Cyberidentities

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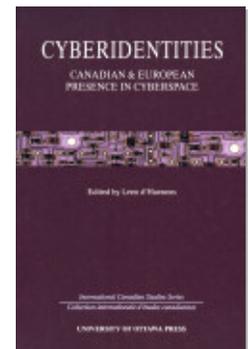
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ABSTRACTS

The Trans-Canada Highway vs The Information Highway: The Road Less Traveled?

Irwin Shubert

The information highway, the information superhighway, the infobahn, the freeway, digital intersection, fiber optic routes... You can't find any of these in your dog-eared atlas of Canada, but these metaphors for telecommunications technologies are rapidly changing our attitudes towards more traditional aspects of travel. The web of intersecting roads and thoroughfares criss-crossing the globe, are now criss-crossing in cyberspace – the web is now the *Web*. The Trans-Canada highway is the longest national highway in the world. It is my intention in this paper to trace the spatial history of this national icon and compare its development to that of the burgeoning development of the information highway. This will begin as a travelogue of a trip taken across the Trans-Canada 26 years ago, a revisitation of sites once vital, now seen as *quaint*, in our so-called *global village*. Will the Trans-Canada highway become the road less traveled? Or, more in keeping with Robert Frost's poem, will it simply become the *road not taken*?

On the (Information) Highway: So Is This a Journey or What?

Robert Kroetsch

The metaphor announced in the expression *information highway* suggests travel and travelers. The delivery of bits of information in sequence further reinforces the sense that we are involved in a narrative pattern. If we are traveling, what are our assumed meta-narratives? Are we re-imagining traditional journeys or quests? What are the landscapes we visit?... In the past the great Dutch landscape painters did much to shape our understanding of space and place. In more recent times highways have reshaped what we call landscape and travel. What changes are we now entering into under the rubric, cyberspace?... I will try to explore (itself a version of travel) the questions (not the answers) by looking at two of Aritha van Herk's most challenging texts: her novel, *No fixed Address*, and her geografictione, *Places Far From Ellesmere*.

Human Rights in Cyberspace

Cees J. Hamelink

This essay explores the application of the international human rights regime to the governance of cyberspace. The proliferation of cyberspace technologies inevitably implies a confrontation with moral issues on different levels. These relate to – among others – choices about the way the technology will be designed; choices among possible applications and the responsibility for certain applications; choices about the introduction and the use of applications. They also address issues such as the unequal distribution of harm and benefit of applications among social actors; the control over technology and its administration; and the uncertainty about the future impacts of technology. The

specific question that concerns me here is whether the current international human rights regime can provide us with meaningful moral and legal guidance in addressing these moral choices.

Internet and Public Order
Stylianos Garipis
If we accept, as we should, that the use of the Internet is related to the recognition of several constitutional rights and liberties (right of expression, communication, publication, advertisement, and so on), we are then obliged to search for the legitimate regulatory institution in this domain. Should this regulatory institution be found on a national or international level? The answer to this crucial question is strongly related to the impact of Internet use on public order. If certain uses – or abuses – are not compatible with the national public order, can the national institutions legitimately limit such uses? Then, of course, we should answer the following questions: can the notion of national public order justify *de facto* restrictions imposed on citizens of other States?

The Legal Aspects of Digital Signatures
Patrick van Eecke
In its recently adopted Communication, *A European Initiative in Electronic Commerce* (European Commission, Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions, 15.04.97, COM(97) 157: 13), the European Commission announced its intention to come forward with a specific initiative on Digital Signatures. This initiative will aim at ensuring a common legal framework encompassing the legal recognition of Digital Signatures in the Single Market, the setting up of minimum criteria for Certification Authorities, as well as pursuing worldwide agreements. Also, the European Parliament has invited the Commission to prepare as soon as possible legal provisions concerning information security and digital identifications (European Parliament Resolution A4-244-96 of 10.09.96, OJ320:164 of 28.10.96). The paper first wants to describe the need for secure authentication in cyberspace. Second it wants to analyze the legal situation in the different EU member states regarding the use, the implementation, and the legal acceptance of Digital Signatures and Certification Authorities. Finally, the keynote wants to compare the European vision with the Canadian legal and technical state of the art. The Canadian government is, indeed, currently developing guidelines for the introduction of digital signatures in Canada.

