

White Paper

With Pirate Bay foundering, where have file traders gone?

October 2009

Executive Summary

After Swedish authorities forced the Internet disconnection of The Pirate Bay, online piracy worldwide dropped substantially on BitTorrent networks as file traders scrambled to find replacement trackers. The shift caused a secondary shutdown among some alternative trackers, which appear to have been temporarily overwhelmed by the unexpected new traffic.

But rather than jumping to competing file-trading protocols, file traders remained on BitTorrent networks. Pirates who are uploading the files are using replacement BitTorrent trackers. Additionally, The Pirate Bay updated their trackers to point to OpenBitTorrent, so content can still be found. Therefore traffic volumes are slowly recovering to previous levels with OpenBitTorrent as a probable Pirate Bay successor, and enforcement target.

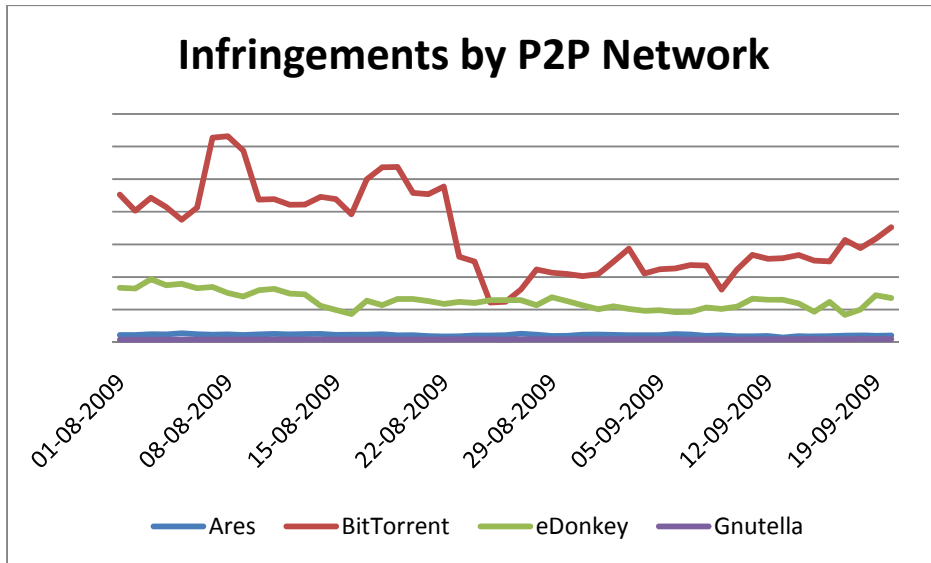
After Pirate Bay

The Pirate Bay has been the world's most notorious file-sharing network to date. Its main purpose was to share pirated video, music, games and other content, using the BitTorrent peer-to-peer file-trading protocol.

On Aug. 24, 2009, the Pirate Bay lost its online connection when its Internet service provider, Black Internet, cut off service to avoid Stockholm court fines for helping Pirate Bay infringe on copyrights.

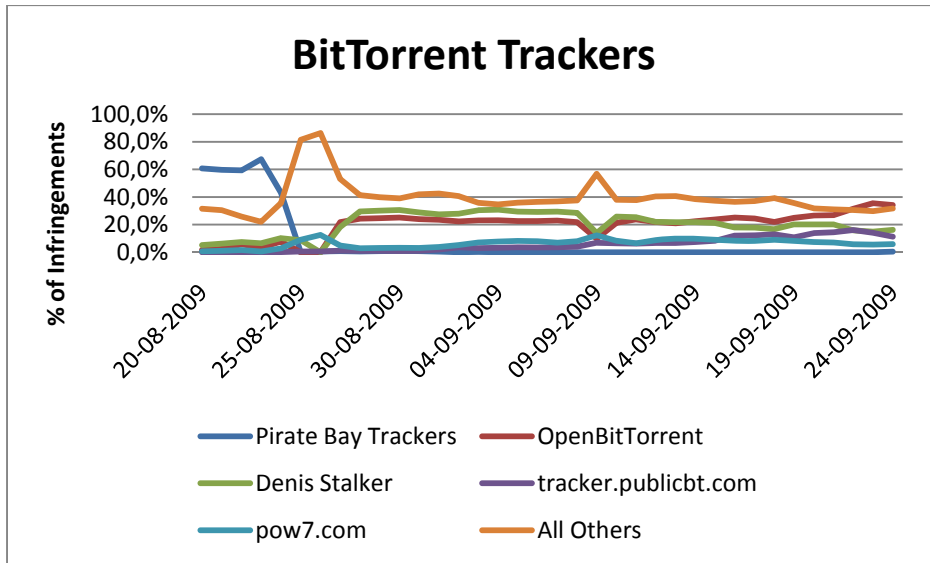
The disconnection had an immediate effect on worldwide piracy networks, as Black Internet also hosted nearly all of Pirate Bay's "tracker" servers, which act as "traffic cops" for people uploading and downloading media files. When the trackers are shut down, BitTorrent programs do not know where to look for files.

The impact of the shutdown is strongly obvious in the graph below. File trading on BitTorrent, easily the world's most popular peer-to-peer protocol, dropped virtually overnight by nearly 80 percent for select main stream media files monitored by DtecNet.



Note that after the shutdown, users did not migrate to other peer-to-peer protocols such as Ares, Gnutella and eDonkey, whose traffic remained relatively unchanged. Instead, file traders remained on BitTorrent, and over time, infringements through that network began to rise again as new trackers became available. As those shifts continue, BitTorrent traffic is expected to soon return to levels seen before the Pirate Bay shutdown.

The pirates uploading to BitTorrent increasingly appear to favor a few trackers, including OpenBitTorrent, Denis Stalker, tracker.publicbt.com and pow7.com. These four now comprise nearly 70 percent of all BitTorrent traffic. The graph below illustrates the chaos the shutdown caused among various BitTorrent tracker networks, and how more recently the situation appears to be clarifying itself as users find new favorite sites.



About two weeks after the Pirate Bay shutdown, two of the successor trackers – OpenBitTorrent and DenisStalker – temporarily shut down, possibly because they could not handle rising demand. That led to a short secondary spike in traffic among a variety of other networks, which has since tailed off again.

Meanwhile, OpenBitTorrent, one of the newest trackers (it was registered only in February of this year), is emerging as the site most likely to replace Pirate Bay as infringers’ go-to tracker. OpenBitTorrent now carries 25 percent of BitTorrent traffic in pirated media worldwide.

Though such concentration of traffic would appear to present yet another enforcement opportunity, similar to the Pirate Bay shutdown, it will be more difficult as BitTorrent technologists continue to adapt. Torrent sites now point to multiple trackers to an even higher degree, so if one is disconnected or overwhelmed by traffic, pirates can still find the files they seek without stopping to find another tracker.

About DtecNet, Inc.

DtecNet is headquartered in Beverly Hills, Calif., with offices in Denmark, London, UK, Paris, France and Lithuania. DtecNet provides content-rights holders with market-leading solutions that track and prevent piracy of their digital media content, while generating actionable, highly granular business intelligence about worldwide demand for those assets.

By monitoring the file-sharing habits of hundreds of millions of Internet users, DtecNet tracks and identifies file-sharing trends, helping rights holders understand how their content is traded on the Internet and how to make better decisions on distribution, business models, marketing and more.

For more information, go to <http://www.dtecnet.com>. DtecNet's Business Intelligence unit may be followed on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/dtecnetbi>.

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