

# Keeping the Web Safe for Pirates

**LET NO ONE DOUBT THE RABBLE-**rousing power of the Internet.

Incited largely by Google and Wikipedia's calls to protect "free speech" online, millions of Americans last week bombarded congressional representatives to voice opposition to the House's Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Senate's PROTECT Intellectual Property Act (PIPA). Both bills were destined to be vetoed by President Obama anyway, but the Netizen riot yesterday scared enough elected officials that they probably won't even get that far.

So much for the millions of lobbying greenbacks dropped by the Motion Picture Association of America, Recording Industry Association of America, NBCUniversal, The Walt Disney Co., Viacom, Time Warner Inc. and others. Corporate media interests were shouted down by the Web mob — and the entertainment industry was caught flat-footed, without a Web 2.0 counter-campaign to make its case about why new laws are necessary.

"You shut down Congress's switchboards. You melted their servers," Wikipedia gloated, claiming more than 8 million people looked up their representatives' contact info on its site. The free encyclopedia "blacked out" for the day in protest, though

## BIT RATE



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savvier users could still access the articles.

But what are SOPA and PIPA for? Google and Wikipedia gloss over this.

The legislation is designed to give U.S. copyright owners a way to shut down foreign pirate sites, which aren't subject to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), by blocking access to their domain names. Period.

Arguing that these laws would result in "censorship" of the Internet is akin to saying shoplifting prohibitions are a restraint of free trade. Or suggesting that criminalizing public sex acts curtails a citizen's right to free expression.

Yes, there are parts of SOPA and PIPA that are troubling. For one thing they would allow the U.S. government to demand that even the links to rogue sites be culled from search engines, according to the Electronic Freedom Foundation — a pointless measure that seems inappropriate.

But instead of trying to find middle ground, the "information wants to be free" crowd is throwing the baby out with the bathwater. So what if a few links to pirate sites are monetized by Google AdWords? That's the price of freedom, bub.

The Web masses have spoken. And so, for now, the pirates are still free to sail the Internet without much trouble. ■

## ACCESS

# Bolster the Ranks of Women Engineers

**HERE'S A QUESTION IN SEARCH OF AN ANSWER:**

We have a great number of women in cable and we have a great number of engineers. So why is it that we have so few women engineers?

In a field that is dedicated to finding the right solution to any equation, the lack of women engineers is a puzzle that even our best minds have been unable to work out — even as careers for women have flourished across virtually every other segment of the industry.

Despite the best efforts of many in cable, the representation of women within the our engineering community remains disappointingly small: Membership in the Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers, for example, is only 6% female, and the female-to-male ratio shows no sign of changing anytime soon.

Thus, at a time when technology is driving new business opportunities in such areas as multiplatform distribution, advanced advertising and business services, a significant source of engineering thought leadership is unavailable to cable system operators, programmers and vendors.

To be sure, the problem is not unique to cable. A study last year by the University of Wisconsin found that "nearly half of women left a career in engineering because of working conditions — too much travel, lack of advancement or low salary. More than two-thirds are working in another field; half of those are in executive positions."

This exodus not only deprives the business community of knowledge and innovation, but also creates the erroneous implication that careers in engineering are not a good fit for women. What's more, the underrepresentation of women engineers can blunt the satisfaction of successful women by burdening them with the responsibility of addressing the gender gap themselves.

Fortunately for cable, new approaches are being initiated by a cross-section of our industry, including

SCTE and such leading women as Nomi Bergman, president of Bright House Networks; Yvette Kanouff, president of SeaChange International; and Maria Brennan, president and CEO of Women in Cable Telecommunications. Together, these players are striving to implement new opportunities to nurture growth for women within cable.

At the SCTE's Cable-Tec Expo last year, SCTE and WICT began to partner on an expanded set of activities, including the "Tech It Out" program that spotlights opportunities for women in technology, as well as "Women's TechConnect," a mentoring program co-founded by Bergman and Kanouff.

At the same time, SCTE has redoubled its commitment to progress by incorporating diversity and inclusion into new and existing programs. These include sessions for women during the second annual SCTE-Tuck Executive Leadership Program at Dartmouth College and the inaugural SCTE Georgia Tech Management Program, as well as the SCTE Leadership Conference in April.

Finally, we're creating specific initiatives to drive diversity and inclusion on the board, committee and chapter levels; we're working closely with other industry associations to accomplish similar ends, and we have instituted a Diversity Council chaired by prominent women in the industry that will help to identify programs that can support the needs of diverse groups.

While none of the above will change the dearth of women engineers overnight, it is important that these steps — and more to come — are being taken to address the situation. It is our hope that in the long term, these efforts can create an environment that enables cable to attract and retain not just women, and not just engineers, but that needed group of contributors — women engineers. ■



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