

Twitter working on Chinese registration page

March 16 2010, By MEGAN K. SCOTT , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Twitter is working on a way to allow Chinese users to sign up to the social networking site in their own language, a co-founder of the site said Monday night, but access to the popular site remains blocked in the country.

Jack Dorsey said at a panel that Twitter is "hard at work" on allowing users to register in Chinese. Dorsey was responding to a question from Chinese avant garde artist Ai Weiwei.

Ai has been an outspoken critic of Chinese authorities and their continuing efforts to impose censorship. He said he spends about eight hours a day on Twitter.

"I need a clear answer, yes or no?" he said to Dorsey, who joined the conversation via satellite.

"Yes, it's just a matter of time," Dorsey responded, citing limited staff and technical constraints as challenges for setting up the Chinese registration page.

Dorsey, Ai and Richard MacManus, founder of technology blog ReadWriteWeb, were part of a discussion on digital activism at the Paley Center for Media. People from all over the world also participated via Twitter, with their [tweets](#) displayed on a large screen behind the panelists.

The conversation came only a couple of days after it was reported that

[Google](#) was "99.9 percent sure" to close its search engine in China because of stalled negotiations over censorship. Google has about 35 percent of the Chinese [search market](#). The panelists praised the decision, calling it courageous and inspiring.

Ai said he wants Chinese translation on Twitter so users who are able to get past the firewall can read tweets.

Since it was founded in 2006, Twitter has emerged as a tool for digital activism in messages of no more than 140 characters. Ai has used it to demand answers about the number of young children who were killed in the Sichuan earthquake.

Last April, protesters in Moldova used Twitter when mobile phones and news television stations went down, rallying as many as 10,000 people to one demonstration. And tech-savvy Iranians turned to Twitter to protest the disputed presidential election.

Dorsey said he has no idea how [Twitter](#) would get around the firewall. He admitted he didn't know the site was blocked in the country until three weeks ago when he was prepping for the event.

When asked whether he would give user information to the Chinese government, he said he hoped the company could work with the U.S. government to make sure that doesn't happen.

"Step one is translation, getting the site accessible in a Chinese version," said Dorsey. "That's something the company is really pushing to do."

But moving into the country is something "that's very difficult to do," he said.

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