

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gpsstash/message/443>

From: John De Wolf <jdewolf@m...>
Date: Thu Sep 14, 2000 1:47 pm
Subject: Geocaching and Letterboxing

I've been a member of this list since late spring and have been involved in letterboxing for almost 2 years now. Some of the recent actions taken at geocaching.com concern me greatly. I will try to address some of my key concerns below:

Jeremy wrote:

>Again, I'm talking to the tech team at Letterboxing.org, so any further
>discussions will be considered off topic. No need to beat this horse.

This issue is very much "on topic" since it relates to what is being done at geocaching.com. Isn't the purpose of these lists to illicit healthy discussions about issues. As a member of this list, I feel this is far from beating a dead horse, and is deserving of fair and well-reasoned discussion. Also, I am a member of the "tech team at Letterboxing.org", and while I have had private, off-list communication with Jeremy, I have yet to witness any discussion from Jeremy with the team.

Jeremy wrote:

>On a side topic, Letterboxing and GPS stash hunt games are very similar in
>nature. Since geocaching is a pretty broad term, does anyone object to
>merging the two games together under the Geocaching name? The more back-end
>work I do on geocaching.com the more similar they become.

I object. The 2 games, while sharing some similarities, are very different. Letterboxing dates back to 1854 in England and therefore has quite a bit of tradition behind it. Letterboxing also offers puzzles at levels many of us may not even be able to grasp. Finally, a good part of the letterboxing community is comprised of artists who take great pride in their work, be it clues, stamps, web pages, what have you. Also, why would someone interested in letterboxing need to go to a geocaching website??

Randy wrote:

>I would work with the letterboxing webmasters on this one.

I too have invited Jeremy to do this.

Randy wrote:

>I would point out that you are violating the copyrights of the clue writers
>by what you appear to be doing (well you're violating my copyright
>anyway :-))

This really concerns me. How can you justify copying copyrighted information to your website, deciding what information to delete from said copyrighted pages, then put your own copyright on those pages? Am I missing something here?

Following is a portion of the text found on the front page at www.letterboxing.org.

Note: The contents of this website are copyrighted, and are not to be duplicated without the specific permission of the various individual authors. You are welcome to print the clues for your own personal letterboxing purposes for free and without special permission. However, republication or reproduction of this material in a book, website, or any other resource is strictly prohibited.

Jeremy wrote:

>As for banner advertising, I'll never even hope to recoup the costs of
>working on this project, but if I can at least pay for bandwidth with any
>kind of revenue I get - it is preferable than asking for money. This is a
>pet project (and hobby). Hobbies don't make any money. I also won't plague
>the site with advertising - I'll only use those companies that I find
>provide a service to the group - and will make it complementary to the site.

As has been mentioned on this list before, we've had the discussion about money and ads over the years. We really don't want to there again. The hobby has been ad-free for almost 150 years and we are working very hard at keeping it that way. We've decided, as a group, that we'd rather ask for money than have an individual profit from the hobby. We've found that

letterboxing2.txt

people are rather forthcoming with cash, particularly if minimal contributions can keep a site ad-free. Perhaps this is a discussion we should have on this list too.

How would you decide which companies provide a service to the group? Seems like a rather unilateral decision-making process. Are others on this list comfortable with that? Of particular concern to the letterboxing community right now, is the fact that the company you provide advertising for is a direct competitor to a company that has been instrumental in the development of letterboxing in the US.

I guess my biggest beef here, is that one individual, to the best of my knowledge not an active letterboxer, stand to profit financially from the work of others.

I've just received Alan's note on dot com, ads and linking to others' pages, and I concur with him.

Pierre wrote:

>Please keep geocaching as it was born: simple, natural, passionate, not >commercial,... Trying to make money out of it will kill it!

I agree.

Randy wrote:

>I personally think it could be useful technology, but I think you should >work with the LbNA folks on it (or at least the owners of >the copy) before >just republishing stuff and pulling down revenue.

And Jeremy wrote:

>My ultimate goal is to increase awareness of both games - letterboxing and >GPS stashing.

Despite all that precedes, I do believe we can find a way to accomplish these goals. I do feel strongly though that it will need to:

1. Be ad-free,
2. Respect the copyright of the clue publisher, and
3. Be achieved through open and fair communication between all parties involved.

Ultimately, I feel that the work and skills Jeremy brings to the table can be beneficial to both communities, but perhaps they do not make sense under the geocaching.com umbrella. I look forward to a healthy debate on these issues.

I apologize to this list for the length of this post, and its apparent letterboxing bias. I believe the issues I raised are very much relevant to what we on this list do as well.

Best Regards,

John