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The Foucault Panopticon Model in Motion: The Internet as a Candidate for Corporate Abandon

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THE FOUCALUT PANOPTICON MODEL IN MOTION: THE INTERNET AS A CANDIDATE FOR CORPORATE ABANDON

by

Thomas Wells Brignall III

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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Western Michigan University
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THE FOUGAULT PANOPTICON MODEL IN MOTION: THE INTERNET AS A CANDIDATE FOR CORPORATE ABANDON

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Western Michigan University, 1998

The possible negative impacts the Internet could have on our society, because of its powerful observation potential is the topic of this thesis. In my work I deconstruct several historical and current texts on the Internet. I then critique modern cultural constructs of the Internet and compare and contrast using historical as well as meta-analysis to dissect the real from the simulated.

I have found that a majority of the Internet's current construction lies in the hands of private companies. In my finding, using historical analysis of previous company policies that the potential to observe, track, and keep large databases of online users, is possible.

I conclude, using Baudriallard's Consumer Society concepts, that people choose to define themselves by the products they consume. In order to make purchasing, interaction, and the control of the flow of information more efficient, a model needs to be employed. I purpose the Panopticon model is the Internet control model, which has been implemented by some companies already. The Panopticon presents the ability to control society because it allows Internet administrators to observe anyone and anything on the Internet without any consumer constitutional recourse.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As with many inventions that have been created in history, the original intended use of the Internet has changed. The Internet has been transformed from a tool for scientists to discuss recent findings in the 1960s space race into an international tool for mass communication. According to Postman (1992),

the Internet is already making a strong impact on society, much like the effect King Charles V had when in 1370 he ordered all citizens of Paris to regulate their private, commercial and industrial life by the bells of the Royal Palace clock, which struck every sixty minutes. (p. 27)

Today's world knows how time has come to regulate and control our daily lives. Like the constraints of time, the Internet has positive and negative effects on our daily lives. In this paper I wish to discuss the possible negative impacts the Internet could have on our society. I choose to do this since I think a large amount of the popular media glamorizes the Internet and its possibilities. Even when the negative possibilities of the Internet are presented via popular media, they are often misrepresented. I believe the Internet is ripe for commercialization. As a critical sociologist, I believe the commercialization of the Internet is a dangerous situation given the possibility that the Internet could revolutionize the structure of mass communication, as we know it. The principal hypothesis informing this thesis is the Internet as a privatized
entity is indicative of its broader potential for abuse as a mechanism for social control. Therefore, there is the potential for the Internet to be used as a tool of control. I hypothesize that the Internet, if privatized, can and will be used as a source of power/knowledge control and will lead to yet further stratification and inequity among the citizens of the world. This thesis is a critical investigation of some of the possible impacts the Internet might have directly and indirectly on U.S. democratic principles. It is also the exploration of the variety of positive and negative consequences related to broad worldwide access to the Internet. I wish to challenge the assumption that new technology (specifically the Internet) always improves the quality of life of the citizens of a nation. While I believe the Internet has many positive possibilities, whenever a juggernaut of change looms in the horizon, I think as critical sociologists we should analyze both the positive and negative aspects of the coming change. In this paper I have chosen to focus mainly on the negative possibilities of the Internet, leaving the positive possibilities as a topic for future papers.

I will construct this paper under several main themes: Despite its origins and early ethos, there are ongoing changes in structure, law, demographics of the user base, and culture underway which make this thesis likely. This thesis is largely a macro level argument, but an underlying micro dimension can be developed by the passive listeners/readers. The ideas conveyed in this thesis can certainly apply to individual concerns. Each reader can possibly find a cor-
relation between the rise of the Internet, and the effects it has had in bringing changes in the reader's personal life as well as changes to the world economy. Personal experience with the Internet could provide as a catalyst for readers of this thesis to be able to see how the possible negative aspects of the Internet may magnify the struggle for equality in their own lives. I plan on discussing the ties that I believe the Internet has with the Foucault/Bentham Panopticon models. Their Panopticon theories will also help me develop a theoretical framework in which to explain how the ease of implementing information control on the Internet is similar to the ease of implementing a rigid control of a prison system when using the Foucault/Bentham Panopticon models. In conjunction, I will also include a discussion of Foucult's specific ideas of the Panopticon model as it pertains to social control.

Any discussion of new technology demands a historical discussion, so to properly convey my theories of the Internet, I must first briefly talk about the history of the Internet. I will discuss the Internet's origins, review the ideals of the innovators, and relate these ideas to the current state of the Internet. In the end I will try to display to readers, how dangerously close the Internet has already become to mirroring the Foucault/Bentham Panopticon models as a tool for social control.

By enticing individuals with new modes of information and the chance to be on the cutting edge of technology, major corporations who use the Internet as a source of income, like Microsoft and IBM,
are convincing people to give up certain rights in order to obtain information from the Internet. When individuals consent to constructed rules that ask for large amounts of personal information, in order to obtain requested company information, many individuals believe they are exercising their freedom of choice and making their own informed decision. Therefore, individuals are giving up some of their private rights without realizing how enslaving their actions were. Since the action of giving personal information to a site in order to log on ends up being a personal choice, the individuals still have the illusion of being free. I will show that by making some of these choices, people may be waving certain constitutional rights. I will try to convey in this paper how such naivete could be the very elimination of privacy, and the key to social control. The Internet can be a powerful tool for observation, data collection, and trend setting. I want to show the possible dangers that can arise from some of the new ways the web is being used. I want to show how those dangers might evolve into serious abuses of freedom if society allows these current ideas about structure, ownership, and overall uses of the Internet to continue growing without a system of checks and balances.

Let me say in the beginning of this paper that I do not think privatization of the Internet is the answer. I think privatization of the Internet will lead to the further erosion of personal freedom of U.S. citizens. As Neil Postman (1992) puts it,

Harold Innis, the father of modern communication studies, repeatedly spoke of the knowledge monopolies created by im-
portant technologies. He meant precisely what Thamus had in mind; those who have control over the workings of a particular technology accumulate power and inevitably form a kind of conspiracy against those who have no access to the specialized knowledge made available by the technology. (p. 9)

Why do I think someone would want to use the Internet in a negative manner for social control? I would argue that there is a rising tide of anger and resentment stemming from the growing numbers of disenfranchised. There has been a large body of pop literature and legislation that has been recently developed that supports the development of more control legislation to pass into laws in order to protect family values. The fingerprinting of children was originally resisted but now is making a strong comeback. I for one am against indexing all citizens who have not broken any laws in order to create a mass catalogue of future possible victims that might need rescuing or identifying in a future crime scenario.

Reasons for U.S. citizens' becoming angry at the current system are growing in number. Over the past two decades, drastic tax reductions for corporations and the rich have starved the public sector of resources. "If corporations paid taxes at the same rate they did in the 1950's, two thirds of the national deficit would disappear overnight. More than half of the largest U.S. corporations don't pay any income taxes at all" (Miller, 1996, p. 15). As a result, people are increasingly forced to seek private solutions to social problems. In the U.S. the gap between the rich and the rest of the citizens is growing. Signs of the breakdown of equality in the U.S. are revealed from the statistics that show the growth of
the booming private security guard business to the growth of private schools. These signs of breakdown are further reflected from the spread of homeowner and business associations acting as mini governments to the inability of this country to lose its distinction as "the only advanced industrial nation without a universal national health system" (Miller, 1996, p. 15). The wealthiest third of this nation is disengaging from the shared social systems that formerly bound the nation together. The middle third of our nation is also left behind to face the increasingly difficult task of getting the previous social systems of capitalism to work. The poorest third, the working poor and unemployed, are dropping through the cracks on to the streets or into the prisons. It seems the sixties war on poverty is no longer the nation's concern. "The standard of living of American workers has gone from first place in the world twenty years ago to 13th place today" (Miller, 1996, p. 241). These provide all the more reason to develop an environment where people can be monitored for dissenting behavior in order to provide a safe communal environment.

Nietzsche (1924) states: "The more liberated we become from custom and become free within custom, the more we will need a conscious ethic. That is the recognition of that which makes man human and the self affirmation of reason" (p. 17). I believe this nation as a whole lacks a unified social conscious and lacks the respect of individuals who do not happen to have money or power. Unlike the rest of the nation, the Internet was, and in many areas still is,
governed by a loose group of ethics, rules, and mores called netiquette. I will propose how the current lack of a conscious ethic in our society is slowly eroding the fabric of netiquette. Since the Internet society is but a mere reflection of current society, I wish to suggest that it is possible that our society will soon be a reflection of the Internet.

The Internet can be used as a powerful medium where new rules of communication and customs can be combined with old ones. The Internet is a place where certain individual values can be replaced with new fabricated truths. The Internet in all of its power allows for the first time, ordinary individuals to communicate and explore new ideals in real time with people they would have otherwise never had a chance to meet. For example, I now have associates I have met using the power of the Internet from California, China, Russia, and Australia. There is no way that I would have contacted these individuals with other previous forms of communication. In the past, I would have had to travel to those destinations or randomly call each of their phone numbers in order to make acquaintances with these new friends. With the Internet the barriers of society, and the us versus them mentality of competition could easily breakdown. People who are not politicians may be able to engage in discussions and come to the realization that someone in Russia has the same hopes and dreams as someone in Utah. This ability presents an awesome power potential. Since according to Foucault, knowledge is power, the Internet presents itself to be potentially
dangerous to those who are interested in keeping the status quo of present governments.

A current example of a system for social control and citizen tracking is the social security number. We, as citizens of the U.S., have an identification badge. This badge is our social security number. Its original intended purpose of citizen identification has been modified, and now it must be used to obtain many services such as movie rentals or credit card approval. People's private lives have been made more accessible to powerful institutions. Individual life habits, matters, and shopping patterns are easily tracked and controlled. People are subjected to more examinations, are increasingly mystified by the decisions made about them, and are often reduced to mere numerical objects. People are now inundated by junk mail. There seems to be no one who is willing or can do anything about these modern problems. The Internet at its present state can be used to make the current data collection task of corporations much easier. To obtain and control a list of names and shopping preferences is as easy as obtaining the Microsoft Online customer registration database. One of the negatives of data collection from the net is the limited pool of individuals, but as more and more people flock to the Internet that soon may change. Since the current trend of major corporations is to not be concerned with the poor, because they can not consume products fast enough, the control of the poor may not be of importance to companies interested in selling product. With the ease of tracking consumer beha-
viors, one could easily invert the policy of tracking consumers to a dictation of consumer behaviors.

This thesis is not intended to be an objective, value-free treatment of these issues. As a participant in the Internet community, many of my observations, critiques, and recommendations are derived from my experiences: both positive and negative. My use of selected authors' theories reflects my political, ethical, and moral positions regarding democracy and human freedoms.

Many contemporary sociologists are writing in the first person as a means of expressing and acknowledging that their personal experiences and perceptions are actual or potential sources of important information. My belief that positivism can not prove anything anymore than subjectivism is shared by a growing number of qualitative philosophers and sociologists. It is my opinion that neutrality through positivism is an illusion that attempts to reify the cult and truth of scientism. I refuse to believe that critical observations do not afford important and relevant insights to the social human condition. I also refuse to believe that we, as sociologists, should not take an active roll in facilitating change and suggesting the means in which to do so. This is also my world that I live in, and I feel the necessity to try to make some sense of it and to have a duty to make a positive impact on it. Of course, what is positive and what is negative is subjective and up to individual interpretation. It is, however, no more subjective than using pure numbers or the scientific method to explain phenomenon without giv-
ing due process to the experience of a situation or event.

A hypothesis, by definition, is a proposition or set of propositions put forward for empirical testing. An empirical statement or theory is one statement that can be tested by some kind of evidence drawn from experience. I, then, wish to provide to the reader the idea that my experiences can provide empirical evidence as much as any other author's experiences. Since I have been working in the computer industry for ten years as a technician building computers and web sites, as well as having personal experience with various versions of the Internet for twelve years, I think my experience is valid. I do acknowledge that such experience offers the possibility of bias, but I think subjective sociology is as valid as objective sociology. I, therefore, think my methods are quite acceptable.

I see the Internet as representative of the struggle between the modern versus postmodern dialectic. This dialectic is defined by the modern capitalist economy and capitalist culture, versus postmodern change in technological basis of capitalism, and changes in cultural superstructure as a consequence of capitalist failures. Ritzer (1997) sums up one way of looking at sociological theory by stating that

the point of sociological theory is not to find the theory, or the answer, for there is no ultimate theory; there is no final answer. The point may be simply to keep the dialogue among sociological theorists alive through the constant generation of new theoretical ideas and perspectives. (p. 212).

I do not align myself to the postmodern ideal completely, because I still feel the need for a grand narrative in my life. I also be-
lieve we as humans need not accept the current exploitative situ-
ation, but try to make an effort to change it. I do not think there
can ever be a world wide or even nation wide grand narrative, but I
believe people need something to believe in, an ideal which contri-
butes to unity. Therefore, I still have some very modern perspec-
tives in my theories about the Internet. This thesis will exorcise
those contrasting views.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE INTERNET

What Is the Internet

The first thing I would like to do in this thesis is clarify some of the historical misunderstandings of the Internet. I would also like to present some background information about the development of the Internet and create a group of definitions to assist me in further explaining possible power issues of the Internet.

The Internet is made up of several networks of computers. A network is simply two or more computers tied together in such a way that they can share information and conduct some form of communication between each other. The Internet is not one network of computers. It is actually comprised of several small networks of computers linked loosely to each other through different connections. Some of the networks connected are larger than others, and some networks are really self-contained Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), like American Online, that consist of their own world construction separate from the Internet. Many members of a BBS have outside access to the Internet. A BBS however, restricts non-members from having access from the Internet to their resources. Most of the services and information on the Internet is free (though that is changing everyday), and access is simply a click of the mouse away. There are many members of the Internet (net-citizens) who argue that the ser-
vices on American Online are now being duplicated in the Internet community. Individuals that support companies like American Online, Prodigy, and CompuServe, insist that these companies provide services the Internet still does not. Furthermore, many customers believe that companies like American Online offer a better standard of control with rules that eliminate undesirable behavior and make paying customers' experiences in the cyber-world more orderly, family oriented, and organized. Anyone with a computer, the proper software, and a phone line, can register with a service provider and log into the Internet. These service providers can range from one-line BBS services to schools, phone companies, and multi-line Internet services.

The Origins of the Internet

The Internet has several starting places in its creation. Like many trends in the U.S. the Internet seems like a new idea that mysteriously appeared in the U.S. quite suddenly. The Internet is not as recent an invention as many people believe. The first idea of an Internet dates back to 1950 when radar operator Douglas Engelbart wanted to develop a technology that would allow humans to manage the large amounts of information being created in the world. "He started thinking of thinking machines that everyone could own and use to manage information. In 1963, Engelbart was funded to create the thinking machines he had dreamed about" (Rheingold, 1993a, p. 66).

Engelbart always believed that people other than scientists
would use computers one day. Computers were very archaic in the 1960s. (A digital watch with a calculator function has as much processing power as a computer that took up several rooms back in the 1960s.) Engelbart had a premonition in the 1950s about an invention that had not yet been created, but he had seen in his dreams. Even though it seemed quite ludicrous to his peers and to some historians, Engelbart believed that one-day people would communicate from one computer to another from far away site locations. He created a concept for an invention but he never created the actual physical manifestation of his vision. Engelbart's invention was the core idea behind the inspiration for those who eventually created the Internet.

According to Rheingold (1993a),

the essential elements of what became the Internet were created by people who believed in, wanted, and therefore invented ways of using computers to amplify human thinking and communication. Many of them wanted to provide it to as many people as possible, at the lowest possible cost. (p. 66)

With nothing but a grandiose idea, who would ever fund such a project as the development of an Internet? The Internet, in effect, was developed because of the invention of other technologies that were originally created for different purposes. Computer networks started with a former Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor working in a small technical funding office in the Pentagon. The global Usenet was created by two students in North Carolina who decided it was possible for computer communities to communicate with each other without the benefit of an expensive Internet
connection. Hobbyists in Chicago triggered the worldwide BBS movement because they wanted to transfer files from one personal computer (PC) to another without driving across town.

Oddly enough, the original funding for what is now known as the Internet came from the Cold War Space Race. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik. This successful rocket created a sense of panic in the Cold War ridden United States. Those responsible for staying on top of the Space Race were embarrassed and shocked that the U.S. was technologically behind the Soviet Union. The flag waving created by the Cold War forced the U.S. to send scientists into action to catch up, and eventually out-perform the Soviet Union. The Space Race was to be won at any cost. Rheingold (1993a) says that in order to keep up with the pace of technical developments that were happening everyday, the Department of Defense created the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) with a specific mandate to leapfrog over existing technology, bypassing, if necessary, the standard process of peer reviewed research proposals. (p. 2)

ARPA had a license from the government to look for visionaries with creative ideas and hire them to create viable schemes that would allow the U.S. to regain the lead in the Space Race.

The Pentagon noticed that many of its universities, corporate researchers, and defense contractors were beginning to request funding to create the same kind of powerful mainframe computer systems needed for advanced research and development. The Department of Defense was willing to pay for the development of new generations of increasingly powerful computers. The problem was that these super-
computers were extremely expensive. Rather than buy a supercomputer for each contractor, it seemed worthwhile to investigate ways in which a computer could be used by more than one person at a time. Space Race researchers wanted to be able to share any information they gathered with other researchers. It was important to be able to share information among fellow scientists no matter where the other computers were physically located. Because of the Cold War, Engelbart's ideas of an Internet communication system found a reason to be funded.

The official version of the Internet was established in the 1960s and early 1970s when the U.S. Department of Defense and several research universities, via the Defense Advanced Research Program Agency (DARPA), linked computers together to communicate to each other. The resulting network, ARPANET, allowed researchers access to other computer sites, not only for communication reasons, but also for review of research data completed by a different researcher. "The latter role, took a back seat to the use of ARPANET as a means for researchers to share information by the way of electronic mail" (Rheingold, 1993a, p. 3).

