

# QUICK READ SYNOPSIS

## Cultural Production in a Digital Age

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### Global Networks and the Effects on Culture

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#### *Protocols*

At the core of networked computing is the concept of protocols.

- The protocols that govern much of the Internet are contained in what are called RFC (Request for Comments) documents.
- The RFCs are published by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and are used predominantly by engineers who wish to build hardware or software that meet common specifications.
- The IETF is affiliated with the Internet Society, an altruistic, technocratic organization that wishes to ensure the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people.
- Many of the Web's protocols are governed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).
- Protocols refer specifically to standards governing the implementation of specific technologies.
  - Computer protocols establish points necessary to enact an agreed-upon standard of action.
  - Computer protocols govern how specific technologies are agreed to, adopted, implemented, and ultimately used by people around the world.

NOTE: These regulations always operate at the level of coding—they encode packets of information so they may be transported, documents so they may be effectively parsed, and communications so local devices may effectively communicate with foreign devices.

#### *Internet Scientists*

Technical protocols and standards are established by a self-selected oligarchy of scientists consisting largely of electrical engineers and computer specialists.

- This technocratic elite toils away, mostly voluntarily, to hammer out solutions to advancements in technology.
- This group is described as an ad-hocracy of well-meaning geniuses.

## ANSI

- To keep the system working, the protocol designers built into the system several key characteristics:
  - The Internet protocols are designed to accommodate massive contingency.
  - The general principle is be conservative in what you do and be liberal in what you accept from others.

ANSI, the American National Standards Institute, is responsible for aggregating and coordinating the standards creation process in the United States.

- It is a conduit for federally accredited organizations in the field that are developing technical standards.
- ANSI verifies that the rules have been followed before a proposed standard is adopted.
- ANSI is also responsible for articulating a national standards strategy for the United States—it is the only organization that can approve standards as American national standards.
- ANSI standards are voluntary, which means that no one is bound by law to adopt them.
  - The burden of a standard's success lies in the marketplace.
  - While most technical standards today are voluntary, this does not mean they are haphazardly or infrequently adopted. In fact, the core standards of the Internet are some of the most universally adopted technologies in history.

*Effects of Standards*

What are the social and cultural effects of universal network standards?

- The principles of flexibility and robustness have changed everything from economic supply chains to buying a book on Amazon.
- Its worth looking at computer viruses:
  - Computer viruses thrive in environments that have low levels of diversity. Whenever a technology has a monopoly, such as Microsoft's Windows, you will find viruses.
  - Computer viruses are able to propagate far and wide in computer networks by leveraging a single vulnerability from computer to computer. Diversity would kill out viruses overnight.

NOTE: The various internal characteristics of the Internet can be leveraged in powerful ways by malicious code because the Internet is so highly standardized. Viruses can route around problems and stoppages because of the robustness of the Internet. Because the Internet is so decentralized, it is virtually impossible to kill viruses once they are released.

*Political Challenges*

The Internet was invented to avoid certain vulnerabilities of nuclear attack.

- In the original vision, the organizational design of the Internet involved a high degree of redundancy to avoid a total wipeout.
- The Internet can survive attacks not because it is stronger than the opposition, but precisely because it is weaker—it is the opposite design of a pinpoint nuclear blast.
- Destruction of a network has to be an all-or-nothing game or it survives.
- Networks can be used for good or bad.
  - Drug cartels, terror groups, and underworld figures all take advantage of it.
  - Yet both corporations and grassroots activist groups make productive use of the Internet also.

*Cultural Production*

The author offers a few instructions for those interested in the effects of global computer networks on cultural production.

- First is the principle of openness to leverage the swelling mass of social momentum.
- Second, build social institutions that can “route around” problems just like core protocols do.
- Third, a warning: following the robustness principle, networking technology will tend to standardize rather than diversify.

NOTE: Cultural producers will become more and more encumbered by technologies that exploit standardized systems, such as spam, e-mail worms, and viruses.

- Those interested in cultural production must understand the political import of networks.
- The powers that be have finally come to understand networks, and what was previously liberating about networks may not be liberating in the future.


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## Multiple Media, Convergent Processes, and Divergent Products: Organizational Innovation in Digital Media Production at a European Firm

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*Background*

This article explores the role of technology in news work and the processes that shape media convergence and its consequences.

- Previous research has suggested that the digitization of information erases the boundaries that separate print, radio, television, and online technologies and by implication or assumption lead to the production of homogeneous news products.
- This article examines the dynamics of a large European media firm from 1994 to 2003 to paint a more complex portrait of change.
- The study shows that understanding the technological dimension of news production is critical to making sense of editorial dynamics. Technical considerations affect who gets to tell the story, what kinds of stories are told, how they are told, and to what public they are addressed.

*GMS History*

GMS—a fictional name for the firm being examined—was born in 1990 from the merger of five publishing and related companies. It began as a print publisher and added broadcast and online media in the past ten years.

- Digital media’s position within GMS changed dramatically during this period. It went from being a secondary function, to becoming the primary strategic focus, to being integrated with other media. Different organizational structures were created to reflect and enable these changes in function and status.
- At the end of 1995, the Electronic Extensions Department was created to centralize digital media development.
  - It was seen as a secondary function—an extension to the core print business.

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S*GMS Prepares  
to Go Public*

- Personnel assigned to create online publications were located in the newsrooms but reported to Electronic Extensions.
- Their status was subordinate to traditional journalists, who viewed new hires in digital media as computer experts with no understanding of journalism.
- The first Web pages reproduced the newspaper content; added online-only features were seen as secondary to the print products.

