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Discovering Internet Access as a Human Right

Since its inception in the early 1980's the Internet has become more prominent in our society. Job applications, applying for college and even ordering food have been relegated to the internet. Citizens in countries of political turmoil have turned to the Internet as a means of spreading information about injustices, others use it as a way to spread their thoughts and opinions to like-minded individuals. It is undeniable that the Internet has become a platform for spreading and gaining information which has brought up the case for it to become a human right. This issue has been a point of interest for citizens, politicians, and scientists and has been researched by the like. With focused research I hope to discover whether it is time to declare access to the Internet a right, and whether governments are equipped to handle the changes that come with that declaration .

My research plans to expand upon comments others , such as the United Nations, key members of the technology sector, have made in an attempt to answer this question. Information systems researchers Wicker and Santoso, as well as Winter, have advocated that internet access should become a right. Throughout their research they present specific cases showing that the Internet has become intertwined with other aspects of human rights. These researchers believe that because of its increasing importance in spreading and maintaining human rights, access to the internet should be treated as one. The United Nations committee on human rights also shares

a similar view, recognizing the idea that the Internet has become a platform in spreading rights and should be protected and unrestricted in member nations. However, Vinton Cerf, a contributor in the creation of modern day Internet believes that access to the Internet should not be deemed a human right. He proposes that the Internet should only be viewed as supplement to our human rights and we should focus on making sure humans are able to exercise their rights.

We can surmise from the researcher's opinions that there is still a clear divide in society on whether or not access to the internet should be regarded as a human right. Although a lot of groundwork has been made from previous research, we are still lacking stances from a majority of governments as well as other figures in the technology sector and the sentiments of citizens. I believe that there is a great importance in getting the opinion of the populace when considering important issues such as this. Each of the researchers have neglected to consider one of the previously mentioned groups. For example, Cerf neglects the opinions of citizens by trying to show that the people do not truly understand what they are demanding. Many of the aforementioned researchers and commentators have only really performed commentary on the issue and have not done large scale research.

My research intends to avoid those pitfalls by attempting to survey a larger number of groups. It will primarily implement a questionnaire that will be provided to different demographics of the American population. This implementation will allow for a wider range of opinions. The demographics of this study will span major races in the United States, as well as social classes and varying degrees of education. However, the method of obtaining data requires many willing participants. Researchers would have to call or physically recruit others to opt in which would take significant time and may have a large cost. Each questionnaire could either be

implemented in the form of a phone call, or a survey completed online to cut down on costs. The subject of the research questions will avoid asking questions about granting Internet access the status of being a human right. Instead, I will ask for the importance of the Internet in the person's life, if the subject deems the Internet an important place to share their thoughts and ideas and ask them about as their daily usage. My study's results will allow us to see if the nation is ready to consider access a right.

We must also consider a government stance on the Internet access issue since they are the ones who ultimately allow the decision to occur. If access to the Internet became a human right, we would have to make sure nations have the bandwidth and infrastructure to allow the increased number of users on a network. In this stage of my research I will reach out to government offices who have been key to the proliferation of the Internet such as those in the European Union, Canada, and the United States. Researchers will reach out to governments by calling or sending emails. In this stage of the study, government officials in infrastructure and technological sectors would be asked questions similar to those asked to citizens so that we may find out their stance on the issue. However, I will also ask them if they believe that their nation could support providing internet access to the masses. There are some hassles with this research method as it is completely dependent on responses from government officials and they have no obligation to reply. Another issue with this method is the fact that it can take a long amount of time to gather responses. When I assemble responses, I will be able to see the feasibility of implementing infrastructure and legislature to allow unrestricted access to the internet.

Currently our network infrastructure cannot handle the massive increase of concurrent users. This presents an interesting challenge that ties into the last element of my research,

estimating the cost of creating additional infrastructure. My researchers will connect with T1 internet providers to estimate the cost of laying down additional infrastructure to handle the increased bandwidth. Internet service providers will have to make sure that free access to the internet will be a semi similar experience to paying customers. Even if infrastructure is laid, there has to be a mechanism for those wanting to connect for free. We also have to inquire to device manufacturers to see if they will be able to create terminals in public places for people to access the internet for no charge. Creating infrastructure is the toughest hurdle in granting internet access as a human right, but I am certain that I will be able to figure out how feasible this task will be.

With my research I strive to figure out if our society would be able to handle the concept of Internet access as a human right. Although many researchers have made commentary on how the internet has become a human right, many have not followed through with significant proof. I will expand on the work of previous researchers by following through on their comments and considering groups neglected by their studies. By learning from citizens, the government, and our technology sector we will be able to see if we are ready to accept the Internet as a human right.

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