"In the late 1960s, the Defense Department's Advanced Projects Research Agency paid for the creation of the [Advanced Projects Research Agency Network] ARPANET by Bolt, Beranek, and Neumann of Cambridge, Massachusetts" (Rheingold, 1993a, p. 44). "The first connected host computer, or node, came online in 1969. By 1971, there were fifteen nodes. By 1973, the count was up to thirty-seven, and
by 1988, it was 60,000" (Rheingold, 1993a, p. 54). Access to ARPA-NET was restricted to people who worked for the military or companies and universities that had defense contracts. However, it quickly became clear that messages contained information that needed to be shared by many users, and thus, mailing lists were created. These lists allowed one person to mail one message to a central point from which that message was bounced or reflected to others who subscribed to the list. "Eventually, lists became specialized to particular topics, and the terms bulletin board, newsgroup, and mailing list came to have some interchangeability" (Jones, 1995, p. 3).

Miller (1996) states that

Despite this limitation (limited number of groups were allowed access), by the mid 1970s traffic on the ARPANET included so many people that the Defense Department decided that it needed to create a separate military network (MILNET) and it slowly began lowering its financial support of ARPANET. (p. 45)

The Internet Starts to Boom

The Internet, the successor to ARPANET, was sponsored in the 1980s by the National Science Foundation. It already included tens of thousands of researchers and scholars in private industries and universities. They all connected to the Internet through their institutions' computer centers. Each computer center is a community of individuals who share computer resources, and when a new center joins the high-speed highways of the Internet, each community is virtually connected to every other. Users can communicate with others on the Internet via private e-mail, public real-time chat, and
worldwide public conversations such as Unix Users Network (Usenet) (which used to be a forum for discussions about Unix but eventually became the universal newsgroup for various different subject topics. Suddenly, Internet culture took on a global, youthful, often heavily American flavor as so many colleges worldwide came online, starting in the U.S.

More efficient means of communication can transfer traditional forms of information, such as research papers, to larger audiences and allows authors the vehicle to publish their work for mass consumption. It also allows for students to perform routine knowledge gathering tasks such as searching for a reference, from any computer location. Because large databases are being accumulated on the Internet students can now find international information that was previously unavailable to them at their local school.

The Internet eventually gave way to a gateway of people using it for purely social interaction and gaming that was not originally intended to be part of the role of the Internet. "Two of the most important and popular cultural experiments were MUD (multi-user-dungeon, which first appeared at the University of Essex, England) and Usenet, which both originated on college campuses in 1979-1980" (Rheingold, 1993a, p. 69).

Usenet is not a separate network but a part of the Internet. It is a way of managing multiple public conversations about specific topics, conversations that are not located or controlled in a central site but spread throughout the system. Usenet enables people
to read and respond to specific conversations about specific topics, similar to the way they read and respond to e-mail, but Usenet postings are public rather than private. In this way, Usenet is related to current efforts of some Internet users to implement software that will provide the means in which a discussion arena will be constructed and available so that one person may share their ideas with other individuals.

In the mid 1980s, the National Science Foundation (NSF), then the main funding source of the Internet, established a number of supercomputer centers around the country. To give universities and research centers around the country remote access to these supercomputer centers, NSF funded a major network that connected these supercomputer centers and also provided funding for connections to the main network for regional networks.

The Internet Goes Commercial

In the late 1980s, NSF awarded a contract to a single organization (Merit, a consortium of educational institutions in Michigan) to be responsible for maintaining and upgrading the physical network and to be the network administration for the NSFNET. According to Pike (1995), in the early 1990s MERIT proposed allowing the Internet to carry commercial traffic. Initially, the NSF was opposed to the conveyance of any commercial traffic on what was intended as an educational and research network. An agreement was reached that required the profits from commercial traffic to be used to improve the national and regional network infrastructure. (p. 12)
Shneiderman (1996) states that in 1994, there were about 3.2 million host computers accessible from the Internet, over 1 million of which came online during the first six months of 1994. Another 2.2 million host computers access the Internet but don't share their own resources with outsiders. Estimates of the average number of users attached to a host vary from 3.5 to several dozen. (p. 39)

With companies like American Online, CompuServe, Prodigy, and now Microsoft Network allowing access to the Internet, the Internet is now swelling in numbers everyday. The Internet currently is quadrupling in size every year. Magazines like Internet World say it is only a matter of time before more people will jump on the Internet bandwagon since it is estimated that only "30 million users are on the Internet in 1994." (Bournellis, 1995, p. 47). "The Internet's Phenomenal Growth is Mirrored in Startling Statistics" (p. 50).

The important key to these figures is how relevant are these numbers to overall traffic on the Internet. While the commercials on TV hype the fact that over 30 million people use the Internet, some real questions should be asked. Are these 30 million people using the Internet each day? How are these people using it? Do these people really understand the Internet's potential? More importantly, do these people understand that 30 million is less than 1% of the world's population? Many BBS users are either shifting to the Internet completely or using their BBS as a springboard to the Internet. In only three to four short years, the all-access Internet computer user has flooded the private (corporation, education,
government, and military) Internet to make it the new forum for public computer generated entertainment and information seeking.

It can be said that the original intentions of the Internet as a mechanism to share information in order to win the Space Race have long since morphed. Is it possible that even though the Internet was created with the best intentions of being a free entity for information sharing and discussion, it could now be changing into a new economic tool for profit?
CHAPTER III

THE INTERNET: A NEW FORM OF COMMUNITY

Technology Emancipating Mankind

Right now with current Internet tracking technology, it is impossible to know how many people are using the Internet at any given time. Even if it becomes somehow possible to record every instance that some account has accessed the Internet, it would still be a difficult task to accurately find out how many people use the account, not to mention if one person owns more than one account.

In technical terms "the number of data packets that flowed through the NSFNET went from 152 million in July of 1988 to 60,587 million packets in July of 1994" (Pike, 1995, p. 17). Pike goes on to say that

the byte traffic increased from 1,594 billion bytes of data in July of 1991 to around 12,764 bytes of data in July of 1994, and the number of hosts on the Internet has grown from 235 in May of 1982 to approximately 3.2 million hosts in July of 1994. (p. 19).

"Most analysts estimate of total Internet users to range from 20 million to 40 million people" (Bournellis, 1995, p. 47). "No one really knows the real number. The number of hosts counted to 6.6 million in 1995. By the end of the decade, 120 million machines will be connected to the Net according to the Internet Society" (Bournellis, 1995, p. 47). Though this data is now dated, it is clear that still less than 14% of U.S. citizens are frequent users
of the Internet.

Computer technology mixed with new communication abilities equals change. A great historical upheaval is taking place, which promises to transfigure the structure of current human interactions. According to Poster (1989),

what is going on today is comparable in significance to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A society in the year 2150 might be as different from that in 1950 as society in 1950 was from any other since the Stone Age. (p. 124)

Positivists see the Internet and its progress as only a continuing, linear evolution, like the shape of things in the past. Poster (1989) goes on to say that

computers and the like mean to multi-nationals, only increased efficiency in material production, a continuation of the substitution of machine for human labor which began with the industrial revolution or even with the appearance of human beings on earth. (p. 129)

People believe that if information is available to us 24 hours a day by the Internet, then there is nothing that cannot be discovered. Ironically, the availability and ease of finding information on the Internet may end up being the main problem. The easier it is to navigate the Internet the more susceptible a person is to the problem of information overload. "Once Internet access is achieved and basic commands mastered, many users start joining newsgroups or email lists, and they quickly get overwhelmed by the amount of email and data flooding their machine each hour" (Miller, 1996, p. 51).

This enormous load of information will only lead to the desensitizing of information. The impact this overload of information will
have is frightening. Any information given to an individual will seem minute in importance. Information given to an individual becomes just another fact in a pool of millions of other facts: Each fact becomes just as hard as other counter-facts to distinguish as truth. In effect, Postmodernity is actualized due to construction of mini-virtual realities that will be created. Depending on one's friendship circles, different ideological dogmas will be competing for one's attention; and therefore, the truths, which are focused on, construct one's concept of reality.

One truism being touted by corporations today is that technology improves man-hour efficiency and increases profits. This belief transforms humans into numbers. People become work units to be properly exploited. According to Postman (1992),

Taylor's book, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, published in 1911, contains the first explicit and formal outline of his assumptions of the thought-world of Technopoly. These include the beliefs that the primary, if not the only, goal of human labor and thought is efficiency; that technical calculation is in all respects superior to human judgment; that in fact human judgment cannot be trusted, because it is plagued by laxity, ambiguity, and unnecessary complexity; that subjectivity is an obstacle to clear thinking; that what cannot be measured either does not exist or is of no value; and that the affairs of citizens are best guided and conducted by experts. (p. 51)

If technology can be used to improve man-hour efficiency imagine how it could be used to monitor employee work habits and customer purchasing trends? As technology today is being touted as the great tool to free mankind, and commercials portray virtual offices on beaches and mountains, another side of technology is being ignored. Technology, as the great liberator, is also responsible for
mobile phones, pagers, and personal fax machines that keep everyone on call no matter where they are. Technology facilitates both efficient self-service at home and an endless workday where workers can always be contacted. Therefore, their work progress can constantly be monitored and updated.

Cultural Misconceptions of the Internet

As is with any new culture, the Internet shares a rather extensive amount of confusion. The Net, Cyberspace, and Virtual Reality are three colloquialisms that are often used in reference to the Internet. I believe only one has any substance in truly describing the Internet. That word is the Net, which I will use from time to time when referring to the Internet. Why is distinguishing between the various references of the Internet important? In my opinion the Net is acceptable because there is a difference between what the current Internet is and what is contrived, consumer-driven marketing. With the recent market expansion of the Internet, it will soon be important to be able to distinguish between the Internet as a source of information, education, and entertainment and as a source of monetary gain.

It will be important to understand what is critical information and be able to distinguish a web site with critical information from a web site that is only for monetary gain. From a capitalist standpoint, there are reasons why a mentality driven by colloquialism is being cultivated in order to describe the Internet. It is
important for capitalists to whip consumers into an emotional purchasing frenzy. Since keeping up with the Jones has been a successful strategy so far in selling products, marketers have turned to fabricating a romantic side of the Internet. Marketers want to make it seem like everyone in the world is using the Internet, and if a person is not on the Internet soon, they will somehow be behind the times and unable to function in today's fast paced society.

Cyberspace is a term coined from William Gibson's book *Neuromancer*. In general terms, Cyberspace is commonly used today to refer to the worldwide computer-mediated communication network where words and graphics are shared, and friendships and power relations are manifested. Cyberspace is also the name that marketers are using in order to convey a common idea. That common idea is that Cyberspace represents a conceptual space where individuals can manipulate words, human relationships, data, and wealth, in order to accumulated power. This power is maintained by people using computers to communicate to consumers.

I believe strongly that most people using the term cyberspace in reference to the Internet have not actually read Gibson's book. Those who try to romanticize the net by using the term Cyberspace fail to realize the irony of their actions. If those people who are trying to portray the Internet, as the great hope of the future knew the content of Gibson's book, I believe they would not use the term Cyberspace to describe their vision of an utopian future on the Internet. Gibson's portrayal of the future and technology is not
very pleasant. He portrays a world of widespread poverty amidst concentrated wealth, of disenfranchised populations and brutal hierarchies, of scrambling contingent workers and predatory corporations not bound by any laws other than their own, a world in which addictions promote mass culture and individual powerlessness. For Gibson, and many of the writers who followed him, the futuristic technogizmos such as the Internet, are just tools of manipulation, not culture. Such tools are constructed surface froth, distractions and indicators of a world gone mad. The real issue posed by Gibson is what type of civilization will the future bring and what types of lives will be endured by the majority of people, due to a few multinational corporations having absolute power over everything including governments. Gibson's portrayal of Cyberspace does not seem like the positive image that would attract the material resources of the masses. It certainly is not a reason to spend the current money the U.S. is spending on developing the Internet. The future of our Internet, and the quality of life of U.S. citizens, is jeopardized if citizens and consumers accept this mass-market propaganda.

Gibson may be a prophet in his portrayal of Global Multi-Nationals controlling the world, using it for whatever whim and money making scheme that comes from their advertising brain trust. Many of the current multinational corporations already use the Internet to control the exchange and flow of information, money, and law. Another reason that I would not use the term Cyberspace, at least as of yet, is also related to the concept Virtual Reality.
In Gibson's book, Virtual Reality is a complex mental and physical state advanced with the use of computer technology. People use neurological connections in their heads to jack in to Cyberspace, a world that is multi-dimensional. In Cyberspace, one can hear, see, taste, touch, and smell (remember neuro connections) things they encountered in real time. People can also die in real time. When in cyberspace, all sense of the other world is gone. In order to communicate, a person must follow representations of paths and doors, and interact with three-dimensional figures that represent other individuals, firewalls, or computer robots. In Cyberspace, people's souls live on without their bodies, viruses are formed that search down and destroy individuals or protect companies from pirates. At this point in time, no one is capable of creating anything like the Virtual Reality Gibson envisions.

The Internet does have telephony (the new term to replace telephone) communications available (talking live with people on the Net, using your voice, not typing). The problem is that for most people it is still slow and unreliable, due to the lack of the proper bandwidth in telephone lines to handle the speed necessary to pass the signals from one computer to another. With fiber optics, cable modems, ISDN lines, or satellites, live audio feeds will become more frequent. How many people will be able to afford the technology right away is still an issue of concern. Additionally, how is the communications industry going to take to the ability of a consumer to talk to anyone, anywhere, for any amount of time, for
Things will change based solely on the potential money being lost. People can also have live online video teleconferencing but even the best software tends to be grainy and jumpy. There are quality signal feeds to be had, but they come at an extremely expensive price. The reality is that the current status of the Internet is far from the Cyberspace that Gibson describes.

Socioeconomic Origins of the Misconceptions of the Internet

So why do those who talk about the Internet talk in terms of Cyberspace and Virtual Reality? I believe it is simply because we, as consumers, have little or no exposure to this knowledge. The mass marketers use catch phrases because they fabricate a hyperreality instantly available. These words seem to create a sense of wonder and mystery that perhaps would not normally be attributed to something so sterile and cold as the technology of computers. It promises a brave new universe to be conquered and developed in order to create a sophisticated higher culture. Cyberspace and Virtual Reality are terms foreign to most consumers, especially if they have little knowledge about computers or to the book written by Gibson. Therefore, these strange words incite curiosity, as does anything that is new and strange to the uninformed consumer. Why make up some boring terminology to sell a commodity when it can become a new way of life, a Virtual Reality? In many of the recent commercials displaying computer and Internet technology, there is a portrayal of a brave new universe that can be settled if only consumers spend
enough time and money. Since the real cultural expansion of the
Internet seems to be a new market for mass consumerism, I believe
it is important to know the differences between market-driven hys-
teria, and real world Internet solutions.

The Actual State of Current Internet Technology

What can be confusing to consumers when Internet providers use
terms like Virtual Reality to describe the Internet is that they are
confusing the Internet with real forms of Virtual Reality that are
available. The problem with describing the Internet as a source of
Virtual Reality experiences is that the Internet does not have Vir-
tual Reality experiences yet. For the most part, Virtual Reality
technology is only available in crude forms to consumers, although
it is possible that NASA or some other government affiliation has
developed a more advanced form of Virtual Reality of which the pub-
lic is unaware. Virtual Reality technology that is currently avail-
able to the general consumer is still very basic. There are devices
available that suspend users in a free-floating environment, so that
they feel as if they are truly experiencing what the computer pro-
gram is putting them through. As I understand it, sensory depriva-
tion can make a person lose touch with reality, and I think part of
the effect of Virtual Reality is the loss of real world perception
caused by having headphones, eye goggles, and free floating body
rigs. Virtual Reality technology has come a long way, but it still
cannot match Gibson's story until the other senses besides sight
and hearing can be stimulated. When people can feel, smell, touch, and taste a game, then there is Virtual Reality. When people start to confuse the real with the virtual, then Virtual Reality is born.

So why do I bother discussing the finer points of Virtual Reality and Cyberspace? What does it have to do with a new cultural change? I think it is important to expose the illusions created to sensationalize the Internet. If the Internet is marketed as a romantic place where people can conquer new worlds, I am afraid people will flock to it like it is a new messiah and ignore anything that might be detrimental to the human condition in order to further the interests of progress. I also believe people choose to identify themselves with what they consume. The more unique or progressive the product the more an individual who consumes such product can think of themselves as unique and cutting edge. I will discuss this concept in more detail in Chapter IV.

The desire to conquer new lands as a mass marketing scheme has been used before in history. The marketing of the railroad comes to mind. The building of the railroad system became a relentless pursuit to connect the U.S. from coast to coast in order to further the development of the country. This push for expansion left in its wake exploited Chinese-American workers, defeated Native-American tribes fending off death, starvation, and submission, and landless Mexican-Americans forced to make a living picking fruits and vegetables often for less than minimum wage. It also created massive amounts of wealth for the privileged few that controlled the means
of production of the railroad system.

The Internet: A Tool for the Creation of a New Form of Community

I believe the reason these sensational terms are used to describe the Internet is simply because they are so appealing. I believe that is why people are flocking to get on the Information Superhighway. "The hunger for community grows in the breasts of people around the world as more and more informal public spaces disappear from our real lives" (Rheingold, 1993, p. 6). I believe Rheingold is trying to convey that the end of the industrial revolution has already occurred. With the end of the industrial revolution brings the rise of a mass homogenized society, destroying the traditional role of the family and the old values of modernity. People are losing their sense of group cohesiveness, and I think the Internet brings to the table a new chance for establishing a sense of belonging. Throughout history, people have had communication structures. From the traveling storyteller, to the pony express, drums, telegraphs, telephones, and television, the world has created ways to communicate. The Internet, however, allows us to merge all of the past ways of communication and provides the chance for total strangers from far and distant lands to meet and interact in real time, simply because they share a common interest. The U.S. is now about to create what the Clinton Administration calls the National Information Infrastructure or the NII. We have always had this, in one form or other, but the Internet brings unique advantages to the
There are a few facts that currently exist about the Internet. The Internet is still such a new force in society that its limits have not yet been discovered. Some form of the Internet will probably be here to stay, but what its appearance may be in ten years is unknown. Mass communication across the globe will become an even more important fixture to our economy, and will soon become a part of everyday life for many. The Internet is the topic of many conversations, press releases, books, and movies. Whether the reality of the Internet lives up to the predictions remains to be seen, though I think that expectations will be met. What is certain is that the Internet is affecting people's daily lives. Even though the number of people using the Internet is still a minority, it is only a matter of time before more people will use this technology. I believe the Internet will be the major source of entertainment, news, resources, and information attainment for most of U.S. in the next ten years. Whether this is for the better is irrelevant. The market demands it, and unless there is a wide spread revolt against new technology and a market-driven society, the Internets' use in the home will be considered an important part of everyday life. At least this access to information will be important for a majority of the people who can afford to be mass consumers.