At the end of the 1990s, GMS executives prepared to take the company public.

- They decided to make the Internet Department into a company within the company and make the whole of GMS revolve around the Internet Department.
- This department was to oversee all the content of the online publications and
  - develop and implement new tools to support these publications,
  - pursue new opportunities in the nonprint business, and
  - infuse the company with a new media ethos.
- Traditional newsrooms moved into Internet departments.
- The Internet Department generated online publications that drew content originally created for the traditional media but added information and services that took advantage of the Web.
  - They wrote shorter story versions for print and longer versions for the Internet.
  - They built online, searchable archives.

*Newsroom  
Integration*

The Internet bust of the late 1990s shattered people's faith in the central role of the Internet department with the firm.

- They reoriented GMS from a media company to a content company.
- They created three divisions: Sports, Business, and Other.
- And they renamed the Internet Department as the Digital Media Department.
- Traditional editors assumed control of online content.
- Digital Media became a unit supporting GMS online publications, developing new tools, and seeking new business opportunities.
- A given reporter could now write a radio story, rewrite it for the Web, and then again rewrite the story for the next day's newspaper.
- A newspaper now works to increase its counterpart radio audience and number of visitors to an accompanying Web page while those departments' staffs do the same for the newspaper.
- Editors sit next to each other at a new location, while reporters are grouped according to areas of specialization.
- A single newsroom produces content for multiple media.

*Conclusion*

Studies of cultural production in digital media have often emphasized the product homogenization that results from media convergence. The story at GMS, however, presents a more complicated picture.

- Digital media moved from being a secondary endeavor to the very axis of content production, converging with the print and broadcast units to form a single system of production.
- But content, format, and functionality of products remains diverse, as a result of differences in technology and differences in background, expertise, and orientation of traditional and new media personnel.

## Convergence: News Production in a Digital Age

Eric Klinenberg, New York University

- Background* Lacking current research, critics are left to guess about strategies, practices, and interests that shape major news corporations; determine the content of news products; and produce the “symbolic power” of publicly defining, delimiting, and framing key issues and events.
- This article examines the point of journalistic production in one major news organization (Metro News) and shows how reporters and editors manage constraints of time, space, and market pressure in companies producing content for multiple types of media such as radio, print, TV, and the Internet.
- Changes in the Journalistic Field* Changes in the journalistic field, particularly new technologies and the corporate integration of news companies, have led to double fragmentation:
- First, for newsmakers, whose daily work has been interrupted and rearranged by additional responsibilities and new pressures of time and space.
  - Second, for news audiences, whom marketers have segmented into narrow groups based on commercial considerations.
- Metro News* Media evolution in a company like Metro News has gone through four key development strategies.
- Going from private to public companies with a bottom-line demand from stockholders.
  - Streamlining production systems in the newsroom and reducing labor costs.
  - Making massive investments in digital communications technologies.
  - Establishing lines of horizontal integration, which meant acquiring other content providers and distributors, such as TV stations, Internet companies, and magazines and also linking the marketing and news divisions across these diverse media companies—reporters had to learn to produce content useable in all media.
    - Each media segment uses the products of the others to enhance its offerings and cross promote its brands.
    - Sales people can work for all the segments and can create special packages of media.
    - News bureaus can be streamlined and combined—reporters in Los Angeles or New York find their work being used by different papers and other media at once.
    - Freelancers can broker deals with a corporate network to provide content across media lines.
    - Each branch of the operation produces content for several media at once—staffs of different media segments share information and content.
- Organizational Changes* The organizational transformation of Metro News has produced changes in the physical and social space of its offices.
- Journalists can move freely between print, broadcast, and Internet departments to meet the demands of the new environment.
  - Newspaper staff worry that the mission is determined by the production values of TV news. But they are interested because TV represents a route to celebrity, wealth, and influence for journalists in these big media companies.

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- The new environment has forced newspaper journalists to take on additional responsibilities in the same work period, which has consequences for cultural production.
- Instead of twenty-four-hour newspaper deadlines, the time cycle for news making is radically different: it is an unending news “cyclone” that works around the clock to fulfill twenty-four-hour news programming.
- In the new media newsroom, journalists have to become flexible laborers, reskilled to meet demands from several media at once.
  - They learn that content does not move easily from one medium to the next. They have to work to adapt material.
  - Being flexible adds to employee value within organization.
- The editorial staff has less time to research, report, and even to think about their work.
  - Concerns about efficiency can push journalists to rely on the most easily accessible information—online information.
  - Errors from lack of confirmation and use of misinformation become more likely.
  - Production of the easiest to produce content becomes the norm and reduces investigative type journalism.

#### *Target Marketing*

Digital news systems have enabled media organizations to push the principles of target marketing to new levels so they can appeal to narrow groups of consumers that can be sold by one advertising staff.

- The mass audience has been fragmented to give each segment what they want in news and entertainment.
- The strategy is to locate and target affluent audiences in the suburbs at the expense of poorer rural and inner-city areas so advertising rates can be raised.

#### *Convergence Production*

Sharing resources and staff helps companies expand the scope of their reporting.

- The Internet, rather than TV or print, offers the most exciting possibilities for creating new forms of journalism with advanced technology and convergence production.
  - The Internet is ideal for deepening coverage with interactive links to video, text, and graphics where you can produce a new kind of content.
- Print staff can help improve the quality of TV news since TV staffs are small and print reporters bring depth to their offerings.
- Print journalists are concerned that visual information is promoted at the expense of text and that production forms of TV will take over newspaper style.
- When news organizations do cover national and international events, journalists are encouraged to illustrate why news far from home is relevant to the local community.
- Target marketing and convergence production have helped to create informational islands of communities who receive specialized news products.

