

# Shortcomings and Challenges in the Restriction of Internet Retransmissions of Over-the-air Television Content to Canadian Internet Users

Benjamin Edelman

Introduction.....	1
Purpose and Summary .....	1
The theory of operation of Internet-based geographic access control systems .....	2
Problems in the production and use of geographic analysis tools .....	3
The lack of an established listing of Internet device locations .....	3
The difficulty of inferring device locations from Internet architecture.....	4
The special challenge of distinguishing between Canadian and American Internet devices .....	5
The lack of independent verification of geographic analysis system results.....	6
The offsetting effect of the need to avoid "false negatives".....	6
Use of readily available methods to circumvent geographic analysis systems will be even more likely to thwart attempts to restrict distribution of high-value content .....	7
Proxy Servers .....	7
Other protocol-level mechanisms of circumventing geographic analysis tools .....	9
Complete bypass of the HTTP-based security system .....	9
Trends and Future Developments .....	10
Conclusion .....	11

## Introduction

My name is Ben Edelman. My office address is 1563 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. I have personal knowledge of the matters set forth in this Declaration.

I am a senior at Harvard College, and I work for the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School as a systems administrator and multimedia specialist. I have previously worked as a computer purchasing consultant, a network designer and systems integrator, a custom software designer, a database specialist, and a designer of database-driven web sites. I have personal experience with RealMedia and Windows Media technologies, the primary methods used to transmit streaming video content over the Internet.

My experience includes six years as an Internet web server administrator. I have operated my own servers for six years, including a server receiving more than 10,000 hits per day. In addition, I have seven years of experience with the TCP/IP protocol on which the Internet is based, including six years administering TCP/IP-based networks. In my experience as a webmaster and network administrator, I have been asked to review log files for a number of purposes, including determining the geographic origins of individuals and groups of users.

In the course of my research at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society, and in the course of work performed for multiple clients, I have become familiar with automated systems that attempt to determine the location of an Internet user. In particular, I have reviewed the Digital Island Traceware technical documentation and have tested the Traceware system; I have reviewed the limited documentation available from bordercontrol.com and have tested the bordercontrol.com system; I have reviewed the Quova GeoPoint technical documentation. I am also generally familiar with DigitalEnvoy NetAcuity, InfoSplit OneToOne, and the RealMapping product line.

## **Purpose and Summary**

I have been asked by the National Association of Broadcasters to identify and describe limitations and challenges faced by Internet retransmitters of over-the-air television content in attempting to limit the transmission of such content to end users located within Canada.

I have conducted my analysis from the perspective that there will be numerous Internet users in the United States who desire to gain access to the retransmitted programming. Given the means available to Internet users today, there will be several ways in which they may gain access, including errors in geographic analysis systems and multiple means of bypassing such systems. Based on my knowledge of geography-based access systems, the purposes for which they have been used, and the means they employ to provide their services, it is my firm opinion that if over-the-air television programming is retransmitted over the Internet, users located in the United States will be able to gain access to the retransmitted programming.

## **The theory of operation of Internet-based geographic access control systems**

To the best of my knowledge, commercial Internet-based geographic analysis tools have been available since no later than 1999, and there are today at least half a dozen geographic analysis tools available for purchase or license. The underlying theory of operation of such systems is that they attempt to determine an Internet user's location from the user's Internet Protocol address ("IP address"), a numerical identifier associated with a device connected to the Internet. Geographic analysis tools make this determination by referring to a previously prepared database that purports to identify the location of the device. Providers of geographic analysis tools use a variety of inferential methods to prepare these lists based on indirect information about location, including inspecting domain names associated with IP addresses, monitoring of routes by which data travels across the Internet, and determining the designated administrator of IP addresses assigned to relevant portions of the Internet.<sup>1</sup> Historically, providers of geographic analysis tools have emphasized the use of their tools for demographic analysis, targeted content and advertising, native language content presentation, and product line segmentation. However, some providers of geographic analysis tools now

