Internet Regulation Essay, Research Paper

The internet was created for the cold war, in the event that the U.S. were attacked, there would be no communication among the nations leaders, because traditional communication would be disrupted by a nuclear blast. Since that time, the internet survived only though commercialization, the original form of the internet was scrapped when the cold war ended. Now, with this medium in the hands of anyone who wants to pay for service, the Internet has exploded with controversial materials that some people think should be censored. When I started this project, I asked the question should the Internet be regulated and if so, how and why? First we’ll look at why the Internet needs regulation, Then how would our government go about doing so? There are several issues that are controversial with the internet. There is pornography, racism, and hate material floating around out there that is accessiable to children all too easily. For the purposes of this paper, I will only discuss the pornography issue, since talking about all of the censorship issues would take more than a short research paper to discuss.

In early 1995, a research team at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania released one of the most revealing studies into online pornography. The value of study titled “marketing Pornography on the information superhighway” is realized mainly due to its massive sample size. There are several issues about pornography on the internet that were highlighted by the study. The research team surveyed 917,410 “sexually explicit pictures, descriptions, short stories and film clips”. Of special intrest were usenet newsgroups, which are basically electronic forums. It was found that 83.5 percent of the digitized images stored on these newsgroups were pornographic pictures. This finding indicates that there clearly is a substantial amout of pornography on the net. However, this doesn’t answer the question, how easy is it to find? In the same study, The student used a search engine called “Altavista”, typed in the keyword “sex”, and 616,156 matches were returned. Of the first 20 only 2 links were pornographic sites. Next, on the same search engine, the keyword “tits” was typed in and 69,920 links were returned. Of the first 20 of these links 17 were to pornographic sites. After looking into one of the sites listed, it was clear that is was used for exchanging child porn. This shows that it is likely that a minor would come across these sites because of their juvinile desire to look up dirty words. Just like an elementary school kid would look up “cuss” words in the dictionary. Porn is no longer just “Playboy” like photos. We have enterd an age where there is a high demand for “pedophilia” (nude photos of children), “hebephilia” (youths) and what’s called “paraphilia” (a grab bag of deviant material that includes images of bondage sadomasochism, urination, defication and sex act with barn yard animals). People who are against censorship of the internet often argue that it would make no difference because obscene material is avalible outside of the internet , even to children. On the internet, childer can be exposed to material even the most adventuresome kid would never get into with out it. That argument is no valid anymore.