#### *Consequences*

The consequences of the emergent journalistic and managerial practices are already visible.

- Convergence news companies expect their staff to be flexible and fast.
- Editors and managers are revaluing their workers, considering multimedia skills in their assignments. Some hiring and retention decisions are based on these skills.
- Time available to report, research, write, and reflect on stories has shrunk.

- An elite group of reporters are able to do investigative work, and the rest have more responsibilities than ever.
- Conclusion* The penetration of market principles and marketing projects into the editorial divisions of news organizations is one of the most dramatic changes in journalism.
- Editors work hard to produce more marketable and profitable products.
  - Corporate managers and advertisers are the now active participants in editorial decision making, and their interests now structure the form and content of news to unprecedented levels.
  - Extensive research is used to learn what kinds of content consumers want, which has made important qualitative changes in their offerings to meet market demand.
  - Digital technologies have changed journalistic production, but not according to the journalists' preferences—the goal is productivity, efficiency, and profitability.
  - Technology is used to facilitate the process of multimedia work and to increase the capacity to repackage articles from platform to platform.
- NOTE: Digital systems in major news companies remain in the early stages, and their direction for growth will be determined by the political economy, cultural conventions, and regulatory restrictions.

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## Digital Gambling: The Coincidence of Desire and Design

Natasha Dow Schull,  
Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy

- Background* Digitally enhanced gambling machines, rather than traditional forms of gambling, now drive the gambling industry. In Las Vegas, machines garner twice the combined revenue of all other games. This turn to technology has consequences for player experience. More broadly, the case illuminates distinctive characteristics of the “digital age.”
- Game Design* Digital gambling machines are designed to increase profit by increasing “time on device” or *duration* of play, and by ensuring *speed* and *continuity* of play.
- To increase time spent playing, single machines are programmed with many gaming opportunities such that players can explore, browse, and experiment from a selection of games without leaving their seats.
    - Some systems allow players to view TV shows and closed-circuit events; others allow players to print bingo tickets.
    - From their game terminals, players can place requests for change, drinks, a mechanic, etc.
    - Mobile ATMs, wireless units, and portable credit card advance systems function to keep money flowing to the player. Players can even transfer funds directly from a checking account to add to their machine credit.
  - To speed up play, machines feature push buttons instead of pull handles, and bill acceptors reduce the time-consuming process of coin feeding.

Digital game design exploits the psychological principles of learning and conditioning.

- Digitized games intensify the variable intermittent reinforcement schedule with frequent small wins and near misses.
- The option to play off credit rather than to play coin by coin allows rapid replay and little consideration of financial loss.
- Multiple payout lines and the option to bet numerous coins on each play increases the machine productivity for the house.
  - These machines give the perception of winning on every pull even though the winnings are most times less than the total amount bet per “pull.”
- Visual and auditory features (or “second-order conditioning”) create a sense of winning and add another level of reinforcement to play.
- As game designers have learned how to “teach” players to stay at machines, they have learned how to adapt their technologies to the playing rhythms and reward preferences of individual players.
  - Some machines automatically adjust the pace and the game to the pace of the player—the faster one plays a machine, the faster the machine lets one play.
  - Some games feature reward schedules designed to appeal to low-denomination players seeking frequent small wins; other games appeal to high-denomination players seeking big wins.

#### *Game Play*

Interaction with the digitally enhanced features of new games sustain a dissociated subjective state that gamblers call the “zone.”

- The zone is a trance-like state that depends on isolation, noninterruption, speed, a sense of choice or control, and flow.
  - Digital gambling machines are designed to facilitate these elements by protecting gamblers from interruption, allowing continuous and rapid play, and lending gamblers a sense of autonomy to increase their investment in play.
- The zone suspends social, bodily, temporal, and monetary parameters of existence.
  - In the zone, players feel removed from their bodies.
  - Money loses its value for players—they play to stay in the zone, not to win.
  - Players lose a sense of “clock time.”
  - Players have a sense of merging with the machines they play.
- The fact that machine design responds ever more immediately to player desire for the zone challenges the idea that digital enhancements in game design allow for greater player *entertainment*, suggesting instead that they allow for greater player *absorption*.
  - Some machines in Australia carry a feature called “auto play” that allows players to load the machine with credits and then simply sit and watch it play game after game for them, removing all sense of interactivity or autonomy in play.

#### *Reflections*

Like their predecessors, digital gambling machines aim to harness space and time to financially generative ends. They do not abandon strategies of modern discipline and value extraction such as fragmentation, regimentation, and discontinuity, yet they refine these to a point where player experience becomes one of continuous flow. The fact that the continuous flow of play translates into “continuous productivity” for the gambling industry raises troubling questions about the use to which digital capabilities are put in contemporary consumer technology design.

## Mobilizing Fun in the Production and Consumption of Children's Software

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### *Background and Framework*

From the late 1970s to the end of the 1990s, a new set of cultural, economic, technological, and social relations emerged in the United States, centered on using computers to create entertaining learning experiences for young children.

