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Freenet

In this paper I will be discussing the Freenet software. I will be explaining exactly what this software is, what Freenet does, how the information is transferred and the purpose of this software.

Freenet is a free software that is available to be downloaded on Freenet Project website. It was created in the early 2000s by Ian Clarke in Scotland. Clarke created this software to help prevent censorship of the users of the internet, which coincidentally also includes a way to access the dark net. It was originally created to help friends to be able to chat, share and browse files without worrying about censorship. Clarke believed that anonymity was also needed to have freedom, since censorship in turn punishes those who speak freely if they are known. This is seen in heavily censored countries like China who in turn banned Freenet around by putting up the “Great Firewall” to help in online censorship.

Freenet allows their users to browse and share files- such as movies or books, publish websites only available on Freenet- like sites on the darknet to sell drugs, chat on forum- for an example criticizing a government without the fear of censorship, and send messages on the Freenet Messaging System to be able to freely message the users’ friends. The Freenet software is also decentralized by the users’ hard drives being partitioned to store files, similar to ZeroNet software that has all of its contents downloaded on the users’ partition for the software. In Freenet, these files are automatically deleted or kept depending on the popularity to make room for more popular content to be shown to their users. Freenet also has an option to be used in a “darknet” mode where they are only able to connect to friends or freely be able to access the open net and not need their friends to browse (Clarke, n.d.).

The connection of the Freenet software is connected by encrypted nodes that are routed through other nodes. The design of Freenet is different from other anonymity networks, such as Tor, by instead of obfuscating traffic streams between the different endpoints, the data is sliced into encrypted blocks and distributed across datastore- the hard drives spaced by Freenet nodes to store the files (Whonix, 2021). Freenet sites are also only available through the Freenet network and cannot access websites such as Google or Facebook through their network. The basis of Freenet is a peer-to-peer network to distribute data and deliver information. When accessing Freenet sites through the FProxy, the Freenet Proxy, the software does not support JavaScript, only a safe subset of HTML standard is in the allowed list, and the user is prompted before downloading unlike in ZeroNet (Whonix, 2021). This helps keep other users to hack other users and keep a safer environment.

Overall, Freenet is a platform that was designed to prevent censorship and help keep freedom of speech, which coincidentally creates an access to a dark net and allows illegal activities to occur.

Reference:

Clarke, I. (n.d.). *Freenet Project*. Freenet. Retrieved March 20, 2021, from https://freenetproject.org/pages/about.html

Whonix. (2021, March 21). *Freenet*. https://www.whonix.org/wiki/Freenet