Not only will the Internet be for e-mail, but eventually cable, news, and even phone calls will all be Internet related. Presently, more public and government databases are going online at
local and national levels. The coexistence of very large and up-to-date collections of factual information in conjunction with a medium that is also a forum for discussion and debate has important implications for the public sphere. Rheingold (1993) goes on to state that

the ability of groups of citizens to debate political issues is amplified enormously by instant, widespread access to facts that could support or refute assertions made in those debates. This kind of citizen-to-citizen discussion, backed up by facts available to all, could grow into the real basis for a possible electronic democracy of the future. (p. 91)

I do not completely share in this utopian opinion, but the possibility is there, if mass communication on the Internet is implemented in the correct way. There is also the possibility that Internet interaction will make people feel directly involved with the government when, in fact, what they say will have little to do with what is actually done. After all, when the poll or voting is done, one must trust what they read to be the truth, since one has no actual power to do a poll of everyone in the U.S. participating in the electronic town meeting. Yes, the technology is there to bring people closer together, but people must be willing to use it, and it must be available to be used.

Current Efforts at Increasing Accessibility to the Internet

There have been recent efforts in a few pilot cities to move in the direction of the electronic town hall. The city-owned network in Santa Monica, California has public terminals available for people who do not own personal computers. Miller (1996) states that
One discussion group about the problem of homelessness, which included a number of homeless people, developed a proposal that was successfully presented to the city council requesting that public showers and lockers be made available to the homeless. (p. 329)

One problem challenges the idealism of the electronic town hall. No matter how simple the system, users will require training. This training will be expensive, requiring frequent updating in order to be effective, and will generate little monetary gain, with no recognizable value, except social responsibility and the willingness to provide equal access to those less enfranchised. There may not be a greater value than public equality in many people's eyes, but our government's policy the last sixteen years has been not to engage in a project that does not exhibit the possibility for monetary gain. That is unless one counts the money spent bailing out the rich in the savings and loans scam (which created a majority of our national debt under the Reagan Administration) or the money spent financing the unknown adventures of the C.I.A. and other federal law enforcement agencies.

If the goal of providing Internet access to everyone in the U.S. is to be realized then a system of training the masses must occur. There will have to be places to train U.S. citizens other than the local public schools. The training can occur in adult education classes, in supermarket parking lots, and churches. According to Miller (1996),

the Dallas Computer Literacy Program offers low cost training in the local Baptist church. Their volunteers refurbish old computers donated by local businesses, which they place in neighborhood computer labs for use in training programs. The
sunflower free network in Kansas is planning to use high school computer clubs and Scout troops as local trainers and online resources. (p. 330)

 Achieving the goal depends on society's commitment to pay for it with its tax dollars and donations. I have little faith that the me-oriented U.S. society will be willing to foot the bill, when we seem to care little for welfare, school loans, and other social spending. I believe most U.S. citizens will demand that people buy a computer and learn it on their own. The appeal to educate the masses has been made by the introduction of several bills to raise education spending, but recently, education seems to be on the chopping blocks of many state governments. Not to mention there is money to be made by people connecting to the Internet. Free connection means lost revenues. We do not provide free phone calls or free newspapers. Why would a corporate identity be willing to sacrifice profit for human equity? What the significance of the Internet is to the future well being of the country, is a topic that needs to be further studied.

 If corporations look to the future and if community networks become widespread enough, Internet access can raise the level of expectation for commercial services, force private firms to keep their prices affordable, and provide services that the private sector would not find sufficiently profitable. These ideas, of course, have no real direct monetary value other than keeping people happy and involved in their community. I support the view of the Internet remaining clear of mass consumerism, continuing on the current path
of the ethos of free information, and the Internet further developing as an entity engaged in valuable community-services. I believe this is the appropriate path for the future of the Internet.
CHAPTER IV

THE NEW PANOPTICON: HYPER-REALITY TAKE CONTROL

Defining the Model for Efficient Social Containment

Some scholars foresee a dystopian future in which the top third of the population takes care of itself by hiring the middle third to protect the top third against the bottom third. The Internet is slowly taking on characteristics of a tool for observation and control of information flow. There soon may not be a need for massive security, police, and military forces having a high visibility. Instead, people could use the Internet to observe individuals and decide if their behavior requires an investigation. There are only a few factors that need to be implemented in order for the Internet to be used as a tool for surveillance. There is an increasing effort by advertisers to use the Internet as a tool for managing information on consumers' individual likes, desires, and dreams. Combined with the ability to observe online behavior and the lack of laws protecting people from having their personal data and hard drives observed, the future I envision is a chilling prospect that is not as far-reaching as it sounds. A group interested in using the Internet to control information would only need to have the blessing of some kind of central U.S. authority. With the Internet one can be observed at any time. All that a person needs to do is have the proper software to gain administration rights to various sites.

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The Internet as an environment used to keep track of everyone's actions is not a new phenomenon. Jeremy Bentham in 1843 wrote about a theory and an idea on how to control individual behavior with his Panopticon proposal.

In Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault discusses the works of Jeremy Bentham, who proposed in the Panopticon or, the Inspection House that it was possible to build a mechanism for reinforcing a system of social control into the physical structure of a building. Bentham's Panopticon was a design that could be used in prisons, schools, and factories. Bentham believed the Panopticon would increase efficiency and quality of order on the streets of a city as well as in prisons. According to Rheingold (1993a),

> individual cells are built into the circumference of a circular building, around a central well. An inspection tower atop the well, in conjunction with a method for lighting the cells, and leaving the inspection tower dark, made it possible for one person to monitor the activity of many people, each of whom would know he or she was under surveillance, none of whom would know exactly when. It was precisely this mental state of being seen without being able to see the watcher that Bentham meant to induce. When you can induce that state of mind in a population, you don't need whips and chains to restrain them from rebelling. (p. 289)

Foucault's ideas on the Bentham Panopticon model fit well with what I have been describing as the possibilities that are available for those who wish to use the Internet as a tool for social control. I am not alone in my beliefs. Robins and Webster (Rheingold (1993) write:

> We believe that Foucault is right in seeing Bentham's Panopticon as a significant event in the history of the human mind. We want to suggest that the new communication and information technologies particularly in the form of an integrated elec-
tronic grid, permit a massive extension and transformation of that same mobilization to which Bentham's Panoptic principle aspired. What these technologies support in fact, is the same dissemination of power and control, but freed from the architectural constraints of Bentham's stone and brick prototype. On the basis of the information revolution not just the prison or factory but the social totality, comes to function as the hierarchical and disciplinary Panoptic machine. (p. 75)

My vision of the Internet's possible future direction is a parallel take off of Foucault's interpretation of the Panopticon theoretical model. Of course my theory requires the Internet to become more of a dominant institution in the future than it currently occupies. I think it is only a matter of time before the Internet becomes a dominant part of our culture in the U.S. As displayed on several television commercials, there is a massive push for consumers to start making purchases on the Internet. Ritzer (1997) states:

As we have seen, capitalist society has undergone a shift in focus from production to consumption...While producing more and cheaper goods remains important, attention is increasingly being devoted to getting people to consume more, and a greater variety of things. (p. 222)

I am not stating in this paper that this is the only way to look at the future of the Internet. What I am proposing is a critical examination of what could be the future of the Internet given its push to become the new consumer market: Call it a warning.

Foucault suggests that his adaptation of the Bentham model could be used as a tool for employers and schools, not just prisons. Like the Internet, "The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unites that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately" (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). To Foucault, visibility is a trap, with which to monitor all activities. It is that constant state of
monitoring that allows a large group of people to be controlled with a limited amount of manpower or friction. He goes on to say that each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the sidewalls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities. From the point of view of the guardian, it is replaced by a multiplicity that can be numbered and supervised; from the point of view of the inmates, by a sequestered and observed solitude. (p. 200)

The differences between a person in a prison cell and a person at a computer terminal are drastic, but the subtleties of the Panoptic machine can still play an important role. The key point to my conceptualization of the Foucault Panopticon model is like a person in a jail cell, a person who is on the Internet can easily be tracked and watched. The dissimilarity to Foucault's Panopticon model and my Internet Panopticon model is that a person in my construct does not see the observation side of the Internet.

A Modification of Foucault's Panopticon Model

Here is how the Panopticon model can be worked into the postmodern entity known as the Internet. According to Foucault, the Panoptic mechanism arranges spatial units that make it possible to see the observer constantly and to recognize immediately that one is being monitored. The Internet allows the possibility of one indi-
vidual to monitor many different groups of individuals from all over the world at one time. Easy visibility of social interaction becomes the trap of freedom. Each individual user is confined to, instead of a cell, a small private room at home. Instead of being observed by a supervisor from the center of the Panopticon, the supervisor has the superior advantage of the consumer having to go through the supervisor's dial up service, thereby giving the supervisor the ability to constantly observe the consumer. Like a prisoner in a Panopticon, the consumer can not see anyone else.

My major modification of Foucault's Panopticon model is that even though Internet users have interaction with other users, which is a deviation from Foucault's Panopticon model, this interaction has its own new purpose in my Panopticon machine. People need to believe that they are free individuals, yet much of their individuality can either be monitored, or spoon-fed to them by the control of the flow of information. The individual may have the illusion of feeling free to choose where he or she goes, but if the only choices are those that are acceptable, than what real choices are there. One important factor in my model is that there must be a feeling of freedom to do what one desires, and the ability to move about the Internet with a minimal amount of friction. Another important element for my model is a sense of anonymity so that a user's identity will not have the chance to be discovered. The illusion of anonymity is the key to luring individuals into giving up their soul and identity to the voidless appetite of consumerism which wishes to monitor
everyone’s behavior in order to perfect the marketing strategy.

The Illusion of Invisibility

There is with individual anonymity still an illusion of invisibility to the forces of oppression. Even though one is not truly anonymous in my Internet Panopticon model, all there needs to be is the belief in anonymity by individuals participating in interaction on the Internet. For the Foucault Panopticon model to ever be successful, our culture must first embrace the Internet as important element to our daily ritual. I will hypothesize that many individuals may fool themselves into temporarily believing they are not being observed when on the Internet, even with the knowledge that they are being watched. This is due to the fact that there is not a visible person directly monitoring the user. In the Bentham model, the individual is not free to discover whether a person in the center of the prison is actually watching them. Therefore the threat of being monitored always seems to exist. This threat is a guarantee of order.

In my synthesis of the Foucault model the same control effect is obtained, but my synthesis model uses a different manor in which to obtain control. The desire of order and control is obtained within the model, not due to reactions of the model. In my model, it is not good for people who use the Internet to fear that they may be monitored. The control and manipulation of the flow of information obtains social order. Therefore, interaction with the model,
but ignorance of the model, makes the model work the most effi-
ciently. When someone is at home, feeling safe and secure in a fam-
iliar environment, one can look for wiretaps, look for people in the
closet or under the bed, but in the end no direct evidence will be
gained as to whether someone is observing them. The power of para-
noia is that just because a person is paranoid does not mean they
are not being watching.

People will feel they are not actually being observed and will
carry on with their normal everyday lives. The individual Internet
user derives this reasoning because there is no direct evidence that
can be discovered to support that they are being observed. In fact
there seems to be a way to prove that no one is watching people’s
every move by the lack of evidence. In the Bentham model there is a
center tower that can be seen. There is also a guard that is seen
as he or she enters the tower. This provides proof that someone
could be watching one’s every move. Illusion of freedom by coming
and going as one pleases in everyday life, work, and play helps to
contradict the invisible barriers of observation via my Internet
Panopticon model.

The Model Can Change

I see my Panopticon model as a facilitator to the eventual
takeover of the Internet by a version the Foucault Panopticon model.
It may also be possible that my model will stay in place for a long
time. Before the world ever becomes conscious to the fact that
observation of Internet customers is a common occurrence, a few things will first have to take place. The Internet has to be used by a majority of people around the world. There has to be some form of class-consciousness to provide a reason for people who know everyone is being observed to be willing to share that knowledge with other people on the Internet. First and foremost, my Internet Panopticon model must be initialized on the Internet and prove itself successful. If my model becomes initialized on the Internet, then Foucault’s Panopticon ideas benefit. Simply, my interpretation of the Bentham/Foucault model would be the medium for which Bentham’s vision could have the opportunity to manifest. I must argue that the Internet will never develop into a cultural necessity if people know they are being monitored from its inception. If users know in the early developmental stages of the Internet development there will be a mass exodus. An example I can offer is when American Online (AOL) users talk to their friends they meet using their Internet connection, they usually informed that as a member of AOL they are constantly being monitored. It has been my experience that when members of AOL learn this, they usually sign up with an independent provider.

If people do not become aware that they are being observed when using the Internet until the Internet is a fully developed regular part of everyone’s daily rituals, then knowledge of being observed will no longer matter. A current example in the U.S. of consumers relying upon material objects is the car. People do not
need cars. We had lived without them for centuries, and people that live in cities seem to continue to survive without them. Yet, because of this form of transportation, many cities now have spread-out resources that are not available to someone whose only means of transportation is walking. Yet many cities have very poor forms of public transportation. We, as a society, have forgotten how to not be reliable on the car as a means of transportation. What once was a luxury is now a necessity.

Even if the Internet is not perceived as a necessity by society, reality is becoming socially constructed for the Internet to become a dominant force in society. If the Internet is a necessity in an individual's reality, then that individual still needs to use it. If people are forced to have to communicate, read the daily news, or download a movie on the Internet, then recognition of being monitored is no longer important. If people are forced to use the Internet as a primary means of interaction and have the knowledge that someone is monitoring them, then Foucault's Panopticon model works, because people acting in an orderly manner in order to avoid trouble achieve order.

The Model Works Because Most People Behave According to the Status Quo

There is also something to be said about the fact that most people behave according to status quo, so their observed behavior will be aligned to accepted actions. It is only those who choose to behave and believe differently that are in danger. Even though
there is a possibility of a collective effort, which, once again, is contrary to Foucault's model, with observation and containment, all collective efforts can easily be contained, modified and controlled without the effort's knowledge.

My model turns Foucault's model on its ear. The major effect of the Internet Panopticon model is to induce the consumer to a state of conscious and permanent invisibility that assures the automatic functioning of power, since people believe their choices are made freely and that there are no direct consequences of their actions.

The Panopticon model becomes "a functional mechanism that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come" (Foucault, 1995, p. 209). So, Internet users allow themselves to be observed, and in effect, the Internet becomes the Panopticon itself.

A Possible Scenario to Facilitate My Panopticon Model

I would like to introduce a possible scenario that aligns with what I have described. The portrait of the Internet, as painted by companies like Microsoft, is a place with boundless free and uncensored information, a new universe to explore. Microsoft has now achieved a virtual monopoly on the software industry. Microsoft has decided to become a shaping force on the Internet. By buying Web TV and spending large amounts of money developing their Internet service and web site, Microsoft is making strides to be the dominant force of the Internet. If Microsoft uses the same kind of business
savvy to tame the Internet as it did the software industry, how will free movement and information on the Internet be affected? Does Microsoft even stand a chance to dominate the Internet in order to do what they wish, or is there another force that ultimately controls the future of the Internet? *Critics also point out that information and communications technologies have always been dominated by the military, and will continue to be dominated by the military police and intelligence agencies for the foreseeable future* (Rheingold, 1993, p. 290).

**Baudrillard's Consumer Society**

I would like to close this chapter with a rationale for explaining why I think consumers will buy into the Internet, and why they will allow themselves to be constantly observed while on the Internet. My ideas stem from Baudrillard's ideas on a consumer society. Baudrillard sees the objects of consumption as being "orchestrated by the order of production" (Poster, 1988, p. 43). Baudrillard sees the system of consumer objects and the communication system at the base of advertising as forming a code of signification. When we consume objects, we are consuming signs, and in the process are defining ourselves. This means that people are what they consume and consumers in today's world differentiate themselves from other people on the basis of the objects they consume.

For Baudrillard, consumption ceases to have anything to do with people's satisfaction of life or what people conceive of as
needs. "The idea of needs is derived from the false separation of subject and object; the idea of needs is created to connect them" (Ritzer, 1997, p. 81). In the end, consumers and objects are defined in terms of each other. Therefore consumers do not buy what they need but what the code tells them they need.

Consumer products are purchased as an expression of one's prestige and power so that a large house shows the power and influence and individual has in society. The curse of Midas infects consumers when they only gain pleasure in the amount and status of the items that they consume, instead of gaining pleasure in the items themselves.

If one takes Baudrillard's ideas into account then the Internet could be the ultimate arena of consumption. It is easy to create a hyper-reality online that can make claims of knowing what everyone wants to consume next. Simply if we monitor everyone's behavior and interaction habits, and if we force the consumer to do much of their purchasing of material goods and knowledge online, the companies can funnel consumption into an easy manageable mechanism for exploitation of signs.

Using Baudrillard's ideas on how consumers consume products in order to identify and differentiate themselves, one can see the latest barrage of Internet ads as a call for people to redefine themselves. The code is telling consumers in order to separate themselves from the average individual; one needs to get online. These ads suggest that in order for an important, smart, elite, ahead,
individualistic, computer savvy, business dominant person to get ahead of the pack, they must wisely choose the bright concept of being one of the first individuals to make it rich on the Internet.

When I sold computers as a job to put me through college, I would always ask the customer why they wanted a computer. I asked this question in order to try to shape my sales pitch to the customer's needs. I was always surprised at how the majority of customers who bought computers from me, had no idea why they wanted a computer or what they could do with it. Quite often they just felt they needed one. On several occasions I would see these customers at civic events or at the grocery store, and I would ask them how their computer was doing. Many times they would tell me they had not turned it on for months but that they were still glad they bought it just in case they needed it in the future. I now make the argument that the sudden Internet marketing boom is driving this same clueless computer-buying phenomenon.