---

<sup>1</sup> Digital Island Traceware Technical FAQ (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app\\_serv/faqs.html](http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app_serv/faqs.html)>), Quova Geopoint Technical Overview White Paper

suggest the use of such tools for the purpose of restricting content to users from particular geographic regions.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the materials I have reviewed from Digital Island, bordercontrol, and Quova, it is my understanding that an Internet retransmitter using a geographic analysis tool would design its access control system roughly as follows: Users visit the retransmitter's web site seeking access to protected content, for which access is intended to be restricted to users within Canada. Upon receiving a request for access to such content, the retransmitter's web server passes information about the user's request (specifically, the user's apparent IP address) to a geographic analysis engine embodied in software code provided by the selected geographic analysis provider. The geographic analysis engine attempts to find this IP address in its database, and if it does, it reports back to the web server the country it has associated with this IP address.<sup>3</sup> If the reported country is in fact Canada, the retransmitter's web server provides a web page giving access to the requested webcast content; if the reported country is other than Canada or is unknown, the retransmitter's web server would refuse to provide such access.

## **Problems in the production and use of geographic analysis tools**

The design of geographic analysis tools makes the process of offering access only to Canadian users highly dependent on the accuracy of the underlying database of IP addresses and corresponding geographic locations. However, the production and use of such a database face significant challenges that make the process prone to significant errors and failures.

### ***The lack of an established listing of Internet device locations***

Most seriously, there is no existing publicly-available centralized list documenting which specific IP addresses are associated with which specific physical locations. Regional Internet Registries ("RIRs")<sup>4</sup> maintain publicly-accessible records<sup>5</sup> of the administrator of each IP range that has been assigned for use by computers, servers, and other devices connected to the Internet. However, individual assignments made by these high-level RIRs are often huge; a single assignment might allocate tens or hundreds of thousands of IP addresses that are ultimately assigned to devices in multiple countries. Nonetheless, for each range of addresses, the RIRs ordinarily publish only a single geographic location, typically associated only with the primary administrative contact for the IP address range, and not necessarily associated with all or even the

---

<sup>2</sup> Digital Island Traceware Technical FAQ (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app\\_serv/faqs.html](http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app_serv/faqs.html)>), Digital Island Traceware Brochure (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware\\_ds.pdf](http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware_ds.pdf)>), Quova GeoPoint API User Guide – Overview

<sup>3</sup> Digital Island Traceware Technical FAQ (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app\\_serv/faqs.html](http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app_serv/faqs.html)>), Quova GeoPoint API User Guide – Overview, Quova Geopoint Technical Overview White Paper, RealMapping Technology Architecture

<sup>4</sup> Each Regional Internet Registry (or RIR) assigns IP addresses to entities located within its geographic area of the world. At this time, there are three recognized Regional Internet Registries, as documented on <<http://www.aso.icann.org/rirs/>>. The RIR responsible for Canada is also responsible for all of the Americas, Sub-Equatorial Africa and the Caribbean.

<sup>5</sup> These publicly-accessible records are the so-called "IP-Whois system."

majority of the devices using IP addresses within the range. Indeed, in the case of multi-city Internet Service Providers<sup>6</sup> or multi-location companies, this information generally fails to identify the location of particular devices, since the RIR registration details address information for the ISP's or company's central headquarters, while the ISP's customers or company's users generally reside in many locations far beyond central headquarters. For example, if one were to seek to ascertain the location of an AOL user, publicly available information from RIRs would invariably point to Virginia, notwithstanding AOL's customers across the United States and beyond. Thus, using information from an RIR's publicly-available records about IP range registrations, it is not possible to draw a reliable inference about the location of a particular IP address.<sup>7</sup>

Country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs) in the Internet's Domain Name System (DNS) provide an alternative source of publicly-available information that might conceivably partially inform inferences about the geographic location of devices connected to the Internet. However, this data also entails numerous difficulties: While some ccTLDs enforce restrictions regarding who may register in their respective areas of the DNS, others allow open registrations by anyone. For example, the .TV and .MD ccTLDs openly encourage registrations by users located around the world. Even the Canadian .CA registry allows registration by non-Canadians: by associations with as many as 20% non-Canadian members, not to mention the Queen of England.<sup>8</sup> In addition, ccTLD registration policies change from time to time, are not always well-documented, and are not always consistently enforced.

