Chanology (also called **Operation Chanology**^[1]) is a [protest](#) movement against the practices of the [Church of Scientology](#) by members of [Anonymous](#), a leaderless [Internet](#)-based group that defines itself as ubiquitous. The project was publicly launched in the form of a video posted to [YouTube](#), "Message to Scientology", in 2008. The video states that Anonymous views Scientology's actions as [internet censorship](#), and asserts the group's intent to "expel the church from the internet". This was followed by distributed [denial-of-service attacks](#) (DDoS), and soon after, [black faxes](#), [prank calls](#), and other measures intended to disrupt the Church of Scientology's operations. Now they use the internet to organise [nonviolent](#) protests.

Digital economy bill

<http://www.schoolforstartups.co.uk/2010/04/08/fck-the-digital-economy-bill/>

Anyone who has been following the evolution of the Orwellian "Digital Economy Bill" understands that this bill is a complete travesty of rational legislation and the method by which it was passed into law after just a few hours of debate was cartoonish. In the great "wash up" before the election, both political parties conspired to let this law be passed without any due scrutiny.

Reasons why debill is bad

Perhaps key among them is that it contains a provision which allows "Copyright Holders" to identify any Internet Provider (IP) as being responsible for the distribution of their content illegally. Once this happens, the business or individual associated with that IP address can be penalized without the tiresome necessity of turning up in a court to present evidence.

As described in the [Guardian](#) "Earlier the government removed its proposed clause 18, which could have given it sweeping powers to block sites, but replaced it with an amendment to clause 8 of the bill. The new clause allows the secretary of state for business to order the blocking of "a location on the Internet which the court is satisfied has been, is being or is likely to be used for or in connection with an activity that infringes copyright."

Sometimes there are good reasons for copyrights to be violated. In the US for example, the website **Wikileaks.com** this week exposed what appears to be the "Collateral Murder" of many innocent civilians in Iraq by US Army Soldiers in an Apache Helicopter. Distributing that content, and other whistle-blower content "owned" by governments and

private enterprises engaged in criminal activity, is almost always a violation of their copyright.

http://www.digitaleconomyact.info/index.php/Possible_Repeal

Part of the [coalition agreement](#) does call for a Great Repeal Bill but says nothing about whether or not the Digital Economy Act will form part of it. For now, the Digital Economy Act will remain law.

Additionally the new UK government's Conservative culture secretary Jeremy Hunt said "We're not going to repeal it," . Julian Huppert, the new Lib Dem MP for Cambridge, has started a 'Early Day Motion' to get MPs from all parties to publicly call for repeal.