I feel it is this mentality of I am what I buy that is fueling the Internet hype. I create web sites for several businesses and it is all I can do to not tell some customers that they really have no need for a web site. When someone makes pencils, I find it hard to sell them a $10,000 web site. Yet customers keep coming to me demanding the latest and greatest technology for their web sites because they have become convinced by the signs and the code that they need a web site. I do not have to hard sell the product. The Internet sells itself. What I find sad is that I understand the po-
potential of the Internet and I do not find it necessary for most businesses to rush on the Internet because it will not provide a monetary gain for them. Many of my customer's web sites provide nothing more than information to the existing customer. While this is a greater customer service tool, it does not lead to profit. At times there may be information on a web site that a potential customer is interested in. I would argue that most customers of a car wash do not look online before they pick which car wash to go to. This may change as consumers value the Internet as the dominant mode of information attainment. If consumers decide to look online before making a purchasing decision, then I will argue that these consumers will not be so impressed with the quality of the product that the web site sells. What will impress the Internet consumer is a large amount of pictures and whether the signs come with Java enabled flaming logos that rotate, blink, and sing the Star Spangled Banner.
CHAPTER V

NEW INTERNET CUSTODIANS: FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN AND DISTINGUISHING MASS HYSTERIA FROM HYPER-REALITY

Fear Achieves the Means to the End: How Can the Panopticon be Implemented?

Why would Internet users ever knowingly summit themselves to a constant state of monitoring? With the press exaggerating the incidence of violent crime (even though violent crime rates have been dropping), drugs, terrorist bombings, lack of police, etc., the press reports that U.S. citizens feel the need for more control by the police. Citizens are being duped into feeling afraid for their lives because they are led to believe that U.S. is in a state of social disorder. According to Jones (1995),

such disorder and the attempts to control it underscore the mythic investment we have in computer technology. The chaos and confusion generated by the opening of new frontiers led us to devise means of communication and transportation as if those means were one part and parcel of the same process. (p. 13)

One might ask how a Panopticon model could ever be implemented on the Internet without negative reprisals from Internet users. My answer to this question is simple. Make the citizens of the U.S. demand protection from the dangers of the Internet. I believe that a mass push for control of the Internet has already been activated. The best way to make consumers want private control of the Internet, in order to clean it up, is to use the old tactics of coercion.
Tactics like lying to the public, making them afraid of some individual or entity, real or not, which needs to be cleansed from the Internet, might possibly work. Of course, one needs to explain to the masses that the cleansing can not be carried out without giving certain powers of control over the flow of information on the Internet to the proper officials. These powers must be bestowed to the proper agents of cleansing. This is how the public will be convinced to give up certain constitutional rights in order to allow themselves to be observed and information censored. This push is clearly being seen in sensational articles and television programs.

Recently, a plethora of articles, and reports are hitting the newspapers, journals, and television programs, describing the evils and dangers of the Internet. From hype to outright sensationalism, magazines like Time and newspapers like USA Today spread outright lies and contradictions. Here are some recent headlines and comments from USA Today's June 5, 1996 edition: Terrorism on the Net: Post-Cold War hysteria or a National Threat.

On the cover of the paper Zuckerman (1996b) states

Cyberterrorism, InfoWar, Electronic Pearl Harbor. The specter of such terrorist-style strikes on vital U.S. computer systems has become a pervasive concern for national security and law enforcement. As society becomes increasingly computer reliant, it also becomes increasingly computer vulnerable. By that standard, the U.S. is the most computer-vulnerable nation on Earth. You bring me a select group of 10 hackers and within 90 days I'll bring this country to its knees. The chaos that could be created is enormous. (pp. A1-A2)
Critical Thoughts on the Agents of Terror

These comments made by USA Today are worthy of critical review. The critical point I would like to discuss is the assertion of the title "Terrorism On The Net". What a misleading title! Since these periodicals claim to follow accurate descriptions procured from available resources, like the dictionary, let us review what the dictionary has to say about terrorism. I make no claims for believing in any sort of constructed reality above all others. Yet there needs to be a frame of reference in order to debate my theoretical opinions. I choose to use the dictionary at this time, believing that the USA Today upholds the belief that the dictionary reflects the truth of words and definitions. A text book definition of terrorism from the American Heritage Dictionary states: "(1) The use of terror, violence, and intimidation to achieve an end. (2) Fear and subjugation produced by this. (3) A system of government that uses terror to rule" (Morris, 1979, p. 1330).

I would like to make the following assumptions. USA Today thinks it is an accurate paper in its reporting. The USA Today thinks its reporters are informed. Last but not least, USA Today believes in the written word and using terminology in its correct manner. Since there is no known confirmed group of computer terrorists out there, I would have to think the literal meaning for "Terrorism On The Net" would be the third of the American Heritage Dictionary definitions: A system of government that uses terror to rule. Currently the level of fear on the Internet is minimal. There
may be strong opinions like racism, sexism, communism, and just about every other opinion on the planet, but it is merely a reflection of the variety of ideas from the real world.

As far as national security, earlier in the paper I stated that the government has changed its computer database to a separate network all together. Its most vital information according to USA Today, is actually on a separate network not accessible to the outside world via the Internet. There is little doubt that it may be possible to crack the system by using some outside source that is funded by a terrorist group and has inside sources to help crack the system. The problem with USA Today's inference is that since there are no outside lines connected from the Internet to the military network, what does this statement "Terror On The Net" in the USA Today really have to do with the Internet? How can the Internet be a concern for national security unless all information is accessible via the Internet?

It would be very easy for any company with sensitive information on a computer to have a separate computer database not accessible to outside lines. If corporations are ignorant enough to have vital data available via a modem, then they are just asking for trouble. If they leave it on an Internet accessible database, they must really want people to find it. Intelligent companies are not leaving any important information on a web or FTP sites. They have no need to do so.

Corporate information means private business information, not
public policy or national interest and security or does it? The statement: "As society becomes increasingly computer reliant, it also becomes increasingly computer vulnerable. By that standard, the U.S. is the most computer-vulnerable nation on Earth" (Zuckerman 1996b, p. Al), is in my opinion almost criminal. If subjected to critical analysis, simple logic will allow a person to deduce what this statement really means. The U.S. has more computers than any other country so it has more chances for a computer to break down or to be infiltrated. That theory is the same as saying the U.S. has more cars than any country so we have more chances for car crashes. Do these facts make it conclusive that the U.S. is more dangerous to drive in or that U.S. drivers are horrible drivers? If the roads are safer, if driver's training is rigid, if the age of a legal drivers is higher, and if laws are strictly enforced, are other variables in the statistics more important than the raw number of chances?

To make the statement "the United States is the most computer-vulnerable nation on Earth" is just irresponsible and sensationalist at best. "Less than fourteen percent of the people in America are online" (Bournellis, 1995, p. 47). Most businesses that are online have a web page, and that is all. No physical computers to their businesses are linked to a modem in order to display the web information. A third party provides the web site service. A company with a web site may have modems on their computer system, but if they do not have software to receive an incoming call, no one can
get on that computer. If the company has such software on the system that makes outside access available, that software must be activated and ready to receive such a call for an individual to log onto that system.

These people who write for the USA Today reporting these so-called facts obviously know nothing about the technical aspects of computers. The danger of this kind of irresponsible, reckless, and sensational journalism is that USA Today is assuming that most people do not know anything about computers. If USA Today assumed that their readers were intelligent when it comes to computer technology, then they must have wanted to look native and stupid to their readers. I doubt if looking stupid was USA Today’s intention.

From recent buying habits stating that "20% of Americans have PC's in their home" (Bournellis, 1995, p. 47). USA Today’s assumptions are correct. To make a broad sweeping generality that the U.S. is the most vulnerable to computer attacks is like saying the U.S. has the best football teams in the world. If no one else plays football, what relevancy does that statement have not to mention what intelligence should be afforded to the statement.

Some may argue that these statements made by USA Today really have no impact on the opinion of the U.S. consumer. On the contrary, I hear many people discussing articles likes Time's "Cyberporn a fraudulent Carnegie Mellon study authored by Martin Rimm" (Godwin, 1996, p. 86) as if the article represented fact. He states that shortly after the article came out, the national press reported that the U.S. Justice Department had announced a doz-
en arrests in a two year investigation into the use of commercial online services to distribute child porn and seduce minors into sex. (p. 86)

Fear Spawns the Need for Protection

With the new frontier of the Internet, there has been a rising call for the need of protection, laws, and privatization in order to save U.S. residents from the imminent chaos that might destroy the nation as we know and experience it. According to Poster (1989), the notion that telecommunications eliminates distances between people and enables the instantaneous registration of individual preferences is countered with the warming that these same devices make possible the stability of ruling elite through techniques of surveillance. (p. 125)

Clinton's infamous Internet Decency law is not the only problem today. More and more privacy laws are being passed that destroy U.S. citizens' rights to privacy. The real danger is that the Internet is far too new, confusing, and strange to the masses for the public to make a real and informed decision. Several bills are being passed in the name of protecting U.S. citizens, but they are created without true representation of the U.S. population. Many projectionist laws could allow for monitoring of online discussions, e-mail, and file transfers without a court order. Eckenwiler (1995) states that a federal prosecutor who wants a phone tapped has to obtain authorization from the U.S. Attorney General before requesting a warrant from a federal judge. Moreover, phone taps can be issued for investigations of only a few dozen specified federal crimes. In the case of electronic communications, the prosecutor can go straight to the judge and obtain an interception authorization to investigate any suspected federal felony. Obviously, the second-class citizenship of electronic
No one, except members of the Internet community, is protesting the new legislation. Obviously people using the Internet do not represent the majority of U.S. citizens. Most U.S. citizens have no connection with the Internet and know nothing about what happens to it save from the stories obtained from the popular press. Sadly many citizens do not realize the impact these laws will have on their future lives. How could non-computer using citizens care about the consequences of Internet legislation if they do not understand what is going on with current Internet legislation. Currently the only mass-market information available about the Internet is in the magazines that are promoting the hysteria and rhetoric. Those in power are making sure that the laws that help their cases, are put in place long before privacy on the Internet becomes a major issue. Those currently in power that support such laws can claim that a law has been passed by the majority of U.S. citizens and is thus not up for discussion.

Companies and the government are all too willing to point to obscure facts that show the relevance and need of strict laws to eliminate such things as a child pornography or illegal software sites. The reality is that these taboo sites are rare, and usually self-censored by the administrators of the various domains. In any case, most of the people that will use the Internet in the future will grow up accustomed to these constricting laws, and so few will know anything different. Many of the children of tomorrow will grow
up not knowing that anything better could and did exist previously in protecting personal privacy and freedom on the Internet. Restrictive communication laws will seem status quo to about 70% of the population that does not understand the current state of the Internet. In Democracy, sometimes the majority does rule.

Reification of Technology

In order for the current fear tactics to work, technology must be "reified" in order for society to feel a need to protect its purity. The first problem to be solved is the U.S. citizens' over-use of reification. In this context, reification in the U.S. works in the following way: we use the word intelligence to refer to a variety of human capabilities of which society approves of. There is no such thing as intelligence. It is a word, not a thing, and a word with a very high order of abstraction. But if we believe it to be a thing like the pancreas or liver, then we will believe scientific procedures can locate it and measure it. According to Hobbes, "living in fear of death or wounds disposes men to obey a common power" (Hobbes, 1962, p. 82). With the deification that we allow reification to uphold, it is easy to see how citizens can be dominated by words.

Current Examples of Reification

One example of reification is society's push to eliminate drugs and gangs at any cost. It is somehow reified that these are
the only ills of society, and if they are purged, society will return to a better state of prosperity and happiness. I see it as treating the symptoms, not the disease itself. According to Miller (1996),

It is now clear that one of the main functions of the anti-gang dragnets such as the LAPD's Operation Hammer has been to create a rap sheet on virtually every young Black male in the city. Data are not simply being kept on people arrested, but rather people are being detained solely in order to generate new data. Thanks to massive street weeps, the gang roster maintained by the LAPD and sheriffs has grown from 14,000 to 150,000 files over the last five years. Needless to say, these files are not only employed in identifying suspects, but have also become a virtual blacklist. Under California's recent Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention act membership in a gang, presumably as proven by inclusion in one of these databases, can become a separate felony charge. The real threat of these massive new databases and information technologies is not their role in a few sensationalized instances, but their application on a macro scale in the management of a criminalized population—where policing has been transformed into full scale counterinsurgency (or low intensity warfare as the military like to call it), against an entire social stratum or ethnic group. (pp. 292-293)

Another example is the town of Novato, California. It is already requiring the implantation of grain-sized, bar code microchips in cats as part of the licensing process. "A San Diego, California firm is developing a body bug that would track the location of parolees and released sex offenders. Newt Gingrich supposedly endorses the idea" (Miller, 1996, p. 296). But why stop there? What if the missing child scare of the late 1980s returns, and many of us become convinced that we need to be able to always locate our child? Police are already collecting children's fingerprints for their files. Is this the next step?

This country is currently obsessed with controlling, incar-
cerating, and observing other U.S. citizens for bad behavior. Why should we believe the Internet would be any different? According to Miller (1996),

since 1980, this country's prison population has tripled to more than one million. The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. In 1993, more than a thousand people entered prison each week. After the passage of the new federal crime bill in the summer of 1994, planners now estimate that the number of U.S. prisoners will more than double again to at least 2.26 million within the next decade. (pp. 355-56)

At the current rate of imprisonment, U.S. citizens will eventually have to come to notice that presently there are more citizens in prison per capata than any other country in the world, or for that matter in history. This list includes China, El Salvador, Iraq, South Africa, and Iran. These are countries we condemn as being too hard on their own people. Instead, this country is willing to replace self-control with the Panopticon idea of control, using the obvious tools of the Internet.

A totally "marginalized" population desperate to survive will do so by any means, whether legal, semi-legal, or illegal. So, police technology is enhanced, even militarized, to contain the social breakdown unless there is a greater form of social control. What better idea than to use the Internet to monitor the behavior and beliefs of people. Where else do people think they can speak so freely, yet be so easily monitored?

Internet Deception

Observers of Internet interaction often conclude that computer
mediated communications are highly susceptible to deception. This I find to be a serious understatement as I suspect that more significant changes are occurring. As McLuhan, Marshall and Fiore (1967) write:

Electric circuitry is orientalizing the Western legacy. The contained, the distinct, the separate, are being replaced by the flowing the unified, the fused. Under power's endless refraction within the new electronic dispensation, old assumptions about the nature of identity have quietly vanished. Our individual concreteness dissolves in favor of the fluid, the homogeneous and the universal. Once the palpable particularity of individual identity is lost, we become relational feedback units among endless arrays of refracted power. (p. 104)

This deception can be used as a tool to control people's beliefs. As many studies have shown, people tend to conform their beliefs to the dominant beliefs of a group. When people only interact with those of their kind and only discuss those topics relevant to the topic of the discussion group, they often forget the sense that everyone's opinions are not the same as their own. In fact, everyone has a slightly different vision of the world. What these micro-groups do is help those in control of the group. It is much easier to manage the group, because the people are in much smaller distinct groups, that can be easily identified, socialized and recruited to certain causes if they behave according to the customs of the group.

Some would argue that this kind of total control could never come about because U.S. citizens would not allow it. Yet people are more sociable under conditions in which they can better control the presentation of self in everyday life. This is why architects tear out walls to increase office efficiency. Richard Sennett (1976)
explains that
when everyone has each other under surveillance, sociability
decreases, silence being the only form of protection.... People
are more sociable, the more they have some tangible bar-
riers between them, just as they need specific places in pub-
lic whose sole purpose is to bring them together...Human beings
need to have some distance from intimate observation by others
in order to feel sociable. (p. 145)

It is exactly this reason that the Internet presents itself as a
unique opportunity to use as a tool of observation. People can not
directly know they are being monitored. They can only suspect it,
or not know of it at all. It is the perfect solution to making peo-
ple work harder under observed conditions.

The Indexing of Society: The Commodification of Knowledge

As noted earlier, force will not need to be used with the In-
ternet Panopticon. The misguided consumers will jump at the chance
to enslave themselves. All the resources to create a hypothetical
mass dossier disk on everyone in the U.S. are currently available
from public sources. It is debatable whether these mass lists are a
crime, but the way that information is sorted into files linked to
real citizens is where intrusion is accomplished.

On each CD ROM disk will be a file that contains a large a-
mount of information telling a user about a person's tastes, brand
preferences, marital status, even political persuasion. If one
contributed to a free-wheeling Usnet newsgroup, all the better, for
political views, sexual preferences, even the way one thinks can now
be compiled and compared with the other information in that person's
dossier. When individual information terminals become as powerful as super computers (which is not that far away), and every home is capable of sending and receiving huge amounts of information, there will be no need for a dictatorship from above. The dictator will only have to exercise power to introduce the commodification of bits of information. Instead of big brother observing everyone, people will spy on their neighbors, friends, and relatives for monetary gain. The typical Internet consumer will sell pieces of each other's individuality to one another for the price of admission and a few trinkets.

The most insidious attack on citizens' rights to a reasonable degree of privacy might come not from a political dictatorship but from the marketplace. Instead of telephone taps, the weapons of domination will include computer programs that link bar codes, credit cards, social security numbers, and all the other electronic identifier characteristics of an information society to one big database. The most potent weapon will be the laws or absence of laws that enable improper uses of information technology to erode what is left of citizens' rights to privacy.

There is an obvious response to the inequity of access to Internet resources and the gap between information that some social critics will use. There will be those who are rich with information and those who will be of the information poor. Some people will be able to afford to pay for enhanced information services; others will be able to use those services in exchange for a little information
monitoring. For answering a few questions and allowing a certain amount of one's transactions to be monitored, individuals will be granted a certain number of hours of service or even paid for the information and the right to use the information. Why should anybody go to the trouble of seizing our rights of privacy when so many of us would be happy to sell them? The sad and scary thing is that small forms of self-selling are occurring presently. Many people in the U.S. are happy to give up their dignity, rights, privacy, respect, and morals in order to make money or feel secure from gangs, drug dealers, and any other violent outlaw horror stories the mass media can fabricate.

The New Laws Are a Protection of Individual Rights

An argument can be made that current telephone and television laws could be used to protect Internet rights. Since the Internet is geared to storing and distributing large amounts of existing data, it is hard to compare both forms of communication. It may soon be possible to think of alternative ways to the Internet of communicating, like the telephone, as relics that will be forgotten as other communication mediums become interconnected and merge with the Internet. "One might say then that if there is a conspiracy of any kind, it is that of a culture conspiring against itself" (Postman, 1992, p. 12).
Comparison of Current Social Control Legislation

I do not believe my arguments are out of line on how many groups want to monitor U.S. citizens as well as limit their individual rights. I would like to make a parallel comparison of my ideas on possible Internet control to the current issues of the privacy rights of workers and the existing monitoring policies that are currently being used. I will also use the issue of the current ways our government is collecting massive amounts of information on everyone as an indicator of the desire to develop a new institution to monitor information control.