Furthermore, even restrictions on registration of second-level domains within ccTLDs are insufficient to cause ccTLDs to provide reliable geographic information. For ccTLD registration restrictions ordinarily apply only to the identity of the registrant of the domain name; the underlying DNS and HTTP servers actually used to distribute content within that domain may be located anywhere on the Internet. Finally, domain names are ordinarily associated only with servers, not with the computers and other Internet-connected devices ordinarily operated by end users; thus, the domain name system does not inform analysis of locations of devices other than servers. In short, then, while ccTLD information can partially inform some assessments of geographic location, such inferences are not reliable and are not likely to inform analysis about the devices used by many end users.

### ***The difficulty of inferring device locations from Internet architecture***

Due to the shortcomings of publicly-available records regarding locations of IP assignments, geographic analysis providers also seek to use knowledge about the design and interconnections of Internet backbones to identify the location of a given Internet user. This method can sometimes partially inform attempts to draw inferences about the

---

<sup>6</sup> Multi-city Internet Service Providers include market leader America Online, whose internal network policies and use of proxy servers make its network especially misleading to geographic analysis tools seeking to determine the location of users' machines.

<sup>7</sup> Digital Island Traceware Technical FAQ (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app\\_serv/faqs.html](http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app_serv/faqs.html)>)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.cira.ca/official-doc/47.RPPG\\_00006EN.txt](http://www.cira.ca/official-doc/47.RPPG_00006EN.txt)

geographic location of particular IP addresses,<sup>9</sup> but such an approach is difficult and is likely to be unreliable in many instances.

One might try to infer the location of an IP address based on the segment of Internet backbone or interchange with which it appears to be associated. However, naming conventions of Internet backbone and interchange infrastructure, which could provide clues, are not widely standardized, reducing the ability of an automated system to draw inferences about the location of a device based on its name.

Alternatively, one might also try to determine location based on an analysis of the path by which data flows to and from a particular user. But “peering” and exchange relationships, which govern the passage of traffic from sector to sector and among Internet providers, are not always publicly disclosed and can fluctuate for reasons including technical efficiency, financial market conditions, human error, and system failure. These factors further reduce the reliability of a system that attempts to infer geographic location from the path that data seems to follow as it travels over the Internet.

Thus, it is difficult to draw reliable conclusions about the location of a user on the basis of traffic patterns to and from that user’s system.

### ***The special challenge of distinguishing between Canadian and American Internet devices***

Both the lack of a reliable locational database and the difficulties of inferring location based on Internet architecture are especially significant when attempting to differentiate Canadians from Americans on the basis of IP addresses. Many large Internet Service Providers offer access in multiple countries worldwide, and even small and medium-sized ISPs often offer service both in Canada and the United States. Similarly, the proximity of Canada and the United States and the economic ties between these countries cause many companies to operate offices in both. Moreover, both for ISPs offering services to the public and for multinational businesses operating their own networks, American and Canadian networks operated by a single entity are especially likely to be interconnected by dedicated private wide-area networks, precisely the design most troublesome for geographic analysis tools since such networks ordinarily have a single common point of connection to the public Internet.<sup>10</sup> For example, Nortel’s American operations almost certainly connect to the company’s Canadian headquarters via dedicated high-speed lines. Internet traffic that follows this same route within the corporate network might accordingly make users at the company’s American facilities appear to be located in Canada.

