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Spring 2012

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Recommended Citation

Jarratt, Andrew, "Net Neutrality: Fight for the Survival of the Free Internet" (2012). *Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE)*. 104.

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Net Neutrality: Fight for the Survival of the Free Internet

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The Internet is often thought of as a tool that allows for the free flow of information. Today, as a vessel of free speech, the Internet threatens to become a vestige of its original self. Increasingly, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) claim the power to regulate content and arbitrarily increase the price for customers to access certain information and have the ability to make customers financially support content that they disagree with. In these ways, ISPs have gained increased control over the flow of Internet information, while the citizen of cyberspace has increasingly lost his freedom to control his choices online. This poses an even more important problem for American democracy, which demands educated citizens, who are threatened by censorship. Only a libertarian approach to this problem, which sustains the original ideals of the Internet as a tool of unfiltered communication, will continue freedom of information. The best implementations of the libertarian approach are net neutrality laws, which ensure that all users are treated equally. This paper argues to support both the need for net neutrality laws to protect against economically driven encroachment upon the freedom of the Internet and the importance of libertarian ideas to the maintenance and strengthening of democracy.

Information about the Author:

Andrew Jarratt is a senior computer science and humanities student who is deeply interested in the effect and role that the Internet has in American democratic society. The past few years have seen the proposal of legislation that either restricts or promotes free speech online, an effect which is often unknown or misunderstood by Congressmen, and the importance of which must be recognized. Andrew has previously presented his paper at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. David Western

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