Who owns the internet?

Aaron Swartz (1986-2013)

- Internet prodigy and activist
- Co-creator of Reddit at age 14
- Developer of RSS and Creative Commons
- Open access advocate and digital freedom fighter



Aaron Swartz core belief

- Information should be free and accessible to all
- Knowledge as a public good, not a commodity
- The internet as a commons, not private property
- "Information is power. But like all power, there are those who want to keep it for themselves."

The JStor incident

- Downloaded millions of academic articles from JSTOR at MIT
- Charged with federal computer crimes, facing up to 35 years in prison
- Prosecuted aggressively despite JSTOR declining to press charges
- Swartz died by suicide in 2013, age 26

Locke, Marx, Swartz

- **Locke**: Labor creates property rights → users should own their data
- **Marx**: Platform owners exploit user labor → collective ownership needed
- **Swartz**: Information as commons → open access for all
- The "enough and as good" proviso violated by monopolies

Current battles over Internet Ownership

- Net neutrality debates
- Right to repair
- Data privacy regulations (GDPR, etc.)
- Antitrust actions against Big Tech
- AI training on copyrighted/user content