In addition, given the proximity of Canada to the United States, such transmissions are less likely to pass through well-known “peering points” (the connection points through which traffic flows between networks) than are other international communications, weakening the data-path means of analysis used by geographic analysis tools. Furthermore, while geographic analysis tools can look for telltale transoceanic delays in data transport between continents, there is ordinarily no such delay in communications between the United States and Canada, further reducing the ability of such tools to properly distinguish Canadian addresses from American ones. Thus, the

---

<sup>9</sup> Quova Geopoint Technical Overview, page 10 (“Analysis Process”)

<sup>10</sup> Quova Geopoint Technical Overview, page 11 (“Design Challenges – Corporate Network Proxies”)

peculiarities of the networks joining Canada with the United States are likely to make geographic analysis software particularly error-prone in this context.

Indeed, the increased causes of errors in differentiating between Canada and the US call into question certain statistics about the accuracy of geographic analysis software. In particular, claims that are based on a full sample of IP addresses worldwide are likely to overstate the accuracy of geographic analysis software when focused on the especially fine distinction between Canadians and Americans. If a company were to assert that its method is, for example, “98% accurate” on average across all its applications involving analysis of locations throughout the world, it is likely that the accuracy rate for Canadian and American location distinctions alone is lower than 98%, given the unique difficulties in this context, as described above. Without extended testing of actual geographic analysis tools, it is difficult to estimate the magnitude of this effect, but it seems possible that error rates could be as much as ten times greater in attempting to distinguish US users from Canadian users than in attempting to filter out Canadian users from the rest of the world.

### ***The lack of independent verification of geographic analysis system results***

Most commercial geographic analysis services do not publish their results, nor detailed information about their methods; this fact provides further reason to question the effectiveness of such tools. When an automated geographic analysis tool concludes that an IP address or range resides in a particular location, the company does not generally follow a practice of directly verifying its conclusion with the users of that IP address or range. Furthermore, leading providers of geographic analysis systems do not appear to publish their determinations of locations, nor make their determinations available on the web for free testing by interested Internet users. As a result, Internet users and system administrators have no opportunity to find or correct errors in their inferred locations. Indeed, without licensing access to each geographic analysis tool, an Internet user has no way to know whether each such tool determines his location accurately. Finally, for those users and systems administrators who wish to help facilitate improved accuracy of geographic analysis systems by submitting documentation about their network architecture, the web sites of leading geographic analysis tool providers reflect no formal way to do so, nor any request or suggestion that administrators might wish to do so.

### ***The offsetting effect of the need to avoid "false negatives"***

In the context of the intended application here – distinguishing Canadians from non-Canadians – the problem of accuracy becomes especially difficult due to the need to balance multiple and necessarily opposing types of errors, each of which presents serious problems. On one hand, the tools must avoid characterizing a user as Canadian when in fact she is not; errors in this regard are “leakage,” and it is only to address the leakage problem that geographic analysis tools are proposed at all. On the other, the tools must avoid characterizing a user as non-Canadian when in fact she is located in Canada; errors in this regard lead to user complaints, increased customer service expenses, and a negative impact on the image of the retransmitter as well as of the network providing the content being retransmit.

In the language of statistics, the problem here is the “type one versus type two error tradeoff”; in common language, geographic analysis tools are struggling to minimize both the incidence of false positives (erroneous permission of access) and false negatives (erroneous denial of access). Intuitively, being more certain that each person allowed in is actually in Canada means refusing access to more people who are possibly, but not certainly, in Canada.

Content delivery systems using geographic analysis tools as access control tools inevitably must make an explicit or implicit decision regarding the acceptable relative frequencies of each type of error. That is, a retransmitter company might resolve to reduce leakage by allowing retransmissions only to users who the geographic analysis tools found with the highest degree of confidence to be in Canada, but in doing so, the number of erroneous denials of service would unavoidably increase. With a given level of technology, it simply is not possible to reduce both types of error simultaneously. Furthermore, the commercial incentives of an advertising-driven business model strongly disfavor false negatives, causing still greater impediments to attempts to minimize false positives.

