

Posting of Leaks Lands Student in Hot Water

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A self-proclaimed Internet activist, UC Berkeley graduate student Joseph Lorenzo Hall has participated in political e-mail lists and even drafted a resolution on political freedom in academics.

But he never had any run-ins with the law until Halloween, when he received a cease and desist order for posting thousands of internal documents questioning the reliability of a company's electronic voting machines.

The documents pointed to possible security breaches and flaws in one of the nation's largest manufacturers of electronic voting machines-Diebold Election Systems.

Easily accessible on the Internet, the internal documents had been made public by a hacker earlier this year.

But Diebold countered that posting the documents was a violation of copyright and that they may have been tampered with between the time they were stolen and the time they were released to the public by the hacker.

Since then, three other UC Berkeley graduate students have posted the documents, but have yet to receive any take-down notice.

Although Hall has taken the documents off his Web site, he is trying to convince the university and others that the information should be public.

"I was pretty conflicted because the information contained people's e-mails and cell phone numbers," he said. "I decided it was a matter of public concern-it had to be done."

Other students from more than 50 universities have also joined in the dissent, listing their sites on why-war.com.

"We originally started calling it electronic civil disobedience, but it is really like electronic protesting," Hall said.

Hundreds of students and protesters picked up the documents and posted them on Web sites, and Diebold has since aggressively tried to contain their spread with takedown orders.

Hall has not decided whether to counter Diebold's order and put up the information on his Web site again.

The UC Berkeley administration will also not intervene, said Michael Smith, assistant chancellor of the Office of Legal Affairs.

Diebold's voting machines replaced the controversial punch-card ballot system in Berkeley last year.

But the company recently came under fire after a study by Johns Hopkins and Rice universities researchers pointed to flaws in the company's machines.

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