Right now companies are desperately trying to figure out how to squeeze that last dollar so that everything they do is maximized for the largest potential profit. Many times, this profit is at the expense of the worker and the consumer. In today's work sites, employees are being watched more than shoppers are. Employers' surveillance power and authority usually extend beyond the power the police have on monitoring phone conversations. We tend to think of e-mail as mail, a personal communication owned by those who create it, and therefore, assume it is private. However, current law makes the owner of the computer network system, not the person writing the e-mail, the owner of the resulting message no matter if the message's contents are business related or personal. Extending that logic, some firms have even claimed that all e-mail sent on outside systems but using accounts paid for by the company are also owned by the corporation rather than the user. According to Miller (1996),
the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled in November 1994, that email messages stored in a computer are not protected by the Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986, which prohibited the interception of private electronic mail. The ruling allowed the seizure by police of the computer and software housing the Bulletin Board System containing the email. In the opinion of the Court, the law as written only protects messages while they are in transit. (p. 291)

It is extremely easy to move from monitoring work to monitoring the worker. Requiring that workers consent to the monitoring is not enough. Desperate people can not avoid taking employment at any price, especially in a competitive market. This willingness to sacrifice individual rights in order to obtain a job puts pressure on everyone else seeking employment to lower their standards. Part of the desperation many workers feel today is conveyed when companies insist on drug testing, large screening tests to evaluate a person's psychological profile (as if the tests really measured anything but the willingness to be a lab rat). Companies even want to know an employee's criminal history, psychological history, and credit history in order to continue as an employee of the company. Even though this decade has seen a massive push to help clean up the environmental conditions at many factories, workers are now more than ever looking away while their employers pollute their land and water, lower wages, destroy labor unions, and eliminate health benefits. All of these problems are ignored in the name of keeping a job.

The Government's Current Pursuit to Know Everything About Everyone

To make the possibility of the Internet becoming an entity
used for monitoring and data collection, I would like to discuss some examples of how the U.S. government has already used other means in order to try to achieve the goal of the complete observation of every U.S. citizen. The employer is not alone in this quest for massive data collection. Miller (1996) also reports that

the U.S. government is, by far, the nation's largest collector of data. In 1982 federal agencies had amassed over 3.5 billion files on individual citizens, an average of fifteen per person. At that time, privacy was mostly ensured by agencies...tendency to operate as a series of separate stove pipes with little communication or sharing between separate organizations or even between separate offices within one organization. A 1990 survey by the Congressional General Accounting Office found 910 major data banks containing health, financial, Social Security, and other kinds of personal data, most of which was shared with other agencies or sold to private firms. (pp. 289-291)

Ronald Reagan thought he had a great idea when he initiated a discussion on the need to have a better way than the Social Security card to identify an U.S. citizen. I remember hearing on the news that a Jewish advisor spoke up saying he knew of a perfect idea: tattooing numbers on everyone's arms. That tough joke sent the idea underground for quite sometime, but now the idea is back. This time the idea is not just to keep track of people, but to help find people when they are lost, killed, kidnapped, missing loan payments, or when someone is trying to use a stolen credit card. Of course, the universal identifier is justified in the name of helping innocent people.

A universal identifier, or any combination of data elements that uniquely names a single individual, is needed to correlate scattered data elements. It might facilitate the quick delivery of
your medical file if you need emergency care in a distant city. It helps law enforcement officials prevent people with a suspended driver's license in one state from simply applying for another license in another state. It prevents tax cheats from avoiding their penalties. But a universal identifier will also allow virtually unlimited collation of data from every possible source. It will make it very easy to track a person's movements and actions, setting the stage for repressive population controls. European data privacy laws are much stricter than those in this country exactly because they remember how the Nazis systematically collected data records and used the information to track down and kill political opponents, communists, unionists, Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally retarded, and others. With the Internet the problem of a universal identifier starts to evaporate because every user must have a unique online name in order to get on the Internet. Alas, a universal identifier is born.

One major topic that brings the idea home is to use the universal identifier in order to deal with the undocumented immigrants that enter the country each year. Miller (1996) says in 1994, the National commission on Immigration Reform recommended the creation of a national identity card to be used for verifying employment eligibility status and for facilitating transactions with government agencies. The card would contain a name, photo, fingerprint, a verified SSN, and a magnetic strip to store electronic versions of the information. In order to keep the estimated 3 million undocumented workers from taking jobs, all 120 million working age residents of this country would have to get government approval each time they applied for a job. (p. 295)

Like anything else, criminals could probably find a way to
fake the new identification card. Real protection from fraud is not the point. The point of the national identity card is to keep the masses under the guidance of the government. If people use the Internet as a major source of communication, information retrieval, and possibly economic transaction, then a universal identifier would simply be a person's e-mail address and online name.

Other Communications Laws Are Taking a Beating

It is not just the computer communications laws that are taking the brunt of punishment. That would not be logical, because lawyers could use other forms of communication laws as a precedent to computer communications disputes. So in order to avoid a legal stand off, existing laws have to be changed. Miller (1996) says to preserve the police's ability to wiretap, the Bush Administration - presumably at the request of the FBI - introduced a Digital Telephony Bill that would have required all existing communication equipment and networks to be rebuilt, and all future ones designed, so as to allow wiretaps of individual conversations. The proposal met with fierce opposition, died in committee, but was reintroduced each year. In 1994, however, Senator Leahy and Representative Edwards, who had previously opposed the measures, decided that passage was inevitable and that it would be best to offer their own, more limited version. EPIC and the Voter Telecom Watch organized a public campaign that temporarily held up the bill, but it was finally passed in a voice vote at the end of the congressional session just before the fall elections. President Clinton signed it soon afterwards. (p. 302)

The new version of the law requires all telephone services, cellular and personal communication services, and other common carriers to use equipment that allow police, acting under a court order, to conduct a wiretap. Industry opposition to the law became muted
when a deal was made to allow the inclusion of a governmental promise to reimburse carriers for up to a half billion dollars of the costs associated with retrofitting their systems. This reimbursement would come if the companies were willing to comply with the bill during the first four years after passage, and for certain costs thereafter, as determined by the Federal Communication Commission. I truly believe that big brother is and has been watching. I believe this example offers proof that the Internet Panopticon is possible given the current laws allowing monitoring of other communication modes.

The Federal Government Declares Its Intention of Protecting Us From The Internet

The Clinton administration got involved in Internet projectionist law in February of 1996. He decided it was important to pass The Communications Decency Act to protect people from the dangers of the Internet. This bill criminalizes the transmission, posting, and distribution of indecent material to the World Wide Web, FTP sites, Usenet newsgroups, and BBSs, Private e-mail and online chat-room communications exchanged with anyone under 18 years of age are covered by identical provisions.

Lappin (1996) reports that "those convicted of violating the act may be punished with US $250,000 fines and two-year prison terms" (p. 84). He goes on to say that

This seems like the hype is being taken very seriously. The Specific Language of the bill states:
1) In interstate or foreign communications knowingly-
a) Uses an interactive computer service to send a specific person or persons under 18 years of age or
b) uses any interactive computer service to display in a manner available to a person under 18 years of age, any comment, request, suggestion, proposal, image, or other communication that, in context depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards, sexual or excretory activities or organs, regardless of whether the user of such service placed the call or initiated the communication; or

2) Knowingly permits any telecommunications facility under such person's control to be used for an activity prohibited by paragraph 1 with the intent that it be used for such activity, shall be fined under Title 18, United States code, or imprisoned not more than two years, or both. (p. 89).

Parts of this law were recently reviewed by the Supreme Court and found unconstitutional. The fact that such a law was set into motion sets a dangerous precedence and might be a mirror of laws passed in the near future. Still, there are parts of this law that are in effect, and this law might easily be transformed and reinterpreted into a new tougher law.

I wish to look at this law anyway to see what kind of effects it might have if it is re-implemented. This law is at best vague, and at worst, all in encompassing. Under it, if I talk about masturbation, I have broken the law. If I talk about genital warts, I have broken the law. If I talk in an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) room to my wife about how I want to make love to her when she lives in say California and I in Michigan, than I have broken the law. If I own a BBS, I am forced to be responsible and therefore baby-sit everyone, even adults, for fear of liabilities. If there is true anonymity on the Internet, how is it going to be possible to clearly lay blame on the correct individuals who break such laws? It is...
quite possible that one family will have one account, and on certain days, the father will use that account, and on other, the son. How will an administrator ever be able to know someone's age? You can not! What rules are to be declared to tell the U.S. citizen what is offensive, when different things offend different people? This law opens a Pandora's box where individual incidents are going to be judged based on individual judicial interpretation and whim. This makes this law very dangerous to a consistent and fair judicial process.

Are We the Ones That Need Protecting?

Before proceeding, I want to cover some facts about the Internet. Usenet readership figures show how popular the alt.sex newsgroup is: for the month of October 1993, there were an estimated 3.3 million readers world-wide: with 67% of sites receiving the newsgroup and approximately 2,300 messages per month, for a total share of 8% of Usenet readers (Reid, 1993). If you calculate how many Internet users frequent Usenet sites compared to the rest of the sites in the Internet, a figure of 2% comes out. That does not constitute a majority to me. Another problem (Lappin, 1996) with trying to deal with the pornography issue is that

a high percentage of sexual content on the Internet originates outside of the U.S., and it is not possible to prevent that content from being available in the U.S...the existence of anonymous remailers means that any content indecent or otherwise, can be placed onto the Internet anonymously, and the government would be unable to identify the content provider. Anonymous reemailer systems, which often are located overseas, will automatically receive a communication and forward it to
a destination after having removed all traces of the origin of the communication. (p. 89)

So it is not even U.S. Internet users who constitute the creation of a majority of these sites. Proving if U.S. citizens frequent these sites is near impossible. Many people are silent participants of the Internet experience. There is bound to be a few people, including me, who want to know what the hype that Time perpetuates is all about. This does not mean that these people are perverts; they are just curious to find out about a particular topic in the news themselves. Does this mean that these curious Internet users should be arrested as well? What about the accidental access of such banned sites by naïve users, should we arrest them? Frequently there are banners or links that claim to offer free software, or calls to making a million dollars. Quite frequently these are just bait and switch tactics to attract people to porn sites. Is accessing a site evidence of guilt? I do not think access should be considered as evidence of guilt.

Being Victorian in Our Decisions

Since when is sex become illegal or pornographic in the U.S. anyway? We have sex in movies, books, and TV. Who is to tell me what is pornographic? Maybe the real issues here is who has the rights to define, sell, and monopolize it. In comes the point of controlling the Internet in order to control who makes the money, what information flows freely, and what information comes with a price tag.
How much of the pornography on the Internet is child related? Just because someone talks about sex, does not mean its about sex with children. Child pornography, I believe, is very rare on the Net. Its appearance is not frequent enough (not that a few times is acceptable) to go on a witch-hunt of this magnitude. Turner (1996) says that

the ban on indecent communications on the Internet is plainly invalid under the recognized principles that forbid vague, overly broad, content based restrictions promoting interests that can be served by less restrictive means. The Supreme Court threw out, on those grounds, the comparable prohibition of indecent speech on the telephone in the Sable Communications case in 1989. It must do the same with the new law. (p. 110)

Users Could Be Info-Bots

There are other very important technical facts being left out of these reports by magazines like Time and papers like USA Today. Info-Bots, which are programs sent by search engines to look for specific subjects, "hit all of their listed sites, sometimes ten times a month or more" according to Yahoo (Internet, Http://www.yahoo.com), an online search engine. With all of the new search engines out trying to find the best and most recent information, as well these Info-Bots continually updating and checking sites to see if they are still there, a user site could conceivably have most of its hits (visits) be by Info-Bots. My personal web site has more hits than what I truly believe have occurred by human visitors. These Info-Bots are not real people, just info-programs. Now we know who the real perverts are.
Protecting a New Model of Communication

The Internet communication model cannot be compared to any other distributed medium in the history of civilization. Any user, anywhere in the world, may create content and instantly make it available to a million other users via Usenet, FTP, the Web, or a half dozen other mechanisms. This immediate access to raw content is unprecedented. This is, I think, the real threat to those who are stirring the caldrons of protection through censorship.

Knowledge itself can be seen as a kind of virus. According to Miller (1996),

on the psychological level, this perception manifested recently as a panic about computer viruses and more generally about computer hacking boundary violations in Cyberspace, so to speak. The government wants access to all computer cipher codes in order to control the net which might otherwise spread everywhere, transmitting secrets, even secrets about abuse and kiddy porn, as if the Net were a disease, rather than simply a free exchange of information. America's immune system can't take too much knowing; America must be protected from penetration by foreign chaos cabals of evil hackers. Borders must be imposed. (p. 224)

I think a very real reason for the current witch-hunt in the U.S. is that our country's economy is in the process of being taken over by controlling global monopolies, run by a handful of multinational mega-conglomerates. Miller (1996) states that

protectionism becomes the only true philosophy of any culture based on mass anxiety about border violation; safety and survival become its shibboleths and highest values. The security state emerges like an abstract constellation figured against a random patterning of stars—each star representing a threatened job, dysfunctional family, crime ridden neighborhood, black hole of boredom. Power in the security state emerges out of fear, and depends on fear for its rule. In the society of safety, all jobs are threatened, all families are dysfun-
ctional, all crime is universal, and boredom is God. You may read the signs of this power not only in the texts of the media which define it, but even more clearly in the very landscape which embodies it. (p. 225)

**Reasons for Speech Restrictions**

Proponents of speech restrictions often have a plausible-sounding reason for such restrictions. Reasons can range from needing to protect our children from learning undesirable values to not wanting them to see pornographic images. There seems to be a need to protect our citizens' reputations and privacy, yet our country seems obsessed about learning about people's private lives. Another rallying cry is that our country needs to protect national security; we want the press to behave responsibly and to give us the information; we need to maintain a functioning democracy.

Still, despite its flaws, the credibility that the Time story gave the topic of pornography on the web spawned a wave of media attention and made it much harder for the House of Representatives to take a hands off approach. Miller (1996) states that despite passage of a provision explicitly forbidding FCC regulatory authority over interactive computer services, a last minute managers amendment included Exxon like language creating several federal crimes for violation of community standards. (p. 132)

Censorship has been a major trend for a century of scholarship that has had the effect of making us lose confidence in our belief systems and therefore, in ourselves. Amid the conceptual debris, there remained one sure thing to believe in: technology will make our lives easier, happier, and friendlier. With this in mind, "elec-
trical communication techniques are hailed as the motive force of desired social change, the key to the recreation of a humane community, the means for returning to a cherished naturalistic bliss (Carey, 1989, p. 115). Technology therefore becomes the symbol for a new messiah. The new holy text and church may lie on the Internet. The problem is that this new messiah needs to be controlled before it gets out of hand.

Evidence of the expectations for social change can be found in the sublimity with which electronic mail was said to have importance in the 1992 U.S. presidential election and in the speed with which the Clinton White House implemented an electronic mail system. According to Heilemann (1996a),

it's almost a cliché it's so pervasive, says Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, an independent polling organization in Washington, D.C. In general, people used to be hopeful about the future. They assumed things would get progressively better. Now they worry intensely about everything related to the future. They sense a sort of unraveling. (p. 54)

This is where the Internet is a saving grace, because those people, who have access to it, realize that they have connected to something that can empower individuals to exercise their freedom of expression, individuality, and speech in new, more expansive ways.
CHAPTER VI

THE INTERNET, A NEW ADDICTION: WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO INTERACT AMONG THE POSSIBILITY OF A PANOPTICON MODEL

The New Areas of Communication

There are many different ways to communicate on the Internet: through news servers, mailing lists, Usenet, Multi User Dungeons (MUDs), a text-based game (sometimes graphical) where players live out an alter ego. I think the rising popularity of the IRC is where the most important interactions will take place in the future. Some would argue that live interactive MUDs are the new interaction wave of the future. All of these communication modes are helping build a desire for people flock everyday to the Internet.

The initial absence and subsequent reconstruction of social context is a fundamental element that IRC enthusiasts use to build their subculture. The Internet is without facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, clothing, shared physical environment, or any other contextual cues that signal the physical presence of participants in a social group. IRC participants use words to reconstruct contexts in their own image, adding imagined actions (such as Howard smiles ironically or Howard takes offense and it looks like he is going to punch you in the nose) as meta-descriptions to the running dialogue. These virtual actions are typographically set apart from words meant as straight dialogue. The style of inter-
action in IRC land and in MUDs serves a similar purpose. When individuals engage in an IRC chat session a unique form of communication takes place. There are FAQ's to describe what the code means. This is an attempt to produce a unified dictionary of IRC speak. The idea situation on an IRC chat group is where everyone understands each other. What is stripped away from normal IRC conversations is the normal interaction rituals that happen between two individuals that we normally take for granted. What usually allows people to understand the unspoken is a shared set of assumptions that surround and support normal communications. Gestures, posturing, smiling, frowning, and intonation are stripped away in an IRC conversation. This renders invisible on the Internet most of the socially mediated definitions that tell individuals what words and behaviors are supposed to mean in our societies.

You cannot see people when you are computer chatting with them; you cannot even ascertain their true identities, and you are unlikely ever to run into them in the real world or recognize them if you do. It is not uncommon for IRC channels to contain no two people from the same country. With the encouragement of intimacy between users and the tendency for conventional social mores to be ignored on IRC, it becomes possible for people to investigate the differences between their cultures.

The dynamic behind the interaction on IRC provides an easy way for a controlling group to assume invented identities that are friendly to individuals who may disagree with particular political
or economic issues of the ruling elite. Befriending individuals, and eventually trying to persuade them into believing in a certain philosophy, can exercise an improved form of mind control and manipulation. If an individual who is in disagreement with governmental policy refuses to change his or her perspective, then there are plenty of chances to document any illegal activities that might be introduced to the deviant via Internet interaction. Using Clinton's ambiguous law, almost any interaction can be declared as illegal.