## **Readily available methods to circumvent geographic analysis systems will likely thwart attempts to restrict distribution of high-value content**

The technical and practical issues discussed above would make it difficult to operate a reliable geographic location access system even if there were no substantial incentives for gaining unauthorized access. But in the present context, the powerful incentives for gaining access add even more substantial impediments to a successful geographic location analysis system.

After reviewing the web sites of leading producers of geographic analysis tools, it is my understanding that these companies have focused much of their promotional efforts on applications in which users have little or no incentive to circumvent or attempt to circumvent the geographic analysis system.

For example, when a geographic analysis system is used to distribute targeted advertising intended only for viewers in a particular region (say, where a particular product is available),<sup>11</sup> typical content providers are not motivated to completely prevent “spillover” beyond the targeted audience. Neither are end users typically motivated to attempt to receive the advertising intended for those in other locations.

There is similarly little incentive for end users to circumvent geographic analysis systems when such systems are used to transmit web pages in a user’s likely primary language.<sup>12</sup> When such systems are used for demographic analysis,<sup>13</sup> there is ordinarily neither such an incentive nor an obvious opportunity to do so.

However, the present context is notably different, in that access to retransmitted over-the-air television content is likely to be valuable to certain users, who may therefore be motivated to take affirmative steps (or even to expend considerable effort) in

---

<sup>11</sup> Digital Island Traceware Brochure (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware\\_ds.pdf](http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware_ds.pdf)>), The Advantages of RealMapping

<sup>12</sup> Digital Island Traceware Brochure (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware\\_ds.pdf](http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware_ds.pdf)>)

<sup>13</sup> Digital Island Traceware Brochure (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware\\_ds.pdf](http://www.digitalisland.net/common/pdf/traceware_ds.pdf)>)

attempting to receive such transmissions. Accordingly, it is important to consider the means by which they might do so as well as the likely extent of their success.

## **Proxy Servers**

Since the initial development of the HTTP protocol used by the world-wide web, certain users and networks have come to rely on “proxy servers,” Internet devices that receive and forward certain types of content requests between a user's own server and a web site she wishes to view. Such use has multiple motivations: A user who values her privacy might find that a proxy server can prevent web server operators from learning a variety of facts about her identity. A network operator concerned about bandwidth expense or inappropriate use of Internet connectivity might use a proxy server to improve network efficiency or to restrict access to certain sites.

However, via the use of proxy servers, interested Internet users are able to disguise their location to most systems, including commonly-used geographic analysis tools. For example, an American Internet user might ask a Canadian proxy server for the web page <<http://www.retransmitter.ca/channelname>>. On behalf of the user, the proxy server requests the specified page from the specified server; then, the proxy server forwards the results to the user who submitted the initial request. In this case, the retransmitter's geographic analysis tool would ordinarily be unaware that the destination of the requested page was not the proxy server itself but rather an unspecified end user; even if the geographic analysis tool recognized the proxy server as such, it would be unable to determine the actual location of the end user.

While public proxy servers are not widespread at this time, there is significant evidence that their deployment is increasing. Companies such as anonymizer.com, ZeroKnowledge, and SafeWeb have long provided free public proxy service, supporting this service with sales of related services and/or with interstitial or header advertising. More recently, peer-to-peer systems have begun to take advantage of the availability of widespread high-speed unmetered connections to offer widely distributed proxy server networks.<sup>14</sup> For example, in some implementations, public-spirited users with unlimited high-speed Internet access volunteer the use of their system, perhaps when not otherwise in use, to relay content requested by others, most likely by Internet users who for any of several reasons cannot retrieve that content directly from its source. In these peer-to-peer proxy server systems, requests forwarded by a volunteer proxy server seem to be from the volunteer herself, despite that the resulting page will ultimately be seen at a different address, in general at a different geographic location. There is no readily-available practical method by which web servers or geographic analysis systems could prevent accesses via a distributed peer-to-peer network of this type; ordinary blocking methods (for example, denying all accesses of apparent origin at anonymizer.com) would be ineffective in the face of thousands proxy servers at dispersed and constantly-changing addresses. Indeed, precisely because this proxy implementation is so effective, recent news articles reflect that the United States government may commission the availability of such a system for use by interested Chinese Internet users who seek to circumvent the Chinese government's Internet filtering systems.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> SafeWeb Triangle Boy (<[https://fugu.safeweb.com/sjws/solutions/triangle\\_boy.html](https://fugu.safeweb.com/sjws/solutions/triangle_boy.html)>)