- PCs held out the promise of interactive, child-driven, entertaining, and open-ended learning environments that differed from the top-down structure of traditional classroom instruction.
  - Children's software development is part of broader trends toward engineering play through the design of media targeted to children.
- Contemporary childhood in the United States is produced through a variety of social, cultural, and economic negotiations where media industries and technologies play an increasingly central role.
- "Education" and "entertainment" or a central polarity in the construction of children's culture and society.
  - Discourse of digital kids promises to cross the divide between "passive" entertainment and "active" learning media.
  - In practice, the distinctions between passive and active, top-down and democratic, entertainment and educational media are not so clear-cut.

### *The Children's Software Industry*

Multimedia united the lowbrow appeal of popular visual culture with the high-brow promise of the PC and the educational ideal of child-centered learning.

- Early developers shared an educational reform orientation, seeking to enrich children's learning as well as liberate it from the dry, serious, and often alienating culture of the classroom.
- The 1990s saw graphics and visual appeal become central to software design.
- These new ventures were not under the same constraints as classroom software and were given more freedom to have content that appealed directly to children—a shift from a pedagogy to entertainment.
- Entertainment was an expanding site of negotiation and struggle between the interests of educators, entertainers, programmers, artists, and businesspeople, with entertainment gaining a strong voice.
- The market for children's software is being polarized between a hodgepodge of school-coded content and wholesome entertainment titles that are marketed as an alternative to action games.
  - Ads for this software portray children as ecstatic and pleasure-seeking rather than reflective and brainy.
  - Ads play on parents' desires to indulge their children's pleasures.
  - They show that entertainment products can compete with TV and videos and still have some educational value.
- "Edutainment" titles are generally linear and make much of achieving certain levels and scores, while entertainment software are exploratory, often repetitive, and open-ended.

*Field Sites:  
5thD Clubs*

The 5thD is an activity system where elementary-aged children and undergraduates from a local university come together to play with educational software in an after-school setting.

- There is a commitment to a collaborative and child-centered approach to learning, mixing of participants of different ages, and the use of PCs.
- In software programs like *The Magic School Bus*, kids learn through a chaotic and dizzying set of encounters where characters in a story careen from one scene to another—representing the shift towards entertainment.
- In the 5thD, an orientation to fun is actively encouraged—fun indicates authentic engagement and is celebrated to the extent it happens in the context of a prosocial learning task.
- The 5thD accommodates both child and adult agendas, creating opportunities for cross-generational negotiation and shared discourse.

*Spectacle and  
Special Effects*

Visual effects are used to keep attention.

- Recordings of kids at play with graphically advanced games is punctuated by their reactions to on-screen eye candy that testifies to their appreciation of visual aesthetics of one kind or another.

*Mobilizing Fun*

The interactional and auditory special effects serve to give the experience of being able to control and manipulate the production of the effect.

- A sound effect is a result of a particular action and, when initiated by the player, is often the occasion for delight and repeated activation.
- Pleasure in this interaction can be understood as a kind of computer holding power that creates a brief but tight interactional coupling of player and game.
- The interactive special effect is somewhat antisocial, relying on a tight coupling of player and machine, often at the expense of other people in the setting.
- Interactional effects are similar to the manipulations of clay and finger paints but are mediated by a program that uniquely amplifies and embellishes the actions of the user—a momentary and aesthetic pleasure.

Adults use “fun” to describe engagement, and kids use it to describe spectacular and no-instrumental activity.

- “Fun” becomes a tool for kids to define a kid-centered social and cultural space defined against adult goals, such as when a child plays extensively with the disaster function of *SimCity 2000*.

*Conclusion*

Fun and spectacle is an important focus for kid peer solidarity that is structurally defined in opposition to educational goals and institutions.

- Entertainment industries are allied with kids in creating these kid cultures. Although children’s software was founded on a challenge to existing idioms of education and entertainment, existing discursive, social, and political alignments across sites of production, distribution, marketing, and consumption have tempered this transformative promise.
- As alternative models for software production and distribution take hold, we may find that children’s software can truly redefine cultural logics of contemporary childhood established in the TV era.

## Audience Construction and Culture Production: Marketing Surveillance in the Digital Age

Joseph Turow, University of Pennsylvania

### *Background*

The digital world being built by marketers has as a core belief that success will come from seducing customers to provide personal data in return for rewarding relationships with media and marketers.

- Marketers would like to ensure that their target views targeted, even customized, commercials on the Web or TV.
- Valued targets may be offered discounts, special programming, and custom messages.
  - Such seemingly benign relationships can lead to feelings of discrimination if other viewers believe they are not getting the discounts or special materials.
  - Customer relationship management (CRM) specialists have learned to make the above feelings a private issue resulting from the rules of collaboration.
  - Good customers try to show by their purchases that they deserve more and those that exit the relationship may suit the company just fine (being less valued customers).
- Efficient marketing means managing the customer roster—rewarding some, getting rid of others, improving the value of each of them.
- Critics say that media firms fundamentally shape the main streams of entertainment and news.
  - Audience definitions lead to the creation of certain kinds of media materials—the production of certain kinds of culture and not others.
  - Audience constructions are not derived from the social world, but the attributes they choose to highlight relate directly to industrial needs and provide justification for industrial activities.

### *Relationship Building*

An emerging strategic logic encourages media firms and marketers to cultivate consumers' trust so audiences will not object when companies want to track their activities.

- The goal is to store personal and lifestyle information to be used to reward the best customers with discounts and even story lines designed for them.
- Advocacy groups decry this practice and push for alternatives.
- An ad-sponsored universe has profound implications for the production of entertainment, news, and information. The material must be successful in attracting audiences that advertisers want and getting them in a buying mood.

NOTE: It seems clear that important aspects of media culture will result from the strategies being laid out now under the rubric of giving the (industrially constructed) audience what it wants.

### *Issues Affecting Advertisers*

There is a need to understand how changes affecting media and marketing organizations are interactively affecting construction of audience and media culture.

- The large number of media channels (created by cable TV and the Web) is making it difficult to reach potential customers efficiently with traditional advertising.
- Consumers are using technology to escape ads and keep content.
- Marketers are trying to figure how to cultivate customers via media in coming decades, which is pushing the production of media culture toward audience surveillance.
  - There are concerns for information privacy and ad-induced anxieties.
  - The model is based on CRM melded with direct marketing.

*Customer Value* A major reason CRM attracts marketers is that it focuses on the quantifiable value of known individuals rooted in two insights:

- A small number of current customers contribute to most of the profit (focus 80 percent of your effort on the top 20 percent of your customers).
- It is almost always more expensive to gain new customers than to keep current ones who have a substantial lifetime value.
  - Marketers' ability to discriminate based on a customer's contribution to profit has become a badge of honor.
  - Privacy issues have forced companies to get permission to gather data from each customer.
  - Advertisers are experimenting with ways to insert themselves in customers' lives in ways that encourage surveillance and tailored relationships.

*Direct Marketing*

Direct marketers are at the forefront of where everyone in advertising is going to be.

- Customized media will apply the concepts of one-on-one marketing to gain the loyalty and trust of desirable audience members.
  - They are turning to the Web to cultivate relationships and collect data for targeting ads.

*Walled Gardens* To generate new revenue streams to help pay for customized permission marketing, many online practitioners have used the "walled garden" approach.

- A walled garden is an environment where consumers go for information, communications, and commerce services. This setting discourages them from leaving for a larger digital world.
  - Consumers are enticed to enter, and then their activities are tracked.
  - The firm running it can charge for this service.
  - They offer incentives to stay, such as faster access to high-end applications and to premium content that others cannot see.
  - They claim to protect their users from things like spam, viruses, pop-ups, etc.
  - An example is Bell South getting \$4.95 for fast access to add-on content from ABC.
- Interactive television is another service that can provide incentives and collect data in return.

NOTE: The emerging strategic logic of mainstream marketing and media organizations is to present their activities not as privacy invasion but as two-way relationships, not as commercial intrusion but as pinpoint selling help.

## Remote Control: The Rise of Electronic Cultural Policy

Siva Vaidhyanathan, New York University

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### *Background*

Since the early 1990s, the United States has been formulating, executing, and imposing on the rest of the world a form of “electronic cultural policy.” This includes:

- Policies to mandate design standards for electronic devices in ways that would dictate a set of cultural choices.
- The goal would be to encourage and enable “remote control.”
  - Such mandates shift decisions over the manipulation of content from the user to the vendor with built-in regulating devices in digital hardware of all kinds.
  - Their potential has created a whole new set of forms of cultural domination by a handful of powerful global institutions.

NOTE: Fortunately, these efforts have been clumsy and incompetent—most are utter failures or have been hacked into irrelevancy. These policies have ignited global indignation and disobedience.

### *Reimagining*

Powerful forces have acted to reengineer or reimagine the way individuals handle media and manipulate texts and images.

- This electronic cultural policy guides the architecture of interfaces, networks, standards, protocols, and formats that house and deliver cultural products.
- Individuals have been employing tools that allow them to evade some of the most powerful instruments of cultural policy.
  - They have spurred powerful interests to demand more expansive means of enforcement.
  - The commercial film industry and the governments that do its bidding are willing to go to extreme measures to preserve their global cultural and commercial standing—this is “cultural imperialism.”

### *Cultural Policy*

The battle over formats and terms of delivery and distribution date back to the struggles to regulate early radio in the United States.

- Major industry players were wise to enact regulations to limit competition.
- This model of industry-state synergy extended to television, cable, and telecommunication.
- The exception is the Internet, which has minimal state oversight and no dominant firms dictating policy.
- Panic over the radical democracy of Internet use has pushed established content producers to try to rein in the freedom of use of PCs and the Internet.
- The leaders of copyright-producing industries started a movement to shift the site of regulation from the courts to the machines themselves with the use of chips and software.
- The developed world pushed for the establishment of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) accord.
  - Members may, through the World Trade Organization (WTO) enforcement mechanisms, seek retribution for violations.

*Copyright  
Changes*

- The United States used the WTO to force nations that sought favorable trade in other areas to sign with TRIPS and follow a set of regulations on global minimum standards for copyright, patent, trade secret, trademark, etc.
- Many developing nations stood their ground against these dictates and made it clear that the United States and Europe could not dictate terms of intellectual policy.
  - Concerns that these nations are havens for software and video pirates has kept pressure on their governments to adopt U.S.-style laws.

NOTE: Many countries including the United States have laws forbidding the distribution of any technologies that might crack access or copy control mechanisms for digital materials. These laws take us from the realm of human judgment to a technocratic regime of enforcement.

Where once users could assume wide latitude in their private, noncommercial uses, now a layer of enforcement code (U.S. Digital Millennium Copyright Act [DMCA]) stands in the way of access to the work itself, preventing a variety of harmless uses.

- Access controls allow content providers to totally regulate use in their own terms.
- Copyright laws now can, against the intent of such laws, allow infinite time of protection. Many providers work over and above real copyright law with their own software-based protections.
- The DMCA ensures that producers may exercise editorial control over the uses of their materials.
  - They can automatically restrict parody and criticism.
  - They can automatically restrict reuse of facts or ideas.

*Global  
Broadcasting*

The most ambitious attempt at imposing electronic cultural policy considered by the WIPO is to allow broadcasters, not copyright holders, to control video distribution rights.

- Consumers would have no rights to copy or edit videos for home use.
- Such regulations would shut down independent recording firms like TiVO and replace them with recorders owned, controlled, and monitored by broadcasters.
- These standards would require manufacturers to build into TVs a device that would regulate access to and the copying of encrypted materials.
- Another bill introduced in Congress would allow copyright holders to hack in and disrupt a computer's ability to communicate with others if they suspect violations.
- There is a clamoring for more intrusive and restrictive measures, which has caused a creative and political backlash.

*Conclusion*

Global information regulatory systems are absurd.

- Such absurdity stems from a widespread anxiety that digitization and networking will wreak havoc on cultural industries.
- Participating in a pirate economy is easier than ever. Participating in a legitimate, competitive economy is easier than ever.
- But participating in a legitimate information or cultural economy is harder and more expensive than ever under new regulations.
- The spread of top-down global electronic cultural policy has the potential to chill both technological and cultural experimentation.

## The Changing Place of Cultural Production: The Location of Social Networks in a Digital Media Industry

Gina Neff, University of California, San Diego

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- Background* Scholars have pointed to the social ties that link companies together across a geographic region as the foundation of innovative, creative, and emergent industries, with social networking being the process to get people together to share ideas, information, and feelings.
- An industry's parties, seminars, and informal gatherings form its social backbone and allow the rapid dissemination of information.
  - The Internet industry owes much to networking and networking affects where people choose to live. People in the industry prefer access the social network—being where the action is, is important.
  - This article looks at the social networks in New York City's Silicon Alley, the home base of Internet companies in New York.
- Geographic Clustering* Even within a digital media industry that relies on the technologies that enable distance work, social networks can lead to tight geographic clustering.
- Social Networks* Social networks provide workers with a type of job security in which personal connections serve as conduits for information about new jobs and new technologies.
- Workers unable to access these networks may be at a disadvantage.
  - In Silicon Alley, the absence of other organizational supports meant one's network became the main source for maintaining employability.
  - Networks encourage collaboration, keep people up to date, and build environments of innovation.
  - “Noise” (rumors, impressions, recommendations, trade folklore, strategic misinformation) may tie the workforce together through a process of negotiating meaning and of sense-making.
    - Noise socializes and enculturates workers, transmitting the norms, practices, and stories of the work community.
    - Telecommunication advances that increased information may make the instinctual interpretation of noise even more important.
- Venues of Creativity* Neighborhoods with the reputation for fostering artistic production provide individual cultural producers with resources that facilitate creative activity.
- The art galleries, bars, restaurants, and other nightlife venues are new intersections of consumption and production.
  - These venues make it easier for cultural producers to recognize and establish contact with one another.
  - Silicon Alley became a thriving cultural space and incorporated the creative values of its workforce into industry practice through the nightlife events.
  - The intensified social networking that occurred suggests that the events themselves become an important place of production within creative industries.

*Social  
Reporting*

- New York had one of the country's highest concentration of commercial Internet domains—this concentration is reflected in the clustering of industry nightlife events.

Social events reporting (gossip columns) is underused for collecting data.

- Event reporting formed a who's who of Silicon Alley.
- Events also provided companies with access to potential employees and clients, as well as access to people in other industries such as arts and media and business and finance.
- Reporting of who hosted and attended events showed who was part of the industry in Silicon Alley.
- Social networking became an industry with event planners and event management companies hired to handle parties.
- Being close to the nighttime action was important for positioning a company within Silicon Alley.

*Conclusion*

City and business leaders looking to foster creative industries should consider how to encourage the formation of ties across organizations as a way to harness innovation.

- Some spaces will be more important and more central to the process of social networking and should be identified.
- Employees could face severe disadvantages if they are unable to participate in the frenzy of nighttime activity.

NOTE: If we are to fully understand markets and economic processes as “tangible social construction,” then the relational richness of social ties must be studied simultaneously with the structures that organize industries. Studying the emergence of informal organization across industry players is one mechanism for research.

## Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy

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*Background*

Analyzing how political campaigns produce political content and how citizens consume this content may be the best way to assess the health of the public sphere, the space where people exchange ideas and challenge opinions.

- First, it requires shared text and content about political campaigns and public policy options.
- Second, it requires conversation about political affairs.
- Third, it requires a place for action: legislatures, courts, voting booths, etc.

NOTE: Increasingly digital technologies allow for both the production and consumption of political content.

*Databases and  
Predictive  
Models*

Both campaigns and citizens buy databases online that match voter's names and addresses with voter registration records, credit card purchases, and more.

- Anybody involved in a campaign is always concerned about control, but chat is difficult to control, so managers have very specific uses for the online tools they build.
  - Campaign consultants use models to predict political outcomes, and the new technologies help improve their accuracy—they make reliable calculations about elections or legislative votes on issues important to their members.
  - Digital technologies make possible a refined science of campaigning with ever more predictable electoral or legislative outcomes.
- Consultants* Political consultants usually offer three kinds of services.
- When lobby groups form, consultants build legitimacy for the cause by identifying members unaware of the need for representation.
  - These firms do direct-inference public policy polling.
  - These firms also do indirect-inference polling from surveys, demographic data, credit card purchases, Internet activity, or voter registration files.
- New Media Tools* With new media tools, political campaigns amass data from so many sources in complex relational databases that are used to extrapolate political information without ever directly contacting anyone.
- When they do contact people, they sample exactly who they want to sample.
  - Today's commercially available political information is multisourced, nuanced, and scaled from named individuals and households to residential blocks, zip codes, and electoral districts.
- Political Information* The market for political information now includes advertising and public relations agencies, media and entertainment companies, university research institutes, pollsters, nonprofits, political parties, Internet service providers, and PACs.
- Most of these organizations associate with academic research institutions to appear more legitimate—they use university names liberally in business plans and literature.
  - The cost of polling has dropped and is now available to anyone who wants to spend the money for it.
  - Most campaigns use informational products to try to narrowcast their messages by sending particular messages to particular people.
- NOTE: The Internet is an integral part of campaign communications and a significant portion of the population uses it to learn about politics.
- Political News* There are several interesting changes in the way we produce and consume political news.
- The proportion of people who never look for political news has diminished.
  - A sizeable number consult at least two types of media for political news.
  - The number who consult three or four other kinds of media has increased steadily.
  - Outside of news providers, six types of Web sites provide political content: special interest groups, office holders, candidates, partisan groups, nonpartisan groups, and community activist groups.
    - The Web sites of special interest groups capture most of the attention.
- The Internet* Although television is still the dominant medium for election news, those who have used the Internet for political information report why they prefer it as a medium.

*Role for New Media*

- They find it more convenient, feel other media do not provide enough news, get information not available elsewhere, and find that online news sources reflect their personal interests.
- Mass media had distinct roles for the elite producers of content and the mass consumers of content, while digital communication is networked and can narrowcast.

One of the most important roles for new media in politics has been in opening up the market for political information.

- Several companies now amass and market detailed profiles of citizens using traditional survey and data mining but have also developed powerful new media tools.
  - Their spider programs crawl through the Web, automatically collecting Web site content, such as personal contacts or press releases.
  - They use unsolicited e-mails to gather or spread information.
  - They use spyware covertly on a user's computer to record activities and political preferences.
- Most digital campaigns claim to share aggregated, not personally identifiable, information, but there is leakage.
  - In the 2000 campaign, several politicians altered their Web sites' privacy policy when they realized they had collected politically and commercially valuable data from their supporters.
- Consultants mislead people into surrendering personal information and often get permission to install spyware, which many panelists forget is on their machines.
- Political information now circulates in a marketplace where it is priced, trademarked, and sold.

*Database Sources*

Many political databases came from companies that provided free e-mail service and required subscribers to fill out questionnaires.

- Spyware is used to supplement this data.
- The largest databases now include information on more than 150 million registered voters.
- Personal information is secretly added to these databases without explicit or informed consent.
- PACs, as nonprofits, are able to access voter registration records and add this to databases.

*Customized Messages*

The combined relational databases are used to serve the private interests of political candidates or lobbyists—to uniquely customize messages to manipulate certain responses from particular individuals.

- Both political organizations and commercial industry are able to drive traffic to their Web sites by directing customized banner and e-mail ads via the political, demographic, and commercial characteristic profiles of members of the database.
  - Partner or affinity campaigns share data on sympathizers, members of the public, and elected officials.
  - Information is also now being collected globally.
- Both political and commercial organizations now conduct surveillance of citizen opinion on public policy questions.

*Shared Text?*

The competition between political campaigns results in smaller pieces of text being shared by smaller and smaller groups of people.

- Experienced Internet users self-segment by programming their news services to provide particular content—random encounters with political content is prevented for users and nonusers of the Internet.
  - Content is designed to entrench a citizen's political norms through software that privileges some content over other content.
  - Some of us identify our preferences by where we go for political information on the Internet or where we go to become members of organizations like the National Rifle Association, Sierra Club, or the Christian Coalition.
  - The campaign managers of these organizations take great interest in preparing content for their membership by reducing exposure to content from competing political agendas and editorializing the context.
  - These managers have developed tricks to direct the results of search engines to specific content.
- Digital technologies remove the random distribution of content, the kind of content that people casually pick up from newspapers and television.
- A healthy public needs shared text and acts of conversation, yet Americans increasingly use digital tools to research politics, which is increasingly fragmented for particular people whose interest have been secretly encoded.

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## Organizing Technologies: Genre Forms of Online Civic Association in Eastern Europe

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### *Background*

Some believe that new information technologies will overcome the one-to-many character of the once-dominant mass media in favor of free flow, unmonitored connections among global citizens.

- Technology like the Internet wakes the dormant public by creating new domains of deliberation and participation.
- The cyber-citizen will be a user and producer of information and news and online debates.
- The public sphere will become virtual and global.

But are such visions likely to be realized? This article examines Web sites of emerging nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Eastern Europe for the likely outcomes of tomorrow's civil society.

### *Online Genres*

An examination of 1,585 of these Web sites reveals five different archetypes or genres:

- Newsletters
  - typically include calendars of events and information about meetings and comprise nearly one-third of the NGO Web sites.
- Interactive Platforms
  - often allow the user to join the organization online and sign up for various services, are most likely not to provide information for offline reachability, are least likely to provide things like annual reports, and characterize about 20 percent of the NGO Web sites.

- Multilingual Solicitations
  - are likely to post reports that establish their legitimacy, are least likely to provide online means for joining, and characterize about 15 percent of the NGO sites.
- Directories
  - are least likely to have information about conferences and meetings, provide virtual directories, and characterize about 12 percent of NGO sites.
- Digital Brochures
  - provide offline reachability information, have very few links, are usually in one language, and characterize about 18 percent of NGO sites.

