SHARING, THEFT, AND CREATIVITY: DEVIAN'TART’S SHARE WARS AND THE PRODUCTION OF THE WEB

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Yes, SOPA Breaks The Internet: By Breaking The Belief In Trust And Sharing That Is The Internet

from the great-point dept

Venture capitalist Brad Burnham has a brilliant blog post that explains how SOPA really breaks the internet. It isn't just the technical aspects of it. SOPA is an attack on the fundamental belief system that underlies the internet, and much of what makes it successful:

BREAKS THE INTERNET?
DEVIANTART
“WHERE ART MEETS APPLICATION”
A cat bows its head respectfully as it walks down a path of bark.

Polonnaruwa again, LKs are the symbol of Lanka, as they’re under royal rule. Actually I find the difference between lions and cats to also be symbolic of that between the ancient Sinhalese and today’s population.

**Share**

- **Note**
  - http://fav.me/d1oa74u
- **Twitter**
  - <object width="450" heig
- **Facebook**
- **Reddit**
- **Digg**
- **LiveJournal**
“There's vast misunderstandings about the basics of how the interwebs work.”

- A member of deviantART.com during the “The Share Wars” - August 2009
• Youth, creativity, and the web
• Collaboration and appropriation
• Copy and paste as literacy
TODAY

Motivating the research

Overview of the project

deviantART’s Share Wars (and the question of “art theft”)

Connecting to other aspects of the project

Creativity in an Information Society (some broader questions)
MOTIVATING THE RESEARCH
A BILL

To promote prosperity, creativity, entrepreneurship, and innovation by combating the theft of U.S. property, and for other purposes.

IN DEFENSE OF CREATIVITY?
AN ASSAULT ON CREATIVITY?
“WHAT IS AT STAKE, IS THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP WE WANT TO UPHOLD BETWEEN CREATIVITY, COMMUNICATION, AND COMMERCE.”
- ADRIAN JOHNS, PIRACY, 2009
A WEB 2.0 CREATIVITY CONSENSUS

1. The web has democratized creativity

2. Creative production is social and collective and anchored in “community”

3. Web creativity is non-commercial and non-market, a part of “participatory culture”

4. A revolutionary moment

Key texts:
Digital Natives?

A Digital Generation?
THE DIGITAL GENERATION IS CHANGING THE RULES OF CREATIVITY
New Technologies + New Generation

A particular media-producing, social-networking subset of a new generation ➔

New Conceptions of Creativity and New Cultural Practices
“Creativity is the upside of this brave new world of digital media. The downside is law-breaking.

The vast majority of Digital Natives are currently breaking copyright laws on a regular basis...the practice is pervasive...an entire generation is thwarting copyright laws as they grow up...”
These tools of creativity have become tools of speech. It is a literacy for this generation. This is how our kids speak. It is how our kids think; it is what your kids are as they increasingly understand digital technologies and their relationship to themselves. …

It is technology that has made them [“our kids”] different, and as we see what this technology can do, we need to recognize you can't kill the instinct the technology produces; we can only criminalize it. We can't stop our kids from using it; we can only drive it underground. …

Ordinary people live life against the law, and that's what I—we—are doing to our kids. They live life knowing they live it against the law. That realization is extraordinarily corrosive, extraordinarily corrupting.

Lawrence Lessig, “The Laws that Choke Creativity,” TED Conference, 2007
(GENERALLY) MISSING IN THESE DEBATES

Specifics of platforms and technologies

Specifics of people and practices

Relating the two
KEY THEORETICAL LENSES

• Social Practice meets Social Worlds, the mutual transformation of context and identity


• Infrastructure as relational socio-technical systems, produced in practice


• Authorship, artistic recognition, and creativity as collective products and processes, historically linked with distribution systems

  Becker 1982; Bourdieu 1993; Heinich 2009; Rose 1994; Williams 1960; Woodmansee 1994
• How does participation with the web shape young creators’ socially recognized identities as creative practitioners?
• How does the process of recognition as creators contribute to the production of the web as infrastructure for creative practice?
DEVIANTART
“WHERE ART MEETS APPLICATION”
• For-profit (ads, subscriptions, merchandise)
• 11 years old
• 19 million accounts
• 100 million submissions
• 100 thousand daily submissions
• 45 million Unique Visitors/month
• 1.5 million daily comments
• Online participant-observation of deviantART

• Field research where artists networked and hung out

• Interviews - Skype, IM, Face to face

From “PhD Comics”
July 2010
CONVERGENCE ON DEVIANTART

Different motivations
(i.e. marketing vs. learning vs. socializing)

Different art worlds
(commercial, fine art, amateur, niche hobbies)

Different ages and levels of experience
### TOPICS

- Discovery, popularity, status, and recognition
- Feedback, engagement, and improving
- Sharing and ownership of content

### FEATURES

- Popularity algorithm and rankings
- Favorites
- Metrics and displayed stats (e.g. pageviews)
- Commenting
- Sharing tools
SHARE WARS!
TECHNOLOGIES FOR “SHARING”

- Embed tags
- APIs (Application Programming Interfaces)
- URL Shortening services (e.g. bit.ly)
THE INTERNET IS FOR SHARING
Promote this Deviation

On deviantART

Send it in a Note...

On the Web

Put it on digg.com
Put it on livejournal.com
Put it on myspace.com...