<sup>15</sup> “U.S. May Help Chinese Evade Net Censorship,” New York Times, August 30, 2001 (<[http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big\\_picture/geographics/article/0,1323,5911\\_151151,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/geographics/article/0,1323,5911_151151,00.html)>)



The availability of exclusive high-value content protected by geographic analysis systems would be likely to encourage additional efforts at circumvention via proxy servers. At the moment, the primary benefit to American Internet users<sup>16</sup> of Safeweb's peer-to-peer system is anonymity in web browsing, but if Internet retransmissions of over-the-air television content were accessible to Americans only if they used Safeweb (or a similar system), use of such systems would likely rise dramatically. In such circumstances, it is also likely that Canadian Internet users, and those non-Canadians with IP addresses wrongly classified as Canadian by leading geographic analysis tools, would offer their services as proxy servers to friends, acquaintances, and perhaps even strangers.<sup>17</sup> In short, then, were over-the-air television content available via Internet retransmissions and restricted by geographic analysis tools, it is likely that proxy servers would see increasing use in effectively bypassing such restrictions.

### ***Other protocol-level mechanisms of circumventing geographic analysis tools***

In addition to proxy servers, there exist multiple alternative methods of purposefully circumventing the protections of geographic analysis tools.

For example, tunneling methods<sup>18</sup> involve repackaging entire IP packets so as to send them to their destination via a remote tunneling server, thereby hiding a user's actual location and causing the user to appear to hold the IP address of her tunneling server. These methods are widely deployed in the context of corporate networks, and the end user's necessary client software is included with recent versions of the Microsoft Windows operating system.

Similarly, terminal services methods<sup>19</sup> involve transmission of keystrokes, mouse movements, and display information between end user and a remote terminal server. Here again, geographic analysis systems would base their findings on the IP address of the terminal server, while the end user is located elsewhere.

The net effect of all these methods is that an interested and determined user has access to multiple methods by which to appear to be located in Canada, for the purpose of receiving over-the-air television content from an Internet retransmitter. Furthermore, such methods are proliferating as proxy servers and tunneling methods expand due to the rise of privacy concerns and the proliferation of corporate remote-access systems.

---

<sup>16</sup> American Internet users continue to represent the bulk of the Internet population. "The World's Online Populations," Internet.com Study (<[http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big\\_picture/geographics/article/0,1323,5911\\_151151,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/geographics/article/0,1323,5911_151151,00.html)>). The same applies to Internet users from all other countries, save for those that filter the Internet (China, for example) and those that contemplate permitting access to retransmit network television content (Canada, for example).

<sup>17</sup> For example, Canadians operating proxy servers might auction the use of their servers via ebay or a similar system, or they might sell lists of access mechanisms as is currently the case in the realm of Internet pornography.

<sup>18</sup> Among tunneling methods are PPTP, IPSec, and all other means of providing "virtual private networks" (VPNs).

<sup>19</sup> Among terminal services methods are Microsoft Windows Terminal Server, Citrix MetaFrame, X Windows, and Symantec pcAnywhere.

## ***Complete bypass of the HTTP-based security system***

Discussion so far has considered various means by which interested Internet users might provide a geographic analysis tool with an IP address unlikely to be associated with the actual location of the end user. However, there exists an altogether separate method of circumventing geographic analysis systems used for the purpose of restricting access to streaming media content: Interested users might link directly to the streaming media content, without first passing through those web servers secured by geographic analysis tools.

