

= Operation Clambake =

Operation Clambake , also referred to by its domain name , xenu.net , is a website and Norway @-@ based non @-@ profit organization , launched in 1996 , founded by Andreas Heldal @-@ Lund , that publishes criticism of the Church of Scientology . It is owned and maintained by Andreas Heldal @-@ Lund , who has stated that he supports the rights of all people to practice Scientology or any religion . Operation Clambake has referred to the Church of Scientology as " a vicious and dangerous cult that masquerades as a religion " . The website includes texts of petitions , news articles , exposés , and primary source documents . The site has been ranked as high as the second spot in Google searches for the term " Scientology " .

The term for the organization refers both to a traditional clam bake , as well as the notion from L. Ron Hubbard 's Scientology : A History of Man that humans follow a " genetic line " which includes clams , and that the psychological problems afflicting humans are impacted by past experiences . The domain name xenu.net is a reference to the character Xenu from secretive " OT III " Scientology documents .

In 1996 , the site was one of the first locations on the internet to host secret Scientology documents pertaining to Xenu and OT III . Shortly thereafter , the Church of Scientology attempted to get this material removed from Operation Clambake and other internet sites , through letters written by counsel , and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act . After receiving a DMCA takedown notice , Google removed many Xenu.net pages from its indexes , which decreased the site 's page rank in searches for " Scientology " . This inspired Google to contribute to the Chilling Effects archive , informing others about material missing from Google indexes due to DMCA takedown notices and other legal threats .

Operation Clambake has been consulted by news media organizations and other groups for information on Scientology and related organizations . Dateline NBC cited the organization in a 1998 investigative journalism piece , as have other publications including The Wall Street Journal , The New York Times and the Associated Press . During the Spring 2002 semester , Xenu.net was included as required reading in a New York University course on " Copyright and Censorship " , and in 2003 webmaster Andreas Heldal @-@ Lund received the 2003 Leipzig Human Rights Award by the European @-@ American Citizens Committee for Human Rights and Religious Freedom in the USA , an organization opposed to the Church of Scientology .

= = Foundation = =

Operation Clambake was founded in 1996 by Andreas Heldal @-@ Lund , an information technology manager in Stavanger , Norway , who administers the site at www.xenu.net. This domain name has been described as provocative , because it is seen by some as a caricature of the character Xenu from Scientology cosmogony . Operation Clambake is registered in Norway as a non @-@ profit organization .

Heldal @-@ Lund chose the name " Operation Clambake " for the organization , as a reference to statements made by L. Ron Hubbard in which Hubbard wrote that the problems of human beings today are a result of traumatic events experienced by them as spiritual beings when they inhabited the bodies of clams during Earth 's evolution . In Hubbard 's Scientology : A History of Man , he asserts humans follow his notion of the " genetic line " of the " genetic entity " , which include clams (as well as sloths , volcanoes , and a " sense of being eaten ") , and certain human psychological problems descend from difficulties these clams experienced . Hubbard defined " genetic line " as a collection of the total " incidents " which occurred during the evolution of what Scientology refers to as the " MEST body " .

= = Conflict = =

= = = OT III documents = = =

Prior to its own direct conflict with the Church of Scientology , Operation Clambake had described on its site how Amazon.com had pulled Jon Atack 's book A Piece of Blue Sky , a work critical of Scientology . The site later became one of the focal points of what some have termed " the war between Scientology and the Internet " . On November 8 , 1996 , Operation Clambake was one of the first sites to host the secretive OT III documents describing the story of Xenu . Operation Clambake maintains the position that posting these internal Church of Scientology documents is permitted under " fair use " allowance of internationally recognized copyright law . The Church of Scientology threatened legal action against various Internet service providers that host the site , demanding it be removed from the Internet for hosting information copyrighted by the Church of Scientology .

In 1998 Salon reported that Scientologists were now blocked from viewing sites critical of Scientology including Operation Clambake and alt.religion.scientology , through the use of a content @-@ control software program referred to by critics as Scieno Sitter . The Church of Scientology was unable to shut down Operation Clambake 's internet service provider in Norway . The organization succeeded in shutting down the upstream connection to the site 's internet service provider , Netherlands @-@ based Xtended Internet . In November 2002 , Xtended Internet 's upstream provider , Cignal Global Communications received a letter from Church of Scientology counsel alleging copyright and trademark infringement involved with Xenu.net. This letter led to Cignal Global Communications , a United States @-@ based company , terminating its service with Xtended Internet , which had to move their company to a new backbone provider .