Developing Social Problems or a Passing Fad

Walther and Burgoon (1992) argue that

the problems that computers pose for the establishment of relationships are easy to surmount. The social information unavailable in the immediacy of the face to face context can be gained verbally through computer-mediated interaction: The social penetration process just takes longer. (p. 81).

This idea is equally true of deception.

There have been arguments made that most U.S. citizens will find nothing of interest on the Internet. One may argue that this recent fascination with the Internet is a fad that will pass. Some recent work shows quite the opposite. The work of both Myers and Hellersteing suggests that some of the heavier Internet users thrive on the relational possibilities of the medium. The heavy users of the University of Massachusetts system that Hellerstein studied said their primary use of the system was to communicate with friends. They reported spending more time in computer-mediated social interaction than on the phone or in face to face communication. Myers
found two kinds of experts among his heavy users: "One technologi­
cally astute and the other relationally astute, both of whom domi­
nated the message flow" (Myers, 1987b, p. 256). It seems that for
these users the Internet is not a passing fad. Herein lies the pro­
blem: users giving up the real world for the online world. I think
there are many more U.S. citizens who are lonely and desire inter­
action with other individuals about topics that are important to
their lives. This fact only strengthens the notion that the Inter­
net is here to stay as a permanent part of U.S. culture.

One may argue that my suggestion of deception would not be so
easily carried out on an intelligent individual. People who don't
use the Internet heavily sometimes argue another important point. If
one meets another person through a specific group, and all they talk
about with each other is about the specific topic that surrounds the
main topic heading of the group, then there is no real way of truly
knowing an individual. I know many heavy Internet users who are in­
telligent people, who insist they know and trust many of the indivi­
duals they meet on the Internet. Frequently these individuals make
arrangements so that they can meet their Internet friends in the
flesh.

Individuals are complex with various levels of thinking and
behaving. Yet, through the instant access of the Internet, people
get a feeling of intimacy and personability without all of the nega­
tive cues to influence their judgment. Because online conversation
is usually one-sided and is filtered heavily by the lack of facial
contact, I argue one can not truly make an accurate judgment of someone else's character. It is my belief that the Internet can be a tool to make friends with people in a faster amount of time. Internet interaction can also lead to a dangerous attitude that one can trust many of the people they meet in Internet Space as if they met them in a face to face interaction.

Virtual Reality: The New Drug of Choice

The reason for including the idea of Virtual Reality early in the discussion was an important foundation upon which I can now build. If the Panopticon Model is implemented on the Internet, there will be a need to create a mechanism and/or process to counteract the rampant oppression that the Internet and technology will bring. Many individuals will undoubtedly challenge some of the dangers I have discussed as impossible, because people would simply not allow it. Virtual Reality has the potential to serve as a form of social control without the physical side effects of hallucinogenic drugs. Aside from total dictatorship, or government takeover, I offer another solution to keep the masses at bay, that being Virtual Reality. Virtual Reality does not mean in my example, actual physical Virtual Reality as portrayed in Neuromancer. Instead I use this term loosely to describe human interaction on the Internet. I contradict my previous declaration that the Internet has obtained the level of Virtual Reality yet simply because I choose to use the words that many marketers use in describing the possibilities of
Internet interaction. I also use this term in the anticipation that something like Gibson’s vision of Virtual Reality may just be around the corner.

According to Miller (1996),

virtual encounters have real life effects: They are transformative of consciousness. People carry their virtual memories into the real world in significant ways. That there are real effects of virtual encounters suggests that these events are, in fact, experienced as full social encounters wherein people can have a full range of feelings: Acceptance and esteem as well as rejection and denial. (p. 8)

Virtual Reality forms yet another tool of powerful social control and containment. If people decide it is more enjoyable to live life online, then there is no need to fool them into thinking they are being monitored. For many, the online world seems more attractive to them because there is an illusion of more control in a relationship with another online user. This illusion feeds some individuals with a desire to stay online rather than react with someone face-to-face.
I think the answer is clear that privatization of the Internet will be the major vehicle by which the Panopticon model will find itself enacted upon. Privatization eliminates all barriers of constitutionality, provides justification for why mass databases are being collected (we need it for marketing analysis), and allows for the most modern, efficient, and effective method of centralizing information. The power/knowledge issue that Foucault often writes about states that power is knowledge and those who have control over the flow of knowledge will have the most power. It may seem ironic that the agency of modernity has the key to the concepts of post-modernity, but this seems logical when modernity is still kicking and screaming, insisting to the world that it is not yet dead.

With the existing means to communicate with words, data files, and images to anyone in the world instantaneously for relatively little money, international information collection has suddenly become easier. For those with the material means to dominate the flow of information, this new money making potential called the Internet is enormous. More and more companies are scrambling to get their name and product on the Internet. Advertising is making companies
realize that the Internet is the market of the future (at least if one accepts the current hype behind the Internet). Miller (1996) states that

Americans already spend $2.5 billion each year on the relatively crude enticements of TV’s shopping networks, and an incredible $50 billion for the convenience of catalog purchasing from home. Wouldn't a 3-D interactive, highly produced video show be able to capture a good percentage of those sales. (p. 11)

"According to Fortune magazine (4/4/94) in 1991, U.S. businesses for the first time spent more money on computer and communications equipment than on industrial, mining, farm and manufacturing equipment" (Miller, 1996, p. 13). Here is the proof that computers already have powerful influence on the global market. It is only a matter of time before the Internet will be touted as the preferred vehicle for communication and information acquisition.

Corporate America will develop powerful enhancements for TV, telephone, and cable systems. These enhancements are designed to provide the lowest common denominator entertainment, home shopping, etc. These programs will reinforce the monoculture of corporate-sponsored entertainment and the ideology of consumption that seems to be spreading throughout the world. These ideas will also help to centralize the Internet as the dominant mode of information.

A New Glass Ceiling

There are those who might say that computers will never be affordable to the masses and therefore will not have a big impact on the rest of society. When 2% of the people in the U.S. control 80%
of the money and resources, I do not think the majority of people need to be involved. Corporations are only concerned with those who can afford to be mass-market consumers. A new glass ceiling is being created allowing more power and control to be filtered to the top. "Although the Internet now reaches 150 countries, two thirds of its host computers are in the U.S. and the top fifteen countries account for 96 percent of all hosts" (Miller, 1996, p. 40). This works out well for the dominating multinationals, because control can be centralized by only a handful of companies.

As the glass ceiling comes into place, a new name for the upper class will emerge. No longer will the ruling class be called kings or queens, emperors or dictators, head of the parliament or presidents, but instead the technological engendered class will be called the new techno-priesthood. Consequently, this group's political aim is the virtualization of economic space with the abandonment of products, and the sovereignty of process economy. They will desire control of all forms of commercial transaction. They will also demand a commission on everything that involves money exchanging between individuals. Its territorial ambitions are to colonize hyperspace as voyagers explore the stellar regions of the electronic frontier. The Internet commerce will be under their rule. It will be composed of correctional and coextensive networks of cyberneticized knowledge. Its prevailing ideology will be an ambivalent, but no less enthusiastic, double rhetoric of technological fetishism and technological determinism. Not a passive class, but aggressive and
predatory, the technological class has an immanently global strategy for its swift coronation as the leading class of post-capitalism. According to Kroker (1996),

the virtual Manifesto, with its associated war strategy proceeds as follows:

Tactical Envelopment on a global basis the logic of tactical envelopment functions by installing supranational trading blocs like NAFTA.

The Disappearing state. Under cover of the GATT negotiations, with their ideological recuperation of the obsolete dogma of free trade, a struggle is waged to destroy the internal integrity of the interventionist state and to free up labor as a fully mobile, fungible, and hence, virtualizable commodity.

A definition of Virtual Situation Resequence the ruling rhetoric of particular political communities according to the global ideology of technological liberalism: that political consensus that holds that the dynamic and unimpeded expansion of the will to virtuality is the superodinate aim and justificatory condition for the state policy making apparatus.

Ideological Delegitimation. Finally, through concerted public policies that speak the language of technological necessitarianism, there is a struggle to delegitimate unions and their political defense of the working class. (p. 172)

Producing Technological Hegemony

*If it makes sense to us, that is because our minds have been conditioned by the technology of numbers so that we see the world differently than they did* (Postman, 1992, p. 13). Naturally, bureaucrats can be expected to embrace a technology that helps to create the illusion that decisions are not under their control. Because of its seeming intelligence and impartiality, a computer has an almost magical tendency to direct attention away from the people in charge of bureaucratic functions and toward itself, as if the
computer were the true source of authority. Large institutions such as the Pentagon, the Internal Revenue Service, and multinational corporations tell us currently that their decisions are made on the basis of solutions generated by computers, and this is usually good enough to put our minds at ease or, rather, to sleep.

In any case, it constrains us from making complaints or accusations. For this reason, in part, the computer has strengthened bureaucratic institutions and suppressed the impulse toward significant social change. Yet, no one will blame the computer because, after all, it can be hypothesized that it is does not exhibit human feelings, and therefore, is objective. I remember one of the first things I was taught when working with computers was garbage in and garbage out. What this means is that humans still program computers, run the software, and make the end result decisions on the interpretations of what the computer gives them. There are some ideals and realities that can never be measured by math; no matter what formula we use. If we give in to believing everything can be measured and graded, we are doomed.

Community the Next Technological Commodity

"New technologies tend to change old ways of doing things. Is the human need for community going to be the next technology commodity" (Rheingold, 1993b, pp. 60-61). I think it has happened already. The youth have no where to go and can do nothing without the fear of breaking a law or restriction, or at least offending someone
with power. Computers provide both escape and control, depending on how they are used. Rob Shields (1995) writes:

For Foucault, institutions of legitimated politics and the statistical social sciences that buttress them are mere window dressings. They hide the real exercise of power. Power occurs precisely outside the glare of official rhetoric and rational debate. It operates at the level of individual discipline. The body’s own unconscious reflexes learn to yield to power. (p. 45)

This socially oppressive environment that today’s youth has to endure forces them to pass many lonely hours at home biding time. In the city where I live, whenever there is a new club for under age kids, or when a parking lot, park, woods, or empty lot is designated as a hang out spot by local kids, the cops always seem to want to close it down. The cops always claim it is for the better because they fear that drug activity or trouble is occurring. Most of the time the concern is unwarranted. Since there is nothing for under age teens to do in many cities and towns because of the lack of city tax support, or city ordinances kids with computers will find that the Internet can offer a plethora of interaction that their otherwise emotionally starved world lacks. Our current culture is then unintentionally breading a new group of citizens that thrive on computer interaction. It is my intention to do another paper in the future discussing the damage this lack of interactivity with other peers may do to the interaction ritual Irvin Goffman writes about.

Controlling the Means of Postmodern Production

Therefore, the true power that lies behind the Internet will
be those able to control the means of censorship, rules, and regulations for the Internet. The Internet will make it easier for multinational corporations to move to areas in the world with cheaper labor costs, fewer environmental regulations, and more repressive governments. This is because the Internet can offer instant efficient multi path communication that can help a corporate director in California give orders to an affiliate in Peru, while looking at a resume from a job prospect in Japan.

The Internet may make exploitation easier than it is now, because it is possible that new markets will be created where there is nothing but a virtual storefront. All transaction will be made via the home computer. Products no longer have to have a middleman, no warehouse, and the consumer will not be subjected to a storefront, so a business will not have to keep up personal appearances. The consumer will only care that their products will be accessible at very cheap rates. The consumer will not see the possible exploitation behind the scenes, because products purchased from a terminal in Troy Ohio, may originate from Korea, but the shipping label says Boise Idaho. When buying a product over the Internet, it will be hard to tell if it originates from a Chinese prison factory, or from an illegal sweatshop in New York. There will no longer be a need for a storefront to provide the illusion a web page can give.

Where computers have already helped companies keep track of data, create blue prints, artwork, and spreadsheets, now computer can make it possible to negotiate, bank, and communicate mergers
with other companies from anywhere in the world in real time from a
local computer terminal. This was not possible just a few years
ago.

Many speakers take the position that the Internet will only
help U.S. citizens if it is privatized. The real force behind this
move is the debasement of our culture and the freedom of business to
pursue profit without constraint from the non-market institutions
that are the repository of community values, using their hired hands
in the advertising industry to lead the way. Behind the veil of
lies and rhetoric, there appears to be more to the multinationals'
desire for a secure Internet.

The private sector will build the Internet; the financing will
come from consumers, and the government will stay out of the way,
while noncommercial enterprises will be kept on the sidelines. This
is not just a Republican thrust. Even President Clinton's former
Secretary of Commerce, Ronald Brown, has stated on television that
the ultimate goal is the removal of most of the judicial and legis-
lative restrictions on all types of telecommunications companies.
Some would say that this would promote a free Internet culture with
no censorship. Quite the contrary will end up happening; censorship
will actually increase, as experts for what is morally correct will
be the chairs of companies who stand to profit from regulation of
information. The decision to privatize the Internet should rest
with U.S. citizens. If everything is privatized, our constitutional
rights will be thrown out the window. Only if nudity, violence, and
strong language can make a profit for some corporation, will our so-called freedom prevail. Who will be the technological lord that will make the decision for what is nudity and what is art? What is violence and offensive, and what is culture?

Many of my peers may believe that this perspective is conspiracy theory at best. How can a focused event like the manipulated, controlled growth of the Internet occur when corporations are so big and bureaucratic? Would not a general consensus emerge and prevent such a global plan, such as I have envisioned, to ever rise to power? Since there are so many small subdivision companies competing with other multinationals, surely there could not be a unified strategy. Even if there is a conspiracy, who will we arrest when hundreds of people are involved in the major decisions of a multinational corporation? In reality (Miller, 1996),

according to the Wall Street Journal (9/9/94) power in multinational corporations is becoming more centralized in headquarters as top executives...call the shots themselves either like old fashioned corporate dictators or as new global specialists with the clout to rule their particular niche of the business from Hong Kong to Houston. (p. 40)

Many people might state: why did not these corporations build the Internet in the first place and have control of the Internet from the beginning of the rise of its commercial use, instead of risking the Internet becoming completely public? One reason is that it would have been very expensive and required even more firms to invest in such a risk. The other is because it took the Space Race as a reason to fund such an adventurous, risky, imaginative task. Corporations are known for investing in sure money-making schemes.
They rarely risk money in a low non-immediate return gain adventure. The Internet hype has only begun in the last few years or so. Private firms are unwilling to invest significantly in many aspects of infrastructure creation, because it is still difficult for them to capture its economic benefits exclusively for themselves. Now the benefits of controlling Internet superstructure are coming to the attention of those in control of corporate funding. Many businesses are now realizing the profit potential that exists with Internet commerce in the near future. "Therefore, it is not surprising that federal money has paid for much of this nation's scientific advantage over the past half century, particularly in computer science" (Miller, 1996, p. 81). This money has been used on computer technology that will only end up benefiting the few and was spent at the expense of other much needed social services like housing, education, and healthcare.

Reflecting the Dominant Social Values

This computer technology will be marketed according to the dominant societal values, which are mostly individualistic and competitive. Computers are advertised as freeing us from the constraints imposed by dependence on others. We can work at home. We can meet online. And if it bores us, we cut the machine off. As a user, we have no obligation to anyone but ourselves. The reality is that we become slaves to the new Internet life system created by multinationals, with little hope of creating our own system except
within the realms of Virtual Reality.

People are accepting such gross abuses of power because they do not know what else to do. According to Hobbes (1962),

reputation of power, is power; because it draweth with it the adherence of those that need protection. So is reputation of love of a man's country, called popularity, for the same reason. Also, what quality soever maketh a man beloved, or feared of many; or the reputation of such quality, is power; because it is a means to have the assistance, and service of many. Good success is power; because it maketh reputation of wisdom, or good fortune; which makes men either fear him; or rely on him...reputation of prudence in the conduct of peace or war, is power; because to prudent men, we commit the government of ourselves, more willingly than to others. (p. 72)

I believe that if the government drops all federal funding and allows the Internet to completely privatize, the free-thinking spirit of the Internet and its potential as a teaching and community tool will disappear. Instead, the communication/information technology will polarize what precious little unity and community thinking the U.S. has left. Instead, the Internet will be set up in order for individuals to seek self-serving goals, while multinationals try to homogenize other countries' cultures to the U.S. way of thinking, all in the name of a cultivated mass consumption market.

Flooding the Market With Americana

The Information Superhighway might flood every corner of the globe with mass-market entertainment, news, and merchandise produced mostly by Western nations. It might overwhelm local cultures in this country and abroad by replacing regional diversity with commercial uniformity. It might provide ever more enticing reasons to
stay at home, by ourselves, interactively consuming any movie we
want, any product we want, anytime we want. It might divide us
into ever smaller niche markets, each unaware of and unconnected to
the rest, each defined by its lifestyle rather than its values, its
fashions rather than its culture. Instead of a global village, the
Internet might be an opium den with 500 pipe stems.

Take What You Can Get

U.S. taxpayers are losing their jobs and tax base for social
programs to those who claim to support them as U.S. companies. For
example, "The University of California Berkeley, Center for Commu-
nity Economic Research has estimated that state and local govern-
ments already lose $3.3 billion each year to untaxed interstate
sales" (Miller, 1996, p. 347). What is worse for U.S. citizens is
that because many of the jobs are now residing in a foreign country,
people are scrambling to fill what few jobs are left. This allows
the multinationals to have control over what they are willing to
dole out monetarily to a worker. The attitude seems to be if work-
ers do not like how they are paid or treated at a job, there are
fifty more people ready to take their place. Firms seeking to max-
imize profits have proven unwilling to produce socially desirable
but relatively low profit products and services such as affordable
health care or housing for low income families. So why does anyone
thing privatization will help develop the Internet as a global vil-
lage? If there is no profit to be made, I can not see the private
industries investing in social development movements.

The New Political Process

Think of the power that Congressional lobbying groups can have dumping political e-mail into everyone's computer. With mass e-mail there will be no filtration, no ability to see counter opinions addressed, and the feeling of personalization. It could become a very intoxicating combination.