Indeed, current geographic analysis tools are generally intended to be integrated into a content provider's system at the level of the HTTP server ("web server"), and they are ordinarily used precisely and only in this way when used to customize a web site.<sup>20</sup> However, an HTTP server is not used to deliver streaming media under the market-leading implementations of RealVideo and Windows Media Architecture streaming video; rather, these systems use proprietary streaming media server systems, namely the RealServer and Windows Media Server, respectively. To the best of my knowledge, there is no off-the-shelf method of integrating geographic analysis tools with these streaming media servers, and based on my review of the technical documentation of these two servers, as well as informal conversations I have had with commercial webcasters who have attempted similar tasks, I have concluded that it would be extremely difficult to perform such integration even with custom software code.

As a result, in most implementations, it is likely to be possible to "deep link" directly to the desired streaming video content without first accessing the HTTP server that ordinarily provides the link to the streaming media content; in this way, it is possible to bypass the sole point at which geographic analysis access controls are applied. It may be difficult for novice users to ascertain the location required for "deep link" access directly to streaming video content. However, this process need only be performed once per channel on each retransmitter. Thereafter, straightforward instructions could be written by a single user and posted for use by all. Furthermore, once the destination of the deep link to a given over-the-air television channel becomes well-known, it is straightforward to create a link to that channel from any web server, and this link alone would be sufficient to grant access, without any additional instructions or access procedures.<sup>21</sup>

For a retransmitter unable to attach geographic analysis software to its streaming media server due to the lack of appropriate interfaces on the streaming media server, such deep linking is difficult or impossible to prevent. Incoming requests that result from deep links appear the same to a streaming media server as do incoming requests that result from clicking through a geographic analysis tool's authentication system on the retransmitter's web site. Thus, in such circumstances, it is likely to be impossible to prevent deep linking to streaming media content without simultaneously preventing authorized access.

---

<sup>20</sup> Digital Island Traceware Technical FAQ (<[http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app\\_serv/faqs.html](http://www.digitalisland.net/services/app_serv/faqs.html)>), Quova GeoPoint API User Guide, RealMapping Technology

<sup>21</sup> In January 2000, Streambox.com created precisely such a link to over-the-air television content retransmitted by iCraveTV.

## Trends and Future Developments

Looking forward, there are significant reasons to expect it to become harder, not easier, to produce accurate geographic analysis tools and to thereby restrict retransmitted over-the-air television content to a Canadian audience.

As noted above, the accuracy of geographic analysis systems – which is substantially impeded in the first place by the lack of reliable information about the location of the devices identified with particular IP addresses – is further hindered by the rise in deployment of proxy servers, tunneling systems, and terminal services. Such systems can cause geographic analysis systems to draw erroneous conclusions about the locations of end users; thus, their increased use reduces the accuracy of geographic analysis tools.

Furthermore, the increased deployment of mobile network devices may make it more difficult to determine the location of an Internet user at the time of access to a particular site, likely differing from the fixed location of the user's service provider.

Finally, geographic analysis tools are likely to suffer in effectiveness due to the increasing availability of automated tools and generally-known methods for bypassing security systems. For example, the Bitbop Tuner<sup>22</sup> allows users to listen to a streaming radio station over the Web without ever visiting that station's web site – a method that would most likely circumvent security implemented at the level of the web server. Other recent tools suggest additional methods for novice users to deep link around HTTP-level security systems, while multiple Internet discussion boards periodically consider this topic from time to time. Thus, there is substantial reason to believe that such methods and skills will become increasingly widespread and well-known in the future.

## Conclusion

Given the current development of geographic analysis tools and given the systems and techniques available to Internet users today, there will inevitably be multiple ways in which Internet users may gain access to any over-the-air television content retransmitted over the Internet. The interconnected global architecture of the Internet is at odds with an attempt to “fence off” a country through technological means, and the challenges confronting geographical access control systems that attempt to do so are, in my opinion, effectively insurmountable at the present time.

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bitbop.com>