

and adapted" test in Australia, the concept is similar. Owing to the scope of the freedom in America more material would be restricted by the CDA than by the Victorian Act, but these findings of fact are valid worldwide. The point remains that there are more effective and less restrictive means of censoring the Internet.

Conclusion

The Internet is a medium with some special features. The barriers to entry are very low - anyone with a PC and a modem can become a content provider. The barriers are the same for content providers and those who access the content. As a result there is an extraordinary diversity of material on the Internet - all those who wish to speak have access, and there is a relative parity between speakers.

This accessibility means that material on the Internet is not always as sophisticated or as polished as that available from other media. However, as Justice Dalzell states in the CDA case at first instance:

"What achieved success was the very chaos the Internet is. The strength of the Internet is that chaos".

By its very nature the Internet comes the closest to creating a "market place of ideas" that has yet been seen. For these reasons, censorship of the diverse viewpoints on the Internet is grossly undesirable.

The type of legislation that has been enacted in Victoria is entirely inappropriate for the Internet. In forcing ISPs to take a greater control over what they publish the costs associated with

providing that service will be greatly increased. Providers will be severely affected, and as a result we can expect the diversity of content to be affected.

Fortunately, it appears that there is a strong argument that the Victorian legislation unconstitutionally restricts freedom of political expression. It is difficult to view the legislation as reasonably appropriate and adapted when there are technologically more effective solutions available.

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Developing Media Industries of the Future? Telecommunications and the "New Media"

John Colette examines the way in which telcom, film and software companies are attempting to use old media concepts to exploit a new medium - and failing.

In the endless wait for the promised "information superhighway", there are no shortage of players eager to assume the role of developers for the information industries of the future. Despite the explosive growth of and interest in networked media technologies, particularly the Internet, it is unclear if these "media" have moved beyond the early adopters who champion their use, into the realm of a true "mass" medium.

What is certain, is that in what appears to be the latent business opportunity of the millennium, it is extremely difficult for companies to build substantial and profitable businesses around the new media. On one hand, looking to develop this market, are the existing telecommunication companies, whose principal experience is in the provision of engineering based services and the development of network infrastructure. Also jostling for centre stage are software companies who have experience in the

development of computer software. These companies have assumed that it is a logical progression for their existing products to "dovetail" into online media.

Applying Old Models to a New Medium

What is overlooked, is that the development of an emerging media form requires a creative flair that is elusive, if not impossible to hothouse within the confines of a large, corporate entity. Previously it was assumed that film and video makers would make ideal candidates for the development of "interactive" entertainment, because they understood concepts like "storytelling". In hindsight, this is patently not true, as filmmakers make good films, and the successful products that are computer mediated "interactives" are games like Doom and Quake, which are the product of another sensibility altogether.

This is why the software companies, even with extremely deep pockets, will have difficulty in "colonising" these new electronic frontiers. People are attracted to the online environment because of the anarchic variety of content that is available to them - most of which is free. This is completely different to the products and services models upon which software and telecommunications companies have been built. The popular "chat" lines that are a big attraction of the proprietary AOL online service in the US, have their genesis in IRC (internet relay chat). In these environments, users type messages that are read by an entire group in a "chat room". This is an aspect of the medium which mimics telephony, as opposed to the "publishing and broadcasting" models characteristic of the world wide web. What is important to note here is that the "content" is provided by the medium's constituency themselves - it is the distributed nature of the network that makes online chat "work".

Technology Does Not Drive Demand

What stands in the way of a clear view of the possibilities and directions of the online medium is a curious form of "technological determinism" that plagues the rhetoric surrounding new, digital technologies. In a determinist view of technology, the argument goes that a technology is developed, and there is a follow on effect on the social fabric. An example of this is the notion that the invention of the steam engine "caused" the industrial revolution, which ignores the historical fact that the first steam engine was shown operating on a circular track a full "30 years before a working railway was built. Similarly, in the rush to develop the new media, all types of products for augmenting the online experience with video, streaming audio and other "traditional" media types are developed and demonstrated on an almost weekly basis. This continues despite the fact that at the very core of the internet is a "packet" based technology, completely unsuited to delivering streaming media like video. Even with the development of so called "broadband" services duplexed on Cable TV coaxial lines, the bandwidth may support low resolution, compressed

video, but the switching technologies around the network generally will not. The need to imitate existing media, particularly television, seems to stem from an insecurity as to what online media really are - the early years of television similarly assumed the form of "radio with pictures" with a studio based format derived largely successful from the radio genre.

Factors in a Successful New Media Application

If the factors that create a good new media application are isolated, they can be broken into three broad categories: media, networking and processing.

Media is simply that - the variety of media types that may be bundled under the abused title "multimedia". Networking is the ability of an application to take advantage of the distributed nature of the Internet to access a potentially global range of media sources. Processing is the ability, at either side of a transaction, to create additional value through the ability of computers to process information, such as through a database. Most emerging applications that show promise offer all three of these features to some extent.

At present, the development of online media is moving past the initial stage of novelty and into a growing period of maturity. Success in this environment is often enjoyed by small enterprises, with low overheads, that have developed niche new media "brands", as opposed to the larger corporate entities that produce, at great expense, derivative "channels" based sites that attempt to create broad market appeal, and in so doing, produce little that is not available in other, existing media formats.

The possibility of providing mass "entertainment" on the internet is remote - on the network, things are interesting in their specificity, the extent to which they address micro constituencies, or in the way that they are useful to the user. In the current environment, the successful developers of new media content will be those who can deliver specialist media to an audience that actively seeks it, or in more broadly based applications, those that deliver context and use value for the content they provide.

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