One thing has been certainly clear in the U.S.'s past: Give the people the vote, and they will not use it. Dump loads of boring information in people's e-mail account and the majority of people will not read it. Just because people are online, does not mean they will suddenly become active in politics. There have been several articles published, and TV shows run, that have talked about the amount of political activity online. All of this is speculation and anecdotal since no one as of yet has conducted a study to find out how many people currently on the Internet vote at the elections. I believe most people on the Internet today probably do vote. The basis for this conclusion is derived from the fact that although computer prices have fallen, a family must still be affluent enough to afford a computer, and an online account. I believe the demographics will show that the typical American Online, Prodigy, CompuServe account is held by someone who is suburban, middle class or higher income. (Again, a study is in order to find these exact answers). These are the people who tend to vote in the U.S. When
the Internet becomes more affordable for the masses, (just around the corner) we can truly measure the amount of political activity online. I believe the percentage of those who are online and politically active will severely drop. Again, this is just speculation since no firm foundational study has been done yet. Still, political activity by online users does not mean they can sway the vote on certain Internet protection laws. Remember that the government still has 70% of the people whom to draw from. Once again the argument that a majority of people that get online become more politically aware, or develop some sort of class-consciousness is ridiculous. Even if people become more politically aware it does not mean they will know they are being observed. If they gain knowledge of being observed, it does not mean they will agree that being observed is for every citizen's protection against the terrorism of the web.

Overwhelming the Weak

As local economies become integrated into the regional system, economies of scale allow the big national firms to overwhelm local small businesses. Local industries move, get bought out, or simply shut down. A national chain will replace the local drug store. The local bank merges with the regional giant. The money that was spent at locally owned retail stores used to pass through local banks. It was then reinvested in local mortgages and businesses. Now, the money that gets spent at franchise outposts of national chains is diverting a critical percentage of the cash of a city to some far
away headquarters from where it is reinvested to some even more distant expansion site. Young people looking for good jobs with upward potential have to move away to establish their careers. This leads only to despair, anxiety, apathy, and eventual chaos. Internet commerce only brings more of this kind of despair.

At this point, it seems that there is virtually no hope that the poor and working class of this country will be consumers of information in any meaningful way. Families are stretched so thin financially that they are having difficulty putting adequate food on the table with only two conventional jobs, and an increasing number of families include parents with multiple jobs. Miller (1996) states that

one report recently said that the difficulty of surviving in the current economy leaves parents, especially working class parents, little or no time for child rearing much less for using the Internet for anything more than a temporary diversion. (p. 17)

As our economy becomes more stratified, the bottom strata are becoming economically and politically marginalized. This stratification will only worsen by commercialization of the Internet.

What will eventually emerge is a technocratic class that will rule through its control of information. The National Information Infrastructure cannot single-handedly solve all our problems of isolation and mistrust, but it can be designed and operated in ways that either push us further apart or help to bring us closer together. As an infrastructure, it can lay the groundwork for either continued atomization or future community.
A Purpose to the Misinformation

Since mainstream media, like USA Today, continues to print inaccurate information and engage in hypocrisy, their stories must have some sort of rational. To prove a point about their libel tendencies, I will quote them directly. According to Zuckerman (1996c),

scenarios would include disabling 911 emergency phone service; enemy forces using broadcast channels at will to deliver threats; rerouting trains to collision courses; wiping out bank records and collapsing power grids; shutting down pipelines that move more than 50% of the nation's oil and gas. (p. Al)

The cover reads "Terrorism on the Net." When I called Ameritech, Sharron Warner informed me of what I already suspected; the 911 service does not even have a web page. Yes, hackers can jam phone lines and hack into computers, but this has nothing to do with the Internet. Sharon informed me that to the best of her knowledge, the 911 computer systems are all separate from county to county, not externally linked. This means you can not call into one system and disrupt the whole United State's system. This biased, distorted USA Today reporting can all be apologized away because the paper's usual response is we were just quoting what we were told by reputable sources. We can not be responsible if they prove otherwise.

These articles give people illusions that anyone can be a hacker and that people who are currently hackers are out to make money ruining people's lives. If one bothered to investigate the truth, one would find out otherwise. If one goes to the web site of
the Cult of The Dead Cow, one of the biggest hacker secret organizations left (or so they claim), one can find that hackers have changed satellite directions, or turned off air conditioners in major corporations. As with most hacker groups, individual hackers do it for the thrill of getting information, not breaking laws. Most hackers engage in their exploits because they believe all information should be available at all times to everyone. In the hacker's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) (there is not one definitive hacker FAQ. Several exist but a decent starting place is at http://www.solon.com/~seebs/faqs/hacker.html) file they repeatedly state not to erase data, or to be harmful to people. They also discuss the fact that most people break into software that is Unix based. Most people can not afford Unix systems, and even though there are IBM compatible Unix programs, a good majority of people do not know Unix commands. These facts lower the percentage of people able to hack.

The Internet is not a place where real hackers that have the talent to break into a large business try to challenge themselves. Their numbers are rare because in order to be effective they must be proficient on equipment not available to everyone. I do not believe the typical hacker wants to break into the 911 computers, because it is too dangerous, and people could get hurt. Sure, not all hackers have an ethic, but there has to be a reason for doing something, and simple thrills can be achieved in other ways. Hacking IRC channels or Usenet groups hurts no one. The Internet may be a training ground
for future wanna-be hackers, but clearly, the Internet is being misrepresented. Even if a hacker decided to hack the 911-computer system for the challenge, I question whether their goal would be to shut the countrywide system down.

Why is the Internet being misrepresented, and why would anyone bother to do such a thing? The reasons are quite simple. There are a few corporate interests that want to frighten the world into believing something must be done to protect the rest of the world. I suggest that what lurks behind the smoke and mirrors of terror and the need for protection is that multinational corporations want to privatize the Internet. Many politicians are now talking about privatizing schools, telecommunications, prisons, and the police. High on the list is the communications industry. The claim is that free enterprise will clean up the Internet. Another claim is that public funding is running out, and the government just does not have the resources to properly monitor and build up the Internet.

Protecting Us From Big Brother

The reverse psychology of multinationals is to inject the fear of big government taking over. This idea joins the conservative element of the Republican and Democratic parties and other right wing groups. I do not like bureaucracy, but I want the government and the Internet to be run by the people, not by a corporation.

People’s private lives have been made more accessible to powerful institutions. Their lives are easily tracked and controlled.
People are subjected to more examinations; are increasingly mystified by the decisions made about them, and are often reduced to mere numerical objects. This makes it all the more important to leave the Internet as a public institution. Corporations do not need a vehicle that will make their market statistic jobs easier.

My Own Experience With Being Catalogued

Some people may make an argument that corporations have no desire to fool individuals. Some people may argue that there is no current example of an attempt by marketers to amass large collections of information on individuals. On the contrary, here is my personal example of marketing done behind the scenes and from where the sources involuntarily came. Before I came to Western Michigan University (WMU), I never received applications for credit cards and I was 21. After enrolling at WMU, which sells their student database to anyone with money, I received applications for numerous credit cards, even some whose trustworthiness was questionable. Let it be known that Western's practices are no different than those of a majority of other universities in the U.S.

I also received requests for subscriptions from magazines I have never heard of or had never read before and solicitation from companies that in some suburban areas would cause a scandal (Playboy, Chic, S & M, Barely Legal). I have never purchased an adult magazine, video, or book. Yet, adult magazines appear on my doorstep. When I complained to school officials, the answer was simply,
"You waive your rights when you sign up for school. There is nothing illegal about it." What option is available to me? I could consider litigation, but that is not likely to succeed and prone to be an additional financial burden on my limited resources. I have talked to other students, but no one seems to care. Its this kind of apathy, loss of individual control, and lack of respect for individual rights that seems to be the new mindset of the U.S., not just by the youth, but by adults as well.

It is this mindset that justifies the perpetuation of multinational companies to collect information about every individual, without complaints by the general public. It is this same mindset that sees the value of the Internet as a tool of collecting information on individuals. Information on most individuals is very easily obtained and without the knowledge of the general public making the accumulation of massive information databases efficient and discrete.

Information for a Safer Planet

The new slogan might be "Information in order to have a cleaner, safer planet." I believe we should question these developments. The knowledge that my name is in someone's computer terminal right now has me bothered. Big Brother or not, a large number of people have substantial information on my private life without my personal permission. This fact points to the beginnings of a police state. So why would I want any mode of two-way communication to be in the
hands of corporations who are only interested in selling my personal information to other companies who wish to sell me something? Why would I wish to have to give up pieces of information on myself in order to get online?

Prodigy Stage.dat File Conspiracy

When it comes to the gathering of private personal information, technology has its history. I will review the Prodigy incident as an example of what a private firm can and will do to monitor a customer, and what a private firm already did do in observing customers. To use the Prodigy service, you must use their software on your personal PC. In order to gain access to their BBS, you must submit personal information (where you live, sex, how old you are, etc.) and a credit card. When you log on and without your knowing it, you grant Prodigy’s central computer access to a part of your desktop computer. This fact is not written in the manual, discussed in the service contract, or in fact, mentioned anywhere on Prodigy, and no one at Prodigy will give you an answer to your questions about it. There is the infamous Stage.dat file that shows up on prodigy users’ computer hard drives after they log in whenever they connect with the service via modem. Rheingold (1993b) says that the idea that Prodigy might be capable of reading private information off your personal computer from a distance even though there was no proof that Prodigy was actually doing any such thing, stemmed from Prodigy’s use of a technology that could, in principle, be used for such a purpose. (p. 277) I think there is enough proof when the Stage.dat file is not on the
consumer's Prodigy install disk and only appears on the customer's hard drive once that person logs on to Prodigy. If one looks at the file, one will find an accumulation of personal information in the file.

I can personally attest that when I was working for a local computer store and a customer's virus checker started detecting this new file, I called Prodigy and this is the official answer they gave me and several magazines and consumers later. This file was used, according to Prodigy, as a means of recording what services the customer liked in order to better service the consumer. They said it contained recorded transcripts of what the customer had done, and Prodigy would read it when the customer came on. The reason for tracking customer trends this way was justified by Prodigy's claim that they could improve their services based on percentages of use of a particular service, as well as offer special products or events tailored to the taste of a customer. Prodigy claimed that the Stage.dat file was the most logical, simple way of going about the information collection process. For example, John likes football and is from Detroit, so a possible example message would be sent to him from Prodigy stating: free Lions T-shirt when you sign a friend on. If Mike likes fishing, then the message might read: free fishing video when you sign a friend on.

I have a problem with Prodigy's explanation of the Stage.dat file based on the fact that, at first, they refused to acknowledge whether they scanned people's personal hard drives. I am aware of
the fact that if they have the technology to write to a person's hard drive, then they have the ability to scan the drive. The difference between Prodigy and the Internet is that Prodigy is its own BBS, with its own proprietary software, using Prodigy's own phone lines. Prodigy can set it up so that you and Prodigy are a direct link (same as if you used Procomm Plus to hook to a friend's computer to play chess online), which means both of you can share files and information. Using an Internet shell account, administrators can not access their users' hard drives because there is no system administrator codes currently in software like Netscape. It is a totally different environment when you log into a local Internet service provider than a massive BBS service. Using Netscape once a person is connected to the Internet the software acts only as a shell rather than an environment. Though there are other technical problems that are beyond the scope of this paper, administrative control is not as absolute with an Internet shell account as it is with a service like Prodigy or AOL. If the private multinationals take control of the Internet, you can bet that the possibility of the Prodigy incident happening again is very high.

The Purge of Major BBS Accounts

In a recent movement Internet-wide, non-experienced users are being informed by more experienced users to drop accounts on American Online, Prodigy, and CompuServe and go to a local Internet account. Why is this occurring? The Internet now offers many of the
same services as the BBS (in fact the BBS now brag about their service as an easier Internet access than other services). The Internet is just as easy to get around, in fact, usually faster, cheaper, has no censorship, not as much corporate fluff (yet), and the new people seem less likely to irritate the experienced users because they are taught netiquette.

Why then does Microsoft, who claims to have learned the lessons of the past, create software and a BBS that does not use local Internet connecting services but instead logs on to their service first? You can use Explorer separately, but their big push is to have you subscribe to their BBS connection MSN, by offering very cheap rates. I think it is because they have designs for implementing someday a system, which allows Microsoft to own a majority of the flow of information on the Internet.

Comparing Internet Services

There are several different methods to getting online. There are several advantages and disadvantages to the different methods of Internet connection.

College Service: Free; clumsy; personal web pages are not offered by many universities (this is slowly changing); the connections are typically slow; there is a large amount of censorship (must use the Internet for education purposes or they will cut you off, though that can be hacked if you know what you are doing); it is often difficult to dial in (busy); no user-defined online name;
no availability of personal domains; lines are mostly 14.4 at this time; and it often seems that connections are cut short.

Local service: $19 a month for unlimited usage yields 4 or more megs for web pages; rarely censored though it can occur; fast lines and lots of them; local domains; personal user name, and encryption for e-mail.

American Online: $19.99 but impossible to get online during peak hours; free web space; use your own name; censorship (lots of it); commercialization up to the ears; few fast lines; clumsy interface; slow; they are charging $1.99 an hour for game areas and are thinking about charging more for additional services.

The Push for the Grand Internet Connection

Microsoft continues to want to push the Microsoft network as the main focus of their version of an Internet connection. Their BBS service brags about all of its resources and insists that the Internet is just the frosting on the cake. With Microsoft announcing its intention to have a dominant role in the future of the Internet, is Microsoft looking to make a global BBS/Internet service that no longer allows for small local Internet access companies to thrive by giving local access numbers to the Internet? I think one could speculate that the idea of domination of the Internet is Microsoft's plan, given their history and almost monopoly on the software industry.

Microsoft could easily follow the current practices of Pro-
digy. One fact that I find highly appalling about Prodigy but very revealing to the ideas I previously conveyed is Prodigy's standard procedures according to Rheingold (1993a). He goes on to say that "more chilling is the fact that all public postings are censored. There are actually bands of people sitting in front of monitors somewhere, reading postings from Prodigy subscribers, erasing the ones with offensive content" (p. 278). The issue that arises from the push for privatization and the Clinton theory that competition and business will take care of everything is the fact that Prodigy is not bound by the constitution as a private firm. He continues, Prodigy as a private publisher claims First Amendment protection from government interference, so Prodigy users can't go to court to claim their rights to free speech without stepping on Prodigy's rights...If you don't like Prodigy, you can go elsewhere. As long as there is an elsewhere. The presence of competition is the key. The Prodigy situation might be a preview of what could happen if a small number of large companies manages to dominate a global telecommunications industry that is now a competitive market of small and medium size businesses that manage to survive and thrive along with the giants. (p. 278)

This shows that Prodigy's model could easily be implemented on the Internet. Currently, Prodigy is not the major threat because it operates in the shadows of emerging corporate giants like Microsoft, Viacom, and Warner. If customers and citizens think this sort of unconstitutional rule is acceptable or if people choose to do nothing to change it, then the Prodigy incident is a prime example of the Panopticon machine that is being cultivated and continues to get stronger.
Fear of the Future

Other issues that threaten the effort of multinationals taking private control of the Internet are that people are afraid of the future. Where hope used to reign for a better tomorrow, it has been replaced by a cynical disbelief in a greater purpose. Now that computers are here, society is in another state of transition. Postman (1992) states that

for one thing, in cultures that have a democratic ethos, relatively weak traditions, and a high receptivity to new technologies, everyone is inclined to be enthusiastic about technological change, believing that its benefits will eventually spread evenly among the entire population. (p. 11)
CHAPTER VIII

THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL CONTROL: HOMOGENIZATION OF CULTURE

A New Global Community

What would companies gain by implementing a Panopticon model that would homogenize society? Companies would gain the domination of economic and knowledge positions of power, an incredible amount of efficiency, and the ability to play gods of culture. The Panopticon model makes it possible for the direct, immediate, and precise manipulation of fads that will spark new buying habits. Companies can almost be assured that a product will sell with a minimal investment of research into the current tastes of the consumer. After all, if one is dictating the culture, one can make a corporation or consumer pay for such knowledge and possible manipulation of current trends in product demand, in order to create and sell the next hot product.

Jones (1995) states that computer-mediated communication will, it is said, lead us toward a new community: global, local, and everything in between. But the presence of chaos inexorably draws us away from that ideal as the need for control becomes greater and greater. (p. 13)

What is developed in this thesis is that privatization of the Internet leads to a police state because consumers will give up many rights in order to communicate. If the industry makes the Internet the number one way of communicating and buying products, people will
be forced to subject themselves to such tyranny. Citizens may start
to even fear themselves and will demand protection from the per-
ceived popular sources of fear such as human interaction with un-
known individuals or cultures.

Universal Access to Everything We Need

It is often said that freedom is available to those who pursue
it. It is possible to argue that citizens of the U.S. can no longer
say that people will not have universal access to everything they
need to know. It can also be argued that there can be no more ex-
cuses for people not being informed, because everything everyone
wants to know will be online. I would disagree with this position
because I still believe that 80% of the information found on the
Internet is just frivolous fluff. Just because there is a large
amount of information does not mean everything of quality can be
found online. Far too often people make the mistake of confusing
large selections of products and information for freedom of choice.
Pandering wares to the drooling masses seems to be the main push now
as the mass marketers try to show how cool a consumer can really be
if only she/he gets online.

The real in-depth web pages, while on the rise, are still a
rarity. Most of the information that is found on current web sites
has surface value content at best and its information is more like a
commercial ad. Usually, the pages already contain basic knowledge
about the company, product, or event that is easily accessed by
other media forms. Much of the information contained on many web pages is already known or is common sense knowledge. Usually, if the person browsing for information is at all informed about the particular company they are searching for information on, what they find on the company's web site is of little value.

Another show of the desire to control the modes of information is the references by some companies as the web being the new universal access encyclopedia. The encyclopedia is a very limited work containing not the knowledge of people around the world but rather, some of the beliefs and interests of a relatively small number of people. Yet the encyclopedias are heavily used in education settings and are taught as core sources of knowledge, tombs containing the kinds of things a student has to know if one is to be considered educated. To use such a reference shows an acceptance of certain modes of information claiming ultimate knowledge while using filters to discard those facts that are not declared important. "The people on the net make a type of equation: data-information-knowledge-wisdom-truth-freedom. The idea that the Internet is full of knowledge as opposed to information is false" (Nguyen & Alexander, 1996, p. 110).