BEFORE
- DISCONNECTED
- OPTIONAL
AFTER
- CLEAN DESIGN, ORGANIZED, UP-TO-DATE
- NOT OPTIONAL
EARLY REACTIONS FOCUSED ON CONTROL

“I would like it if we had the option to disable it … I understand there are many reasons why people will enjoy it, and also that people will say “well even without it people can still link to your work” but because of my career choice and my choice of artistic outlet I would prefer to be able to disable this function. It's obviously not going to stop people who really want to “share” your work, but having it disabled would at least discourage.”

“… a loss of control to us all, on the quiet. … If we want to share our work with the outside world, we already have the tools and the choice to do so. ... Part of the appeal for using dA is control - control over what goes where. ... I do not want my thumbnail images turning up, at someone else's behest, on random websites all over the world, and who knows what other images my own might end up sitting next to? ... dA, should remain strongly ring-fenced,..
FROM CONTROL TO THEFT

“I don't want everyone on Twitter or Facebook reading my stuff and sharing it as their own. I'm taking down my entire gallery! dA is full of hypocrites. They will ban folks if they steal art or plagiarize and yet they are making these very crimes easier than ever.”

[from the CEO]: “The idea that deviantART would take direct action to help others steal your work, or encourage this sort of behavior is not acceptable to us. It is offensive to us. It is a contradiction of our core mission; many of us are artists ourselves, and we have zero interest in siding with copyright infringers.”
Massive Art Rip!!

=InsaneSandy reports, October 20

Yesterday I received two notes, and I was shocked 😞

It's the second time that someone has uploaded some of my works 😞: "So tired of all "Love tears me apart", "Life is beautiful" and "A place to hide" [link].

Art Thief! Please help! :[

=InsaneSandy reports, October 15, 2007, 8:30 AM

I got ripped

=InsaneSandy reports, June 13, 2008, 4:34 PM
S: i dont post anymore on [deviantART] because i see my pictures "Ripped"
S: ripped as in stolen and **posted on [other sites]**
...
S: they share really cool photographs for people to download, for people to … **to spread around the internet.**
S: then people sometimes make them into icons, make them into webbanners, and sometimes
S: put them on book covers
S: so **i didnt want my photography around the internet** like that
...
S: it makes me angry because **i dont like seeing my pictures so available for people to steal.**

[Interview with Sharon, 15, Instant Messenger]
THREE DIMENSIONS OF TRANSGRESSION

1. Not Asking for / Receiving Permission
2. Not Giving Credit
3. Material or symbolic gains
IMPLICIT AGREEMENT

• Artists have the right to decide how they should control their own work and define theft.
• Theft is a **moral threat** to one’s **identity** as creator.

See:
COMBATTING THEFT, ASSERTING CONTROL

• Posted warnings
• Creative Commons licenses
• Watermarks
• Spreading the word
• Vigilante groups
“SHARING” = THEFT?
“SHARING” ➜ THEFT?

• “If you honestly want to discourage people from posting a link to your image, then don’t post your work at all. Because short of that, nothing else discourages or prevents it.”

• “I don’t use a browser to protect my artistic rights. In fact, I don’t use the internetz at all!”

• “URLs should be removed from this site altogether!”

• “There's vast misunderstanding about the basics of how the interwebs work.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share tools</th>
<th>Internet/Web</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do the share tools work?</td>
<td>How does the internet work?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the differences between “sharing” via different APIs? Embedding? URL-shortened links?</td>
<td>Can content be controlled?</td>
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<td>Is there “one” internet?</td>
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<td>Is the Internet “all about sharing”?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Art</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How should a community work? Open or closed?</td>
<td>How does art “work”?</td>
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<td>What are the rights of an artist?</td>
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<td>How important is the context in which art appears?</td>
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<td>What kind of “marketing” is acceptable?</td>
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3 options: Show tools, Hide tools, For deviantART only

Current tools as hidden compromise

What is the work required to make the Internet a medium for sharing?
CONNECTING TO OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT
“WHERE ART MEETS APPLICATION”

Ongoing production of the web as distribution infrastructure for creative practice (products and identities)

How art works (Historical tensions)

How the web works (Historical tensions)

Corporation ↔ Community
Decentralization ↔ “Distributed centralization”
Visibility and exposure

Artistic recognition?

“Popularity”

Quality
Visibility and exposure

Artistic recognition?

“Popularity”

Quality

Statistics

Comments: 587
Favourites: 6,403
Views: 51,215
Downloads: 420

28,932 Comments
12,158,762 Pageviews

Popular

24 hours

Daily Deviations

Improving Learning

Marketing Self-promotion

Feedback

Criticism

“Critique”

On one’s own

Following others
LEARNING 2.0?

“The latest evolution of the Internet, the so-called Web 2.0, has blurred the line between producers and consumers of content and has shifted attention from access to information toward access to other people. New kinds of online resources—such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and virtual communities—have allowed people with common interests to meet, share ideas, and collaborate in innovative ways. Indeed, the Web 2.0 is creating a new kind of participatory medium that is ideal for supporting multiple modes of learning.

CREATIVITY IN AN INFORMATION SOCIETY
“Creativity is on everyone’s lips these days... In a global commodity market with an insatiable appetite for new things, where every aspect of life and art is convertible into an object of fascination or desire to be appropriated and consumed, creativity has come to be seen as a major driver of economic prosperity and social well-being.”

- Hallam and Ingold, 2007, *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*
Digital **material**, media, technologies, services, and networks
New *distribution* infrastructures (distinct from production and consumption).
“Information” (e.g. art as information, sharing art as sharing information, etc.)
Thank you!

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