Information Management Committee Monthly report

January, 2012

Type of report

Information

Statement of issue and/or area of report

This report only covers activities undertaken by the chairperson of the Information Management Committee (James Phillips) during the month of January. Not covered are ongoing activities such as the website redesign being overseen by Jim Foley at NAIT.

Hopefully this will change for next month, especially if the Terms Of Reference are approved.

Background information

Most of my activity this past month involved the temporary black-out of the website to protest SOPA/PIPA in the United States. As of this writing, I have not yet broken up the Information Management Committee wiki page as mentioned in the January board meeting minutes (http://edmontonbikes.ca/w/Board_Minutes_January_2012). I also did not write the draft Terms Of Reference for the committee until February. As a result, the process will be detailed in the February report. I have set a deadline of January 8, 2012, 1830 MST; in an attempt to have them ready for the board meeting.

Website black-out to protest SOPA

In solidarity with [Wikipedia](), [reddit](), [Google]() and many other websites, the EBC website was blacked out on January 18, 2012 from approximately 6:00am through 6:00pm MST (1300-0100 UTC). EBC otherwise operated normally during that time.

The action was in protest of two proposed bills, Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and Protect IP Act (PIPA), which are working their way through Congress in the United States. They are aimed at shutting down websites facilitating Copyright and Trademark infringement, yet fall outside US jurisdiction. The bills are controversial because it is believed that they will erode the DNS system, which resolves human-readable domain names into IP addresses.

It appears that somebody edited my entry posted on the website after I converted it to past tense to include more information.

Technical details

In order to make restoration easy, I wanted to change as little as possible. The first idea I came up with was an HTTP 302 (found) redirect to a static web page (HTML file). With Apache, this can be achieved by editing a relevant .htaccess file; though disabling those files and using a central configuration file is prefered. Because mod-rewrite (hides .php extensions) was in use, I set up a test .htaccess file on my own website with conflicting entries:

```
AddType 'text/html; charset=UTF-8' html


redirect 302 /EBC/index.html http://phillipsjk.ca/EBC/SOPA.html
redirect 302 /EBC/index.html http://phillipsjk.ca/EBC/dup.html
```

I found through trial and error that the first entry takes precedence. I also created a couple of redirect loops before getting it right. Normally such tests should be done on a local development machine I don't have set up.

As websites started to go dark on Tuesday evening, I still did not have credentials for editing the .htaccess file on the EBC website. However, the need to enable JavaScript (now more properly known as EMCA script) to view some "blacked out" pages gave me the idea to simply use that for the redirect. All I needed was the ability to dump raw HTML code into the front page; which the Expression Engine allows (requires even). I simply added the following code to my post warning about the website black-out:

```
If you can read this, you have JavaScript disabled. I was not able to
obtain the credentials to do a proper redirect. <script
type="text/javascript">
<!--
window.location = "http://phillipsjk.ca/EBC/"
//-->
</script>
```

I made sure that I was able to log in to change the page back, with JavaScript disabled, by making the initial change with JavaScript disabled. In addition to the brief explanation of the (PIPA) blackout, the static page hosted on my website went on to explain:

EBC is operating normally today

Bikeworks is scheduled to be open from 2pm through 5pm.

Alley Access
10047 80 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta
780 433 BIKE (2453)

Project timeline

January 6	Heads-up e-mail to EBC board and staff that I may be preoccupied with organizing anti-SOPA protests.
January 7	Resent heads-up e-mail.
January 11	Reddit sets a black-out date. I add the SOPA protest to agenda of the January board meeting.
January 12	Board narrowly approves 12 hour black-out of edmontonbikes.ca website to protest SOPA.
January 13	Sent cryptic e-mail to Chris Chan (vacationing in China), asking who is able to change the .htaccess file. I also send proposed black-out text to EBC president Adam Burgess. He forwards the message to employees.
January 14	Sent a notice of the website black-out to the ebc-core mailing list. Learned how to use transparency layers and masks to produce "Blackout due to SOPA" graphic. I clarify to Adam I needed text approval. He approves the first two paragraphs of proposed text.
January 16	SOPA is tabled. Adam asks what I want to do. I contact Jim Foley at NAIT and "Oxygen Smith" (who designed the current website); neither have direct access to website.
January 17	I explain to Adam that "It's not dead. It's just resting." (Monty Python) and that we should "Nuke it from orbit. It's the only way to be sure." (Alien 2) I send another e-mail to Chris Chan, this time asking for FTP access. I set up the test redirect on my personal website.
January 18	I woke up early to apply JavaScript redirect. I was planning to go to EBC to montior things and work on my bike, but I slept instead. I was about 2 minutes late restoring the site, not that I think anybody noticed (note: clock I was using for reference may have been up to 5 minutes slow). While I was restoring the site, I changed most of the explanitory text in the black-out announcement to past-tense.