= = = DMCA and Google delisting = = =

In various incidents documented in such publications as The New York Times , Slashdot and Wired , the Church of Scientology has also used the controversial Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to force notable Web sites (including the Google search engine) to remove the Operation Clambake homepage , and several leaflets containing copyrighted information , from their indices . Because the Xenu.net site itself is based in Norway , it does not fall under the jurisdiction of the DMCA .

In March 2002 , Google agreed to limit access to material critical of the Church of Scientology on www.xenu.net , after it was sued by the Church of Scientology for copyright infringement . Information the Church of Scientology had objected to included an internal report on the death of Lisa McPherson , and images of L. Ron Hubbard . Google received criticism for its actions , and The Guardian reported that Operation Clambake suspected the Church of Scientology was mainly concerned about secret documents where " L Ron Hubbard is said to describe how an alien galactic ruler called Xenu is the root of all human woe " . After Operation Clambake was delisted by Google , free @-@ speech advocates besieged Google , complaining that the company was censoring search results . Prior to Google 's delisting of the Operation Clambake site , CBC News reported that the site was listed fourth in a search for " Scientology " . After Google 's actions , Xenu.net did not appear in searches for " Scientology " .

= = = Aftermath = = =

Though Google did remove links to Operation Clambake for a short time , in place of the actual links , Google posted a notice explaining the links were removed due to the DMCA , and where the internet surfer could go to find more information . In April 2002 the International Herald Tribune reported that the net effect of the copyright controversy actually drove up the number of links to www.xenu.net , which improved its search results in searches for " Scientology " on Google to number two on the results page ? just below the official site of the Church of Scientology . Reflecting on the controversy in a February 2003 interview in The Boston Globe Magazine , Google founder Sergey Brin stated : " Ultimately where we ended up was the right conclusion , but we didn 't initially handle it correctly . " Some groups critical of the Church of Scientology 's actions have later used the

Google bomb technique to increase Operation Clambake 's Google rankings to the number three slot in a search for " Scientology " on the search engine , by linking the term " Scientology " on their Web pages to [http : / / www.xenu.net /](http://www.xenu.net/) . The Church of Scientology itself has also been accused of an attempt at Google bombing for making a large number of websites linking terms " Scientology " and " L. Ron Hubbard " to each other .

The publicity stemming from this incident was the impetus for Google contributing to the Chilling Effects archive , which archives legal threats of all sorts made against Internet users and Internet sites . Chilling Effects contains the original complaint letter from the law firm used by the Church of Scientology , Moxon & Kobrin . Helena Kobrin , lawyer for the Church of Scientology , stated she took offense at the name of the Web site , saying : " It implies that the First Amendment gives people some special right to infringe copyrights . " Sergey Brin and Larry Page were both questioned on Google 's response to the Church of Scientology 's complaints in a 2004 interview in Playboy Magazine , and they appreciated Chilling Effects as a " nice compromise " . Brin explained the new scenario : " So now , if you do a generic search on Scientology , you get a link to a site that discusses the legal aspects of why the anti @-@ Scientology site isn 't listed . "

Also in 2002 , Internet Archive removed all Wayback Machine archival pages of Xenu.net at the request of lawyers for the Church of Scientology . Initially queries reported that the pages had been removed " per the request of the site owner " , which Andreas Haldal @-@ Lund denied . This was later changed to a generic " Blocked Site Error " message .

= = Reception = =

= = = Awards and recognition = = =

Operation Clambake is included as part of the Library of Congress " September 11 Web Archive , " and in Spring 2002 www.xenu.net was listed as required reading for the course " Computers in Principle and Practice " at New York University , under a section on " Copyright and Censorship " .

On May 17 , 2003 , Operation Clambake webmaster Andreas Haldal @-@ Lund received the 2003 Leipzig Human Rights Award from the European @-@ American Citizens Committee for Human Rights and Religious Freedom in the USA , an organization which states it is composed of " Scientology opponents from all over the world " . Operation Clambake was cited by the Committee for exposing what it referred to as " fraud and human rights violations " of the Church of Scientology in the United States . The former Secretary of State of France , Alain Vivien , presented Haldal @-@ Lund with the Award , and stated that his work had revealed the actions of Scientologists with " respect and intelligence " . In his acceptance speech , Haldal @-@ Lund spoke about freedom of speech , and emphasized the role of the individual citizen .

= = = Media resources = = =

On June 16 , 1998 , Dateline NBC aired an investigative journalism piece on Scientology , and Operation Clambake was referenced on @-@ screen as a resource to learn about " Xenu and the exploded souls " . The St. Petersburg Times called Operation Clambake : " the best known of the critical Web sites " on Scientology . New Straits Times referred to the site as " a fantastic source of information for anyone interested in the Scientology cult " . In July 2000 The Wall Street Journal included Operation Clambake among its list of " Our Favorite Sites " under the " Opinion , Commentary and Gossip " section . The Seattle Times described Operation Clambake as " one of the most popular " sites critical of Scientology .

Many other news organizations have recognized its work . BBC News wrote : " The Operation Clambake site portrays The Church as a money @-@ hungry cult . " , and an article in The New York Times stated : " The site portrays the church as a greedy cult that exploits its members and harasses critics . " Still other news articles have called Operation Clambake " an anti @-@ Scientology Web site " , and the program " Technofile " on Sky News called it " one of the most

controversial sites on the web ". The Associated Press cited the Xenu and OT III story in describing the Web site : " Critics at www.xenu.net and elsewhere say advanced Scientologists are taught that 75 million years ago , the cosmic ruler Xenu paralyzed billions of people in our galaxy , stacked them on Earth and destroyed their bodies with H @-@ bombs , though the traumatized souls survived . "

More recently , news media have consulted Operation Clambake and its proprietor when seeking out information for background on stories involving Church of Scientology and related organizations . The Sunday Times used Operation Clambake 's resources while doing a January 2007 story on Narconon and its links to the Church of Scientology . The Daily Reveille consulted Operation Clambake resources for an article on the " Second Chance " program , specifically for background on the Scientology doctrine known as the " Purification Rundown " . In April 2007 , the Daily News cited an " emergency bulletin " disseminated by Church of Scientology leaders that was posted on Operation Clambake , which seemed to refute claims by Church of Scientology representatives that their ministers were forbidden from proselytizing on campus after the Virginia Tech massacre . In August 2007 , the Associated Press included information from Operation Clambake in an article on Scientology 's attempts to connect with religious leaders from other faiths .

= = = Scholarly perception = = =

In Who Controls the Internet ? : Illusions of a Borderless World , Jack Goldsmith notes that the site 's " secret library of Scientology " page was blocked from Google for a short time . He notes that Google 's actions in the matter were indicative of its policy to remove search results when threatened by governmental action . The incident between Google and the Church of Scientology involving the Web site was also discussed in an annual meeting of The State Bar of California , and cited as part of the caselaw for " Domestic Copyright Law in Cyberspace . "

Fred von Lohmann , an attorney with the Electronic Frontier Foundation , raised free speech concerns in the Xenu.net case , stating : " The danger is that people will attempt to silence critics under the guise of copyright infringement . " In Beyond the First Amendment : The Politics of Free Speech and Pluralism , author Samuel Peter Nelson raises the question : " Why should a private actor (Church of Scientology) in the United States have the power to restrict the speech of a Dutch citizen publishing in the Netherlands whose speech is protected by Dutch law ? " In an interview on the Xenu.net controversy , Harvard Law School professor Jonathan Zittrain predicted that more conflicts involving the Church of Scientology were likely to occur in the future . Zittrain stated : " The cutting edge on such battles is often the Church of Scientology . They have very well honed procedures and tactics to remove information that they find objectionable . "

Mentioning Operation Clambake as an example of an Internet response to a controversial movement in their 2003 book Understanding New Religious Movements , John A. Saliba and J. Gordon Melton referred to the site as " a Web page devoted to the negative aspects of Scientology " . Douglas E. Cowan , writing in Religion Online (2004) , characterizes Operation Clambake as an example of a " surfeit of sites dedicated to so @-@ called watchdog organizations or [?] home pages of disgruntled ex @-@ members . " According to Cowan , Internet coverage of the Church of Scientology represents an " important example of competing propagandas that struggle for authority and control both online and off " . Cowan proposes that Operation Clambake seeks to demonstrate that the Church of Scientology " lacks any redeeming social value " . Cowan notes that most of the content presented by the site is not the result of original research by the owner but rather a collection of hyperlinks to media reports , scholarly and popular articles , court documents and out @-@ of @-@ print books . Complemented by links to like @-@ minded sites hosting essentially the same information , the result is thought by Cowan to be inflation of the apparent quantity of anti @-@ Scientology material available . According to Cowan , Operation Clambake is not designed to be read by Scientologists , but rather meant for those who already hold negative views about Scientology and might join Haldal @-@ Lund in his self @-@ stated purpose : " The Fight Against the Church of Scientology on the Net . " Cowan compares the site to a propaganda effort , and writes that a message is presented repeatedly , consistently to a target audience that already has

some affinity with it , leading to a somewhat self @-@ limiting construction of reality .