*Analysis*

These archetypical NGO Web sites are not aligned across stages of development from simple to sophisticated, as an analysis of the age of the Web sites reveals. Newer Web sites are actually more likely to have features that are typical of the genre to which they belong. Several of these genres are also more likely to have links pointing to them from other Web sites, increasing their accessibility and visibility to potential users through the technology of search engines. The Directory, Newsletter, and Multilingual Solicitation sites are more central to the Web in this regard than are the Brochure and Interactive Platforms.

*Conclusion*

The world of online civic organizations serves diverse specific publics through different levels and types of civic engagement that appear not to be converging on a single model. Inequalities in their visibility are shaped in part by the editors of news portals and designers of search engines that will likely sideline interactive Web sites and give greater voice to solicitations and newsletters.

## The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti-Corporate Globalization Movements

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*Background*

A diverse coalition of environmental, labor, and economic justice activists succeeded in shutting down the meetings of the WTO in Seattle in 1999.

- Seattle became a symbol and battle cry for a new generation of activists, as antiglobalization networks were energized around the globe.
- Activists followed the events in Seattle and beyond through Internet-based distribution lists, Web sites, and the newly created Independent Media Center (IMC).
- Activist networks provided concrete mechanisms for communication and coordination in real time among diverse movements, groups, and collectives.

*The WSF*

The first World Social Forum (WSF) represented an important turning point, as activists began to more clearly emphasize specific alternatives.

- The WSF constitutes a dynamic process involving the convergence of multiple networks, movements, and organizations.

- Whereas Peoples Global Action remains more radical, the WSF is a wider political space including newer decentralized network-based movements and the more hierarchical traditional Left.
- Anti-Corporate Globalization* Three broad features characterize anti-corporate globalization movements:
- Although locally rooted, they are global in scope.
  - They are informational.
  - They are organized around a multiplicity of virtual and physical network forms.
- Activists' Use of the Internet* Anti-corporate globalization activists have employed digital networks to organize actions, share information and resources, and coordinate activities.
- They have made effective use of e-mail and electronic lists, which facilitate open participation and coordinate global protests.
  - They create temporary Web pages during mobilizations to provide information and contact lists and post documents and calls to action.
- NOTE: Internet use has complemented and facilitated face-to-face coordination and interaction, rather than replacing them.
- Internet Value* The Internet does not simply provide the infrastructure for computer-supported social movements, it reinforces their organizational logic.
- Decentralized, flexible local/global networks constitute the dominant organizational forms within anti-corporate globalization movements.
  - The absence of organizational centers within networks makes them adaptive, allowing activists to simply route around nodes that are no longer useful.
  - Technology enhances the most radically decentralized movements by facilitating transnational coordination and communication.
  - Within movements, networking logics have given rise to what many grassroots activists call a new way of doing politics—network-based politics involve the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse organizations converge around common hallmarks while preserving their autonomy and specificity.
- Shifting Alliances* Radical anticapitalists face a continual dilemma about whether to operate within more strictly defined political formations, at the risk of being marginalized, or participate within broader spaces.
- Complex patterns of shifting alliances operate at local, regional, and transnational scales.
  - Specific networks move between larger forums or do not participate at all, depending on the political context.
  - Digitally powered social movement networks are rhizomatic: constantly fusing together and hiving off, driven by complex cultural politics within specific contexts.
- Alternative Media* Contemporary independent media activists have made effective use of new technology through alternative and tactical forms of digital media production.
- Alternative media constitute independent sources of news and information beyond the mainstream press.
  - Such alternative or radical media also tend to be independently operated and self-managed rather than involving top-down command.
- Indymedia* Indymedia is perhaps most typical of the new alternative digital media projects with more than 120 local sites networked worldwide.

- During mass actions and gatherings, Indymedia centers become communication hubs, particularly among more radical sectors.
- These temporary spaces of digital production provide a crucial terrain where activists carry out several concrete tasks:
  - Using e-mail to coordinate action and send information.
  - Generating formal updates.
  - Providing video and image files.
- Providing workshops to carry out complex operations.
  - Creating innovative activist uses for new technologies.
- Protesters have also made innovative use of cell phone technology to coordinate, report, and provide real-time updates.
- Indymedia incorporates a broad networking logic, as open publishing software allows activists to independently create, post, and distribute their own news stories. Absence of editorial control allows users to draw their own conclusions about the truth and relevance of reports.

*Tactical Media* Rather than creating alternative counterpublics, tactical media aim to creatively intervene with dominant media spheres.

- Tactical media interventions do not necessarily take place in cyberspace, but new digital technologies are almost always crucial.
- “Culture jamming” involves the playful parodying of corporate advertisements and logos to produce critical messages.
- “Hacktivism” or “electronic civil disobedience” constitutes a final dimension of tactical media using digital trespass or blockade tactics. This often generates significant media attention.

*Conclusion* Anti-corporate globalization movements have not only generated widespread visibility surrounding issues related to global economic justice and democracy; they have also pioneered in the use of new technology.

- Their practices have facilitated the emergence of globally coordinated transnational counterpublics, while providing creative mechanisms for flexibly intervening with dominant communication circuits.
- At the same time, the network has also emerged as a broader cultural ideal, as digital technologies generate new political values and vocabularies.
- Activists are building a new digital media culture using open participation and horizontal collaboration.
- Anti-corporate globalization movements are best understood as social laboratories, generating new cultural practices and political imaginaries for a digital age.