

## Aaron Swartz Case Essay

The case of Aaron Swartz, a talented computer programmer and activist, has sparked a debate and controversy surrounding the question of whether his actions should be considered criminal or not. This essay aims to explore this topic by examining Swartz's actions in the context of the documentary film "The Internet's Own Boy". By examining the charges against Swartz and the differing perspectives surrounding his activities, this essay aims to shed light on whether he committed a crime.

Aaron Swartz's case has been a subject of debate due to the nature of his actions and the motivations behind them. His intention was to make valuable resources widely available to the public, challenging the existing restrictions on accessing academic articles. The charges against Swartz were based on violations of the law. The charges were brought forth due to Swartz's bypassing security measures and utilizing his programming skills to download a substantial number of academic articles from JSTOR without proper authorization.

The case of Aaron Swartz raises significant questions about the classification of his actions as criminal. While his motivations were naïve with a desire of open access to knowledge to all, the charges brought against him highlight violations of existing legal frameworks.

- Did Swartz commit a crime?

Aaron Swartz was indeed charged with several crimes, including unauthorized access to a computer network, wire fraud, and theft of information. These charges were related to his actions of bypassing security measures and using his programming skills to download a large number of academic articles from JSTOR without proper authorization. Some of the charged crimes are described below.

- Should his activities be considered a crime?

Whether Aaron's activities should be considered a crime is a subject of debate and depends on one's perspective. Supporters of Swartz argue that his actions were driven by a desire to promote open access to knowledge and challenge restrictive publishing models. I believe that the charges brought against him were excessive and overshadowed the political issues he sought to address.

Overview of Aaron Swartz and his charges: -

1. Aaron Swartz was charged with trespassing in a wiring closet at MIT.
  - ➔ Aaron Swartz's access to the wiring closet at MIT has been a point of contention in the case. While it is true that Swartz's fingerprints were found on the door handle, indicating that he had been in the room, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that he was not authorized to be there.

Swartz's was a student at MIT. So, it is reasonable to assume that he had access to various resources and rooms within the university. This includes the possibility of having authorized access to the wiring closet as well.

Moreover, the surveillance footage of the wiring closet revealed that the door was not locked, implying that it may have been accessible to anyone. This raises questions about the significance of Swartz's presence in the room and whether it should be deemed as trespassing or not.

It is also important to note that the issue of trespassing into the wiring closet is not directly related to the case. Therefore, the relevance and weight of the trespassing charge in the overall context of the case can be called into question.

Considering these factors, it is reasonable to argue that the charge of trespassing does not hold strong. While Swartz's presence in the wiring closet may raise some questions, there is insufficient evidence to definitively establish whether his access was authorized or not.

2. Aaron Swartz was charged with Computer Fraud, specifically unauthorized access to a computer network, in relation to his actions involving JSTOR.

➔ Despite Aaron Swartz's intention to distribute the downloaded articles and make them widely accessible, the methods he employed to achieve this goal were indeed improper and violated laws related to computer systems and networks authorization. Swartz's actions, which involved bypassing security measures and accessing a computer network without proper authorization, violates the legal requirements governing authorized access.

It is evident that Swartz utilized his own programming scripts to download a significant number of articles from JSTOR. In order to carry out this task, he accessed the resources provided by the MIT network to connect with JSTOR servers and retrieve information about the desired articles.

The fact that Swartz entered the room where the network infrastructure was located, switched a new hard disk drive from his bag, and left his fingerprints on the hard drives, as revealed by surveillance video, indicates his active involvement in unauthorized access.

Moreover, the discovery of a USB drive in Swartz's possession containing the exact programming scripts used to download articles from JSTOR provides further compelling evidence against him. These pieces of evidence, collectively, support the charge of computer fraud against Swartz.

Swartz's actions, including the bypassing of security measures, unauthorized access, and utilization of his programming scripts, violated these fundamental principles. Due to all the compelling evidence, I feel that Aaron was guilty of computer fraud charge.

3. Aaron Swartz was accused of unlawfully obtaining and stealing a significant number of academic articles from JSTOR, which was considered theft of intellectual property.

➔ Aaron Swartz's unauthorized access and subsequent download of articles without proper authorization constituted a violation of JSTOR's terms of service and policies, potentially violating the copyright and intellectual property rights. In this context, theft of information refers to the act of acquiring someone else's intellectual property without legal permission or proper authorization. In the case of Swartz, the stolen information encompassed academic articles that were protected by copyright laws, owned by publishers and authors.

Swartz's actions involved bypassing security measures and utilizing his programming skills to obtain a significant quantity of articles from JSTOR. These activities were considered as unlawfully acquiring and taking possession of intellectual property that rightfully belonged to others. By disregarding the established legal frameworks designed to safeguard intellectual property rights and prevent unauthorized use or distribution of copyrighted materials, Swartz's actions constituted a violation.

Swartz's actions went against the principles of ensuring proper authorization when accessing and using digital content. This resulted in legal consequences being brought against him. Due to this, I feel that Aaron was guilty of information theft of intellectual property.

In conclusion, the case of Aaron Swartz raises significant questions about the classification of his actions as criminal. While his motivations may have been naive with a desire for open access to knowledge to everyone, the charges brought against him highlight violations of existing legal frameworks.

Swartz's actions, although driven by noble intentions, involved bypassing security measures, and engaging in unauthorized access to a computer network to download a substantial number of academic articles. These activities directly violated the terms of service and policies set forth by JSTOR.

It is crucial to recognize the importance of upholding legal standards and protecting intellectual property. Unauthorized access to computer networks and theft of information are regarded as serious offenses within existing legal frameworks. By bypassing security measures and unlawfully obtaining copyrighted material, Swartz's actions violated these legal boundaries.

Ultimately, the complexities of Swartz's case and the debates arising due to it, have underlined the importance of examining technology, information, and the law.