

The Uncensored Library

Bypassing censorship and gaining press freedom

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The Uncensored Library is the collaborative brainchild of Reporters Without Borders, the world's biggest defender of media freedom, which they regard as a basic human right to be informed and to inform others and Blockworks, a Minecraft creation company. It launched March 12, 2020 on World Day Against Cyber Censorship and marks a new age of circumventing censorship.

This virtual library houses a collection of inaccessible articles from all over the world with five distinct sections focused on Egypt, Russia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. James Delaney, managing director of Blockworks, states in an interview with The Verge that the content of each room is illegal but has been accessed from all five target countries showing that their effort is working.

At the entrance of the library is an official declaration of the library's purpose and once inside a world map is displayed on the ground. This map is based on the Press Freedom Index ranking 180 countries according to their

censorship status. The United States ranks 48 out of 180.

In the main rotunda is a dome with all the represented countries' flags with an associated book reporting the press freedom of each country. According to Delaney, most users look at the map and go straight for their country.

Its construction took three months to complete with the cooperation of 24 builders from 16 different countries. The building comprises 12.5 million blocks and took more than 250 hours to design and create.

Minecraft was chosen as the platform for this endeavor due to its wide popularity with 145 million monthly players, its ability to support creative expression and its international accessibility. Delaney notes that the server has been working smoothly with attempts to dismantle it. This is another reason Minecraft was chosen: unless the platform is banned completely it cannot be censored and because the map itself is downloadable all that needs to be done is for it to be reuploaded again.

This inability to be completely censored provides a loophole to overcome censorship providing unlimited freedom of speech

and expression in countries that have no or limited freedom. According to The Verge, The Uncensored Library has been a great success with, as of March 15, 175 countries have accessed it including individuals from all five target countries.

According to DDB Senior Creative Tobi Natterer, there have been huge audiences in Russia and Mexico, two of their target regions. So far around 40 percent of players have returned more than once, showing that logins aren't just one-time deals.

According to the official Uncensored Library website "Censored Articles Become Uncensored Books Within Minecraft," the new online resource has allowed journalists from five different countries who have been banned, jailed, exiled or killed to have their voices heard. As The Uncensored Library continues its operation, Reporters Without Borders will continue to contact journalists, add new countries and add new content.

The building itself can be accessed through a downloadable map on uncensoredlibrary.com or through their online multiplayer server, visit uncensoredlibrary.com, on version 1.14.4.



The entrance to The Uncensored Library, located in Minecraft. The library can also be accessed on the Web at uncensoredlibrary.com.

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