I do believe that everyday more in-depth web sites appear, but there is still the potential for the Internet to be nothing more than the market of tomorrow. Currently, all I see is a massive marketing hype-campaign stressing a hyper-reality that does not really exist. Indeed, some postmodernist theoreticians like Bour-
dien have charged that this historical era is one characterized by hyper-reality.

Who Currently Controls the Flow of Information

Still, who controls and who will control the information flow on the Internet? Currently, chaos, at best, rules, which is probably for the better in my opinion. Even though several Internet providers are proving to be influenced by the morality of protectionism, there are just as many providers who are not concerned about deciding for their users what is right and wrong. For example, people generally do not need to worry about information censorship on a pure Internet connection as they do on more commercially operated connections like American Online. Censorship can still exist on a pure connection, but for the most part, if someone wants to publish an opinion or articles that are deemed offensive to some, that person can usually get away with it without fear of retribution. For now, there is no official, organized authority to patrol the Internet. I think this will change as the government hands over more power to the private organizations to help clean up the Internet.

The control issue has to be understood in the following context. The government, which asserts its need to relinquish power over many industries, services, and the net, should acknowledge a very real fact. "As of May 1995, the Internet backbone had been completely privatized. Already, about 50 percent of traffic on the backbone comes from commercial organizations" (Miller, 1996, p.
Miller goes on to state that as part of this emphasis on commercializing Cyberspace, the Clinton administration plans to stop subsidizing the network itself. Subsidizing is what had the progressive side effect of reducing the cost of access to the Internet for everyone. Instead, in a throwback to the early days of the military ARPANET, the government will cover the usage fees for designated government, industry, and higher education users only. All other users will have to get access to the Information Superhighway via a commercial access provider. (pp. 107-108)

Why would the government eliminate the former backbone of the Internet? The rhetorical response is illuminating. Miller (1996) goes on to say,

FCC chairperson Reed E. Hundt describes the approach with unusual clarity. Our role is to promote, stimulate and introduce competition in all communications markets... We need to get rid of rules and let competitive markets provide choice, fairness and opportunity on their own...If we get competition, the business will take care of everything else on its own. (p. 111)

This statement by Hundt sounds well and good until one realizes that very few companies own the phone lines. Ownership of the phone system is divided between AT&T, GTE, and the local Bell companies. Anyone who wants to set up an access site and number will of course pay high fees to the phone companies unless they make a corporate deal. If this deal is made, it will make their service more money than say a company using AT&T or Sprint without a large corporate agreement. What will happen is giants like Time/Warner, Microsoft and Viacom who have the capital to operate at a loss for an extended period will take over the communication market. They will make a deal with the phone companies, offering the lowest rates for Internet access. In the end they will drive out the small com-
panies, and eventually their prices will rise when no competition is left.

Walmart: A Possible Example of Things to Come

Examples of this hostile, homogenization of culture and buying habits are well documented by the Walmart saga. All of it leads to questions of monopolization, and unfair, noncompetitive business tactics that fall within the existing laws but outside of the spirit of competition in a democratic business environment. Just as Tucker, who wished to make an honest, well-made working man's car, was crushed by the Big Three auto manufactures, so too, will any independent Internet service provider. If an independent provider somehow stands out from the crowd and provides competition for the majors, there are other ways the majors can eliminate the competition. In the end a few, will control the Internet, and the basis of the setup of control is complete. It will be very easy with a limited amount of providers to observe anyone online and accumulate mass databases on people's habits socially as well as monetarily.

The Power to Sway Opinion

Given that the companies like Viacom have so much capital to play with, they have very powerful lobbyists in Washington. More likely than not, they will be able to influence the passing of certain laws and the initiation of certain witch-hunts. These commissions will go after what is left of the competition in order to
create justice. The ideological position of noninvolvement by the
government has become a smoke screen behind which policy deal mak-
ing will give the politician the most money. All of these deals
occur without full public participation or scrutiny. Miller (1996)
goes on to say that

in reality, because the government is a major influence shap-
ing the environment within which markets exist, markets are
inherently and inevitably shaped by governmental policies and
actions no matter how laissez faire the political leadership
claims to be. (p. 378)

What Should Be Done

I think the government should take a stance and let true,
non-monopolized, free enterprise reign. Since this technology could
lead to an improved U.S., its only in the country’s interest to
spend tax dollars on it. In fact, the U.S. will continue to spend
tax dollars but without public knowledge. The U.S. is not going to
drop from a 30% budget-spending rate to nothing overnight. Instead
of this money being spent on making the Internet more egalitarian,
it will be used for policing the Internet. Such an example would be
the Senate Judicial Committee’s efforts to eliminate the 2% porno-
graphy on the Internet (something which they can never really leg-
ally stop) and developing new technologies that will be implemented
by those who can afford it (mainly the multinationals).

New laws will be executed in the early stages of Internet
growth, much like Clinton’s bill, in order to build a blue law
framework. Initially, current Internet administrators will not
heavily enforce these laws due to fear of heavy opposition. These laws will only be exercised when a prior charge needs to be found. Instead of attacking people in the beginning, the plan is to let the public forget about the laws until their power to make a choice of which provider they can use (censored or uncensored) is not an option. Why not wait to enforce a law until a few companies run the Internet? That way, exercising control will be much easier. Then, the trials for blame will begin.

In the Internet’s current state, rigid control would be senseless. Presently, despite its size, Usenet has no central authority that monitors access or content. It is not like Prodigy, where masses of employees monitor what everyone on their service is doing. All control, if any, is exercised at the site level. Sites determine whether to provide access to users, or whether they want to provide a feed, or continue access to a potential site. Users and sites may remain on the Internet as long as the Internet companies that provide them allow them to do so. There is no centralized authority, just small individual collectives and no possibility for strong control, because blame can not be placed on anyone in particular, or can it?

The War of Attrition

The war to eliminate small providers of Internet service is led by the charges of responsibility. Right now, it is the responsibility of the provider if a customer breaks a law due to the
fact that the provider owns the computer system that provides his users with local Internet services. If the provider does not let the government observe certain individuals, the provider becomes the one to be blamed for any violation. Right now there are no laws protecting providers from what their customers do online. It seems the government is going to try violating the constitution if it must. According to Lappin (1996),

the Communications Decency Act criminalizes the transmission, posting, and distribution of indecent material to the World Wide Web, FTP sites, Usenet newsgroups, BBSs, private email, and online chat-room communications exchanged with anyone under 18 years of age. Those convicted of violating the act may be punished with US $250,000 fines and two-year prison terms. (p. 84)

How can someone really know if a person is 18 when they are online? There is no way possible, and therefore this establishes the rationale for a totally ludicrous open-ended law. This law operates like a catch 22 where any government group can frame just about anyone who steps on the Internet. Who is going to be in control of determining what is decent and what is not? Hopefully it will not be the Victorian mindset that seems to be capturing the public's attention, wishing to put jockeys and underwear on the Greek statues at the 1996 Olympics. As Turner (1996) states:

The First Amendment speaks in seemingly absolute terms: Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or the press. This has never meant, however, that people can say whatever they want wherever they want. Freedom of speech does not mean speech totally uninhibited by any legal restraint. It has always been true that some forms of speech can be outlawed or penalized and many have been. Common examples include fraudulent advertising, child pornography, obscenity, fighting words, help wanted ads that discriminate on the basis of race, words used in a criminal transaction (I'll kill your
husband for US $10,000) unkept promises, unlicensed broadcasts, libel, speech that infringes a copyright, and unauthorized disclosure of data used to make atomic weapons. (p. 104)

The Need for the Elimination of the Constitution

Privatization leads to a loss of constitutional rights! According to Turner (1996),

our constitution is a series of constraints on government, not on individuals or even powerful corporations. It is not a violation of the First Amendment for the Microsoft Network, if it so desired, to forbid postings that criticize Bill Gates. Microsoft is not the government, at least not yet. (p. 104)

It seems that government is preparing for that time when, like Prodigy, our rights will not be in effect because the only providers of information access on the Internet will be private. According to Miller (1996),

Time (1994) claims the US government is expanding its use of the Clipper Chips to help the FBI eavesdrop on computerized messages. Reportedly the FBI is also investigating increased use of sniffer programs that steal passwords and access to privacy protected Internet data. (p. 109)

Under the present legal state, the FBI could not legally get away in many cases with using the Clipper Chip, at least legal battle. Under the status of privatization, if Microsoft chooses to use the Clipper Chip on its own BBS, it would be completely legal as long as Microsoft gave a disclaimer when a person signed up for the service. Microsoft may wish to incorporate such a device, since under Clinton's recent law, Microsoft would be held responsible for illegal distribution of information under the Communications Decency Act.
Argyle and Shields discuss the fact that there is no longer any real privacy, due to hackers and government intervention, but this is still a very popular myth to many net users. When discussing about online chats, Shields (1996) says that

no one else is allowed entry to this space while the two of you are there. For this reason, hotchats are held here. Hot-chatting is using the chat mode to talk to each other about sexual fantasies, with each other in the past, present, or future. The language is detailed, graphic and expressive, to try to transmit sexual activity over the computer. (p. 64)

The problem is that people are legally and illegally being monitored, and this graphic and expressive language can and will be used in a court of law under the current rulings.

If there is any hope to salvage what could possibly lead to a de-revolution of culture, because of the Internet, then something must be done. The government continues to state that by privatizing the Internet, private firms can afford to give universal cheap access. When do corporations do anything that does not improve the bottom line? Under current conditions, and given present trends, universal access is an empty phrase. Theoretically in the U.S. people have universal access to the ballot box but choose not to use it. Why? The reason I think many people do not vote, besides apathy, is that there are several barriers (education, access, etc.) that force individuals to not be able to participate in the voting process. The barriers to using the vote are far less significant than the barriers people face when wanting to use the Internet. Are people who are just struggling to survive likely to cheer universal access to advanced telecommunications services? For most people,
access to the Internet will be gained through commercial network providers. The Internet's ability to serve as a common space will be severely curtailed simply because access to much of the information will be censored. Only those who are very proficient in navigating the loopholes of the Internet will gain access. These people themselves will become a small clique that will more than likely be corrupted into selling the information to the highest bidder, much like in the Gibson novel Neuromancer. Tonnies (1961) states that as a rule, it is a new and higher culture which, with religion and in it forms, penetrates a peasant culture against the wilder life of nomadism, or an urban technique against the crudeness and primitivism. Great improvements and innovations, such as drainage and irrigation systems, bridge building and techtonic arts have often served as the material bases for new divine as well as human authorities. (p. 56)

Homogenization of Education

The Internet can be a vehicle for the further commercialization of education, because fiscal constraints make schools increasingly vulnerable to the Faustian bargain wherein equipment is exchanged for commercial access to students' attention. Miller (1996) reports that the Whittle Communication Corporation's Channel One program led the way in this area by providing TV equipment and a short daily news feed in exchange for required viewing of the accompanying advertisements. Reliance on private sector resources can also lead to self censorship. As public sector budgets are decimated by tax cuts for the rich, schools turn to private sector benefactors, whose giving not only meets pressing local needs but also makes it much less likely that school curricula will contain anything that a major donor would find offensive. (p. 8)
The commercialization of the Internet is part of a general deregulation of all aspects of the telecommunications industries, unleashing, at least for the short term, a huge expansion of our telecom systems as private firms seek commercial advantage by deploying new technologies. The hyped convergence of different digital media is being preceded by a convergence of ownership. These conglomerates are expanding both vertically and horizontally, seeking to control everything from the creation of content to its distribution into the consumers' living room, seeking to have a strong position in every possible alternative transport media from copper wire to wireless. "The result is a network of telegopolies tied together by joint stock ownership or strategic partnerships, often hidden from public view by multiple levels of subsidiary firms" (Miller, 1996, p. 29).

As I alluded earlier to in this paper the U.S. government has continuously made public efforts to convince citizens that it wishes not to be involved anymore in the development of the Internet. However in recent years, government action increasingly occurs behind a thick smoke screen of proclamations about the leading role of private sector innovation and free market initiative. "This too often gives the impression that the government is simply accepting some natural law of the marketplace rather than actively setting the ground rules for the process" (Miller, 1996, p. 29). Miller goes on to say that
the government's official answer to the solution is to allow private industry to build the Internet guided by profit seeking incentives in a deregulated market. The underlying assumption is that a competitive market will be able to achieve whatever goals the public desires and allow the best technology to emerge victorious in the Darwinian marketplace. (p. 60)

Unfortunately, this will only foster what I have discussed previously in that only the major multinationals will survive.

Today, regulation is a dirty word. Government officials often talk as if competition will solve all the problems previously created or prevented by regulation. But unless government regulation requires it, individual businesses have no incentive to burden themselves with social costs that do not directly contribute to their profit margins. And so universal service will never come about, and rules protecting the individual rights will be replaced by the quest for more profit. "Now both the Clinton administration and the Republican Congress proclaim that telecommunications are a key to national economic prosperity as well as national security" (Miller, 1996, p. 101). I agree with this. I believe this country should develop a more viable plan instead of allowing free enterprise to take care of everything.

There needs to be no major resolution for what I suggest to come to pass. Convincing others to believe the multinationals will take care of everything in the best interests of the society is very easy once certain communication channels are controlled.

Therefore, the first action to empower the multinationals' control of the Internet is to spread panic about big government. It is also the deification of the Internet. The Internet will be-
come so cherished that it must be saved from the evils of humanity and big government. Since most people do not understand the Internet, it is argued that its safety should be left to private firms. The justification for transferring total power to the established power brokers is to protect our youth, our family values, and our national security. The control of the dominant mode of information in the U.S., as well as possibly the dominant mode of commerce, is being granted to a few major multinational corporations. This power is being granted for all for the wrong reasons. U.S. citizens should wake up before we no longer have any control over how our country is run.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Positive Consequences of Embracing the Internet

There are positive consequences to the world embracing the Internet. In theory a black man can talk to a Klan member as a Klan member without the Klan member knowing he/she is talking to a black man. Participants gain greater anonymity because their gender, race, rank, physical appearance and other features of public identity are not immediately evident. It is this current level of anonymity that I believe makes the Internet so appealing. It is also this anonymity that some idealists think will help form a working, cooperating, online community to solve offline problems. There are some problems with this line of thinking. When community membership is in no small way a simple matter of subscribing or non-subscribing to a bulletin board or electronic newsgroup, how important in creating social culture is such a community? Is the nature of interaction on the Internet preferable to today’s community interaction simply because one may disengage with little or no consequences? Furthermore, connection does not inherently make for community, nor does it lead to any necessary exchanges of information, meaning, and sense-making at all. When one can easily run away from a discussion, because they have no social commitment, or responsibility to save face (remember anonymity), then what depth of community can there be?
All of these human attributes are expressed currently in a variety of ways. The Internet could possibly add to the multiple ways humans express themselves and construct new cultures in the U.S. It is possible that more people will speak what is on their mind; therefore, giving way to lively discussions about real life issues. These discussions could lead to a greater understanding of humanity and one's own opinions.

Computer-mediated communication can give users a sense that they can start over and learn from the past. Advocates' comments point out that we have a fundamental need, or at least hope, for something better to come from future media. Individuals find friends, and groups find shared identities online through the aggregated networks of relationships and commitments that make any community possible. But are relationships and commitments as we know them even possible in a place where identities are fluid? In everyday interaction, people's physical worlds are a place where the identity and position of individuals with whom they choose to communicate on a constant basis are typically well known, fixed, and highly visible. As Rheingold (1993a) states,

in Cyberspace, everybody is in the ark. We can only exchange words with each other-no glances or shrugs or ironic smiles. Even the nuances of voice and intonation are stripped away. On top of the technology imposed constraints, we who populate Cyberspace deliberately experiment with fracturing traditional notions of identity by living as multiple simultaneous personae in different virtual neighborhoods. (p. 61)

I have mixed feelings about how people interact on the Internet. Even though there is no physical presence of touch, sight,
members of electronic virtual communities act as if the community met in a physical public space. The number of times that on-line conferences refer to the conference as an architectural place and to the mode of interaction in that place as being social is overwhelmingly high in proportion to those who do not. They say things like this is a great place to get together, or this is a convenient place to meet. (p. 104)

According to Mackinnon (1995),

the deprivation of the subtleties is exactly what makes communication and interaction among Usenet users different from a room full of computer users. In the external world, behavioral standards dictate that one should not provoke a visibly angry man, but in Usenet the absence, or at least the distortion, of visible anger interferes with that standard of behavior. (p. 115)

The Creation of Netiquette to Control Social Problems on the Internet

It is possible that the best way to enforce behavior could be by using the modern creation of norms, cultural values, and mores that would be enforced by every citizen of the Internet. The rules are currently called netiquette. Enforcement of netiquette begins with the individual users; consensual interpretation by the Usenet public determines the laws of the Usenet. If a user's action offends one person in 10 million, that action is probably a slight breach but nothing of wider concern; however, if an action results in 3,000 complaints, then it usually is treated more seriously. Since there are not many organized complaints filed with authorities, no real governing body to take these complaints, and few administrators for service providers to take these complaints, those who do not choose to follow netiquette for whatever reasons can
easily become a giant emotional problem for many. One sociopath with several different user names can frustrate a Usenet group out of existence. Therefore, maybe an enforcement body could be elected by the Internet citizen body to help reinforce netiquette. Such provisions for a candidate might be the years of experience on the Internet or a personal history of being able to solve disputes on the Internet in a fair and just manor.

The Internet A New Frontier of Cooperation

When it comes to the Internet and community, the existing illusion is that the Internet will be the new frontier of cooperation among human beings. Whether this mass exodus transformation will occur remains to be seen, but the world must be aware of the restraints taking place. Bayman (1992) states,

my argument is that the distinct cultures that emerge in (Internet) are grounded in communicative practice. Community is generated through the interplay between preexisting structures and the participants strategic appropriation and exploitation of the resources and rules those structures offer in ongoing interaction. (p. 139)

With the Internet, the level of ongoing interaction varies so highly, since there are many who just watch other individuals. This is similar to real life, but at least in real life, in some form or another, people must interact with others and be noticed. Bayman (1992) goes on to say that

because computer mediated interactants are unable to see, hear, and feel one another they cannot use the usual contextualization cues conveyed by appearance, nonverbal signals, and features of the physical context. With these cues to social context removed, the discourse is left in a social vacuum
quite different from face to face interaction. (pp. 139-140)

*Because people cannot see or hear others laugh, wince, or indicate other immediate reactