

Family blame prosecutors after free-access pioneer found dead

Erena Dobnik
Sapa-AP

NEW YORK: The family of a Reddit co-founder who has been found dead here weeks before he was to go on trial on charges of stealing millions of scholarly articles, is blaming prosecutors for his death.

Aaron Swartz was found hanged in his Brooklyn apartment on Friday night, his family and authorities said.

The 26-year-old had fought to make online content free to the public and as a teenager helped crease RSS, a family of

web feed formats used to gather updates from blogs, news headlines, audio and video for users.

In 2011, Swartz was charged with stealing millions of scientific journals from a computer archive at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in an attempt to make them freely available.

He had pleaded not guilty, and his trial was to begin next month. If convicted, he would have faced decades in prison and a fortune in fines.

In a statement, Swartz's family in Chicago said: "Aaron's death is not simply a

personal tragedy. It is the product of a criminal justice system rife with intimidation and prosecutorial overreach. Decisions made by officials in the Massachusetts US Attorney's office and at MIT contributed to his death."

US Attorney Carmen Ortiz in Boston could not be reached for comment. The New York Times has quoted her as saying "stealing is stealing, whether you use a computer command or a crowbar, and whether you take documents, data or dollars".

A zealous advocate of public

online access, Swartz has been lauded by those who believed as he did. In a tribute on its home page, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an international non-profit digital rights group in California, wrote that he had been "an extraordinary hacker and activist".

"Playing Mozart's *Requiem* in honor of a brave and brilliant man," tweeted Carl Malamud, an internet public domain advocate who believes in free access to legally obtained files.

Swartz co-founded the social

news website Reddit, which was later sold to Condé Nast, as well as Demand Progress, a group that campaigns against internet censorship.

He also apparently struggled at times with depression.

Harvard law professor Lawrence Lessig, faculty director of the Safra Center for Ethics where Swartz was once a fellow, wrote: "We need a better sense of justice... The question this government needs to answer is why it was so necessary that Aaron Swartz be labelled a 'felon'."

Before the Massachusetts

case, Swartz helped Malamud in his efforts to post federal court documents for free online. The government charges a few cents a page through its electronic archive, PACER.

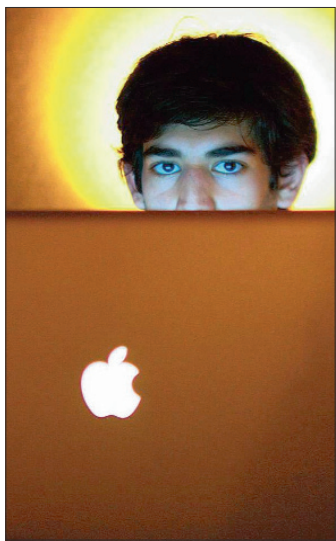
Swartz wrote a program in 2008 to download the files legally using free access through public libraries, according to The New York Times. About 20 percent of all the court papers were made available until the government shut down the library access.

The FBI investigated but did not charge Swartz.

Three years later, Swartz was arrested in Boston.

The federal government accused Swartz of using MIT's computer network to steal nearly five million academic articles from JSTOR, a subscription service that offers digitised copies of articles from more than 1 000 academic journals.

Prosecutors alleged Swartz hacked into MIT's system in November 2010 after breaking into a computer wiring closet on campus. They said he intended to distribute the articles on file-sharing websites.



FACED TRIAL: Aaron Swartz was found hanged. Picture: AP

Sold-out send-off as SA's Parlottes head for LA

Munya Vomo

AWARD-WINNING local rock band the Parlottes have delivered their final performances before heading out to the US permanently.

In their performances on Saturday and yesterday at Ellis Park and Kirstenbosch, respectively, the band gave the fans two hours of their best music.

Both venues were sold out. "These shows were just to send the message out to the fans that we are relocating," said lead singer Kahn Morbee.

Although the move is permanent, the group promised to return whenever possible. "It's not to say that we are never going to come back and perform here, but more of a symbolic gesture that this is our last show for a while in South Africa," he said. The group will be based in Los Angeles, but they still plan to make their music back home to keep it "purely South African".

Fans arrived at the shows in their droves, most with their faces painted in the band's signature make-up colours, in black-and-red regalia. To satisfy everyone, the band had to research which songs their supporters would like to hear.

"We decided to do a longer set than we usually do. We looked at doing 25 songs, which would be trimmed in parts so that they fit in the two-hour time we had.

"We also went on social networks to ask fans what they wanted to hear, and we were surprised by some of the old songs that they asked for which we haven't played in a while," said pianist Glenn Hodgson.

Over the years, the Parlottes have been a permanent feature in all local music award ceremonies, clinching several awards.

Their fan base spreads beyond South Africa's borders to countries such as Germany, Australia and the US.

Building on the evidence of that international popularity, the band decided to give the cut-throat US music industry a go.

"All we are going to be doing is play in the gigs we have lined up there," said Morbee. "There are a few radio promotional things waiting for us and we have been invited to the Grammys as guests, so that's pretty cool."

THE MAN WHO SEARCHED FOR SUGAR MAN

Film reels in fame for vinyl store

Caryn Dolley

IT STARTED out as a "cultural cockroach" of a vinyl store in Gardens – and is now becoming a major tourist attraction, thanks to the Oscar-nominated documentary *Searching for Sugar Man*.

An increasing number of international tourists have been making their way to Mabu Vinyl – the record, CD, DVD, cassette and bookshop in Rheede Street, which is featured in the documentary.

"Ah jeez, we're in hyper-drive," Stephen "Sugar" Segerman, 58, co-owner of the store, said yesterday, sitting among stacks of records in the shop.

Segerman himself features prominently in the documentary as he was the person who started trying to find out what had happened to "Sugar Man", the US musician Sixto Rodriguez who had been rumoured to have killed himself decades ago.

The documentary details how Segerman and a fellow Rodriguez fan from Cape Town, Craig Bartholomew Strydom, managed to track down the musician who was in fact alive and unaware that he had been wildly popular in South Africa decades ago when he was unknown in the US.

Searching for Sugar Man was the opening film at the Sundance Film Festival in February last year and Segerman, who had been there with Rodriguez, said the rest of the year had been "insane".

On Thursday, when the Oscar nominations were announced, he had been too overwhelmed to watch as this happened live on television.

"I thought, no, this is just too much for me. I switched it off," Segerman said.

His brother in Australia had then called to tell him the news – *Searching for Sugar Man* was up for a Best Documentary Feature Oscar.

"This place is going crazy... we've become a minor tourist



OVERWHELMED: Stephen Segerman, who co-owns Mabu Vinyl, the music and bookshop in Gardens, says the Oscar-nominated documentary *Searching for Sugar Man*, in which he and the store feature, has resulted in the shop becoming an attraction that tourists are increasingly visiting. Picture: MICHAEL WALKER

attraction," Segerman said.

As he was talking, a family from the US walked into the store and their tour guide, Alan Petersen, told Segerman they wanted to meet him.

The family, which had just climbed Table Mountain, then took photographs of themselves with Segerman and told him they had watched the documentary at the Sundance Film Festival.

Segerman said he spoke to

Rodriguez often.

"He's having a wonderful time. I spoke to him recently, asked how he was and he said: 'I'm getting lots of room service.'"

Since the documentary, customers were going to Mabu Vinyl store specifically to buy Rodriguez's CDs and ask if the musician was indeed getting money from the sales.

"They refuse to download (the music)," Segerman said.

He could not believe Mabu Vinyl's roots – records being sold from the back of a store that had become a shop that was open from premises to premises.

"We were like a cultural cockroach," Segerman said.

Next month, he plans to be at the Oscar awards ceremony along with Rodriguez and others involved in the documentary.

Segerman was over-

whelmed by its far-reaching effects.

"I've got about a thousand e-mails (mainly from) South Africans overseas..."

"Just this morning I got an e-mail from someone saying (after watching the documentary) it's the first time ever they're proud to be South African," he said.

"It's been a crazy ride... hyper... surreal."

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SUGAR MAN RODRIGUEZ

Man 'miraculously' survives black mamba bite

Bongani Hans

DURBAN: A Zululand man has "miraculously" survived a black mamba attack despite having only received treatment about an hour after being bitten.

A nurse at the Hlabisa Hospital said most people died if they were not treated within 30

minutes of being bitten.

The nurse, who asked not to be identified because she is not allowed to speak to the media, said Makhundu Thusi was the first person in the Mpembeni village to have survived such an attack.

Thusi said he was aware of at least two others who had died last year.

"It is a miracle that I'm still alive. People normally die after being bitten by a black mamba."

Thusi was connecting a pipe to a spring waterhole when the long snake slid out of the bush.

"I was picking up the pipe when the snake appeared and raised its head to the level of my knee.

"Then it suddenly attacked me before it disappearing. It was a long black mamba," he said.

What probably helped save the 30-year-old father of a two-month-old son, was that he immediately used a rope to fasten the upper part of his bitten leg to minimise the blood flow and circulation of poison.

Avocets join flamingos in river

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Rob Little, manager at UCT's FitzPatrick Institute, said the presence of the flamingos in the Black River was attributed to an "eruption" of invertebrates in the river.

"Flamingos follow them around in the Western Cape. They know where to find them," he said.

Asked if the number of invertebrates had increased due to better water quality, he said: "Not necessarily. We might think so, but the water is okay for invertebrates."

He did not have flamingo population figures at hand, but said the bird species was not threatened.

"It's stable," he said. "They

feed on small aquatic animals which are not really insects. They are shrimp-like animals and the flamingos feed on them. You will also notice that a large number of avocets that also feed on these animals have joined the flamingos in the Black River," he said of the flamingos' diet.

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Woman, child die in taxi crash

A WOMAN and a child died when their taxi overturned yesterday on the N7 near the Melkbosstrand turn-off.

ER24 spokesman Werner Vermaak said 19 people were involved in the crash and 17 were injured.

One child had head injuries and his leg was partially amputated. He was airlifted to Red Cross Children's Hospital but died.

Other occupants were taken to nearby hospitals. – Sapa

SUPPLIER GALA EVENING 2012

Tafelberg Furnishers – the Biggest Independent Dealer in the Western Cape – recently held their 5th Supplier Gala evening at the beautiful Zevenwacht Wine Estate, during which a number of their suppliers received awards for outstanding service delivery in various categories. This has become such an important date on the furniture trade calendar that many suppliers already enquire at the beginning of each year as to when the next gala evening will take place in December. Many supplier Head offices are based in Johannesburg and top senior management specially flew down down to CT to attend this prestigious Gala evening. This time round the entertainment was provided by Steve Hofmeyr.



LG ELECTRONIC SA (Pty) Ltd – Major Appliances - Valued Support & Effort
left: Ashton Gardner (LG representative) & Gerry Theron



SEALY – Highest turnover contributor to Tafelberg bedding turnover
left: Riaan Lamprecht (Tafelberg Furnishers) with Ras Erasmus (Sealy)



ALPINE LOUNGE – Furniture supplier of the year
left: Riaan Lamprecht (Tafelberg Furniture & Bedding buyer) & Jenny Wagner (Alpine representative)



DEFY APPLIANCES (Pty)Ltd – MAJOR APPLIANCES – DEALER OF THE YEAR
FROM LEFT: Jason Crowther, Bernadette Latimer, Koot Barnard, Gerry Theron (Tafelberg Appliances buyer) and Mel Katz

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