How Comfortably Does the Internet Sit on Canada's Tundra? Reflections on Public Access to the Information Highway in the North
Lorna Roth
Much of the recent discourse in Canadian communication studies has focused on the development of the information highway, the Internet, and the ways in which minority constituency groups may gain equitable access to its common routes. One of the assumptions underlying current discussions it that everyone would

automatically want to be linked to the information highway in order not to be *left behind*. Using case study materials from Canada's North, this paper will examine several ways in which First Peoples have intervened in the broader Canadian debates to examine their own cultural, political, and economic objectives and goals in an effort to construct an infrastructure reflecting their unique information needs. First, it will focus on the ground-breaking teleconference, *Connecting the North*, which took place in 1994 to discuss Northern priorities and services. Second, I shall look at the more recent pilot projects and plans for the extension of the information highway into the North. Evidence from the Northern planning process supports a more deliberative decision making approach consistent with those like Harold Innis (1951) and Heather Menzies (1996), both of whom argue for a slowing down period in which to contemplate long-term technical priorities and policy strategies, as well as the information highway's possible implications for (cross)cultural communication patterns in the future.

Policy-Making and the Value of Electronic Forms of Public Debate: Underpinning, Assumptions and First Experiences

Cees Leeuwis

This paper investigates the potential value of electronic forms of debate in governmental policy processes. For this purpose, some strengths and weaknesses of conventional forms of political debate are discussed. On the basis of insights derived from communication science and social psychology, a number of preliminary assumptions are generated. These assumptions address the way in which electronic forms of debate may compare with conventional forms of debate, keeping in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the latter. It emerges that – under specific conditions – electronic forms of debate may have various advantages over conventional forms of debate. These potential advantages are, amongst others: (a) a larger number and variety of participants; (b) less occurrence of time pressure; (c) more egalitarian participation; (d) more extensive articulation of arguments; (e) more flexible information provision during the debate; (f) better opportunities for in-depth debate along a greater diversity of discussion lines; and (g) greater freedom and openness during the debate. A major weakness of electronic forms of debate may lie in their limited capacity to facilitate a group identity, thereby having counterproductive effects on consensus formation and conflict resolution. On the basis of some initial research experiences, the paper sets out to critically reflect on the extent to which the assumed advantages and disadvantages have materialized in actual practice.

Two Canadian Models of Communities on the Net: SchoolNet and Community Access

Alan L. Cobb

This paper outlines recent experience in Canada with two national initiatives: *SchoolNet* and the *Community Access Program*. Launched in 1993, SchoolNet is surpassing all expectations and is considered to have been an outstanding success. SchoolNet connected 300 schools by 1994. All 16,500 schools are

connected as of 1999. In addition, 400 of the 450 First Nations schools and 2,100 of the 3,400 libraries are connected as of 1998. As of the end of 1998 all libraries and First Nations schools were connected. Each month SchoolNet receives 2.5 million "hits." Every day, on average, someone signs on to SchoolNet over 83,000 times. Launched in 1995, and an offshoot of SchoolNet, the Community Access Program is an equally outstanding success to date. Beyond the use of computers, the purpose of Community Access is to provide Canada's rural communities with affordable public access to the Information Highway and to familiarize rural Canadians with how the Information Highway can be used for economic and community development, particularly the creation of jobs and growth. The Program provides assistance of up to Cdn$30,000 to help cover the start-up costs of establishing a community site, including equipment, Internet connections, staff, training and technical support. A site is usually situated in a community center, library, school or other public facility. Average program costs to date (i.e., the 50 percent share) is some Cdn$20,000. Starting with 20 sites in 1994, there are now over 1,200. While the current target is to establish sites in 5,000 remote communities by year 2000, there is a proposal to increase that target to 10,000 communities in the same timeframe.

Teledemocracy in the Province: An Experiment with Internet-based Software and Public Debate

Nicholas Jankowski, Cees Leeuwis, Peter Martin, Margreet Noordhof and Jeffrey van Rossum

In November 1996 a month-long experiment was held with teledemocracy in the Dutch province of North Brabant. During that experiment, some 100 residents and representatives of organizations in the province were invited to debate aspects of land use for the province. This public debate took place with the aid of an Internet-based software program which allowed for moderated discussion, periodic polling of participants, and voting. A research report of this experiment was completed in May 1997 and this paper – based on that report and academic theses subsequently prepared – provides an overview and assessment of this experiment with teledemocracy. Data are presented on the participants and their reflections on the experiment. Attention is also paid to the role of the provincial government in this initiative with *on-line democracy*. These findings are related to two of the central theoretical perspectives which guided the work – Rogers's and Kincaid's convergence model of communication and Habermas's notion of public sphere. The paper ends with a summary of the main findings from the experiment along with consideration of a number of central issues valuable for future research around initiatives with teledemocracy.

Work and Community in Networked Organizations

Caroline Haythornthwaite

When computer networks link people as well as machines, they become social networks. Such computer-supported social networks (CSSNs) are becoming important bases of virtual communities, computer-supported co-operative work, and telework. We review our Toronto-based Virtually Social Research Group's analysis of scholarly networks and on-line workgroups. We find that CSSNs sustain strong, intermediate and weak ties that provide information and social support in both specialized and broadly-based relationships. CSSNs foster sociable and work communities that are usually partial and narrowly focused, although some relationships do grow to become encompassing and broadly based. CSSNs accomplish a wide variety of co-operative work, connecting workers within and between sites that are often physically dispersed. Although many relationships function off-line as well as on-line, CSSNs have developed their own norms and structures. The nature of on-line media both constrains and facilitates social controls. Thus CSSNs have strong societal implications, fostering situations that combine global connectivity, the fragmentation of solidarities, the de-emphasis of local organizations, and the increased importance of home bases. For our case study, we report in detail about our social network study of *Cerise*, an English-Canadian university computer science research group, to understand how 25 scholars' work and friendship relationships were associated with the kinds of media they used for different kinds of information exchange. The use of electronic mail, unscheduled face-to-face encounters and scheduled face-to-face meetings predominate for the exchange of six basic kinds of information: Receiving Work, Giving Work, Collaborative Writing, Computer Programming, Sociability, and Major Emotional Support. Face-to-face contact is the medium of choice for pairs with weaker ties, i.e., those who exchange only one or two types of information. Those pairs with stronger ties supplement face-to-face contact with e-mail, but few use synchronous, intrusive desktop videoconferencing or telephoning. The intensity of work and friendship relationships are each independently associated with greater frequency of communication, the exchange of more and different types of information, and the use of e-mail as well as face-to-face contact.

ICTs for SMEs: The SME Wins on the Information Highway

Karel Uyttendaele

In a blitz co-operative effort, Fabrimetal and CRIF-WTCM, along with the Belgian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, reached 1,600 SME managers with a promotion campaign concentrating on Internet and on E-Commerce. Fabrimetal is convinced that SMEs should not wait any longer to get acquainted with the Internet. The G7 and the EC believe that the accelerated introduction of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) at SMEs can stimulate new economic growth. A second series of "roadshows," aiming at Internet-enabled innovation and manufacturing, took place in November and December 1997 at 25 locations, in 35 sessions, using 4 ISDN lines per location. Central aims

of the initiative were the promotion of Internet-based Electronic Purchasing (E-Commerce) and Internet-enabled networking along with complementary SMEs (E-messaging), as initial steps for a full informatization of the 185,000 Belgian SMEs. Fabrimetal is the Belgian federation (with 1,200 members) of industries in the "metal" sector (machinery, transport, electroconstructions, electronics, telecommunications, IT), and CRIF-WTCM is its associated joint research arm. With this initiative, Belgium operates at the forefront of the diffusion of ICTs for SMEs.

The Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts (CEECT) and Cyberspace
Mary Jane Edwards

For the last sixteen years the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts (CEECT) at Carleton University has been preparing, with the help of computers, scholarly editions of major works of early English-Canadian prose. We have thus participated in the revolutions in both textual theory and technology that have occurred in the past two decades. We have, nevertheless, continued to publish our critically edited texts in paperback and casebound copies. With the price of books escalating and the medium itself threatened with obsolescence, however, we are now contemplating the advantages and disadvantages of mounting our editions on the Internet. This paper describes briefly the scholarly editions prepared by CEECT, discusses succinctly its use of computers, and analyzes some challenges posed by cyberspace for scholars who wish to protect both the integrity of their authors' work and the reliability of their editions, but who, at the same time, still hope to have their publications distributed cheaply, conveniently, and widely.

The Position of Flanders with Regard to Some Internet-Related Matters
Luc Van Fleteren

The Government of Flanders has decided to make the Internet accessible to the largest possible public. As of 1997 free access to the Internet was made available in all Flemish libraries, schools of higher education and a first group of 150 secondary schools. In the medium term all primary and secondary schools will be connected. The most ambitious initiative is *Telenet Flanders*. The goal of *Telenet* is to convert the existing cable networks into an interactive broadband network which, apart from the existing broadcasting services, also offers telephone, Internet and other multimedia services. The complete regional network overlay will be finished by 2002. *Telenet Flanders* already delivers fast Internet access in some areas, and started with telephony services after January 1, 1998. The Government of Flanders sees an important but minimalist role for government in regulating the Internet. The general guiding principles should be twofold: first, using existing laws wherever possible, rather than creating new ones; and second, always erring on the side of a limited number of regulations until activities on the Internet assume a clearer shape.

Québécois Policy and the Development of the Information Highway

Serge Proulx

The Québec Government takes very seriously the development of the information highway. Its policy orientation aims at six general objectives: (1) economic and regional development of Québec; (2) achieving productivity gains in Government; (3) internationalization of Québec and Québécois expertise abroad; (4) better citizen information, with services that are more adapted to people's living and working conditions; (5) improving education and social development; and (6) promoting the French language and the expression of Québec culture. The Québec Government intends to assiduously pursue three essential objectives: (1) growing productivity within its own ministries and organisms; (2) supporting that part of the private sector interested in positioning itself on the world market for electronics (the Government favours projects with payoffs in the industrial environment as a whole over supporting projects that are aimed at the development of one particular firm); and (3) supporting the production and on-line dissemination of contents and services in the French language (undoubtedly to be understood as an element of the Government's sovereignist project). However, the objectives concerning universal access and its integration into educational contexts seem to be long in coming. In conclusion, the author reminds us of the current globalization context. This context is characterized by a series of major transformations in cultural industries including the media sector, and this on a planetary level.

Advancing Canada's Information Highway: Strategies for the New Millennium

David Johnston and Natasha H. Faraqui

Canada has made enormous progress in building the Information Highway in the last decade. While much has been accomplished, more work remains before the full promise of the knowledge society is realized. At the close of its mandate (September 1997), the Information Highway Advisory Council (IHAC) outlined specific areas it felt would require further attention including initiatives in advanced networks, standards, performance indicators, electronic commerce, and lifelong learning. The IHAC believes that:

1. government has a responsibility to take the lead role in developing the knowledge society by positioning itself as a model user of information and communications technology;

2. access to the Information Highway is critical to Canada's future, as the economy becomes more dependent on information;

3. reinforcing Canadian sovereignty and protecting Canada's cultural identity continues to be a major public policy mandate. Thanks to information technology, there are now new ways to create, produce, market and distribute content;

4. sectoral areas such as health, education and small business represent significant opportunities for the development of content, applications and services. In each of these sectors, the potential benefits of the Information Highway are considerable.

Electronic Commerce Policy and the European Commission

Paul Timmers

Electronic commerce has become an important policy area for the European Commission over the past few years, within the context of the promotion of the Information Society. Recent developments in policy making related to the European Commission and their international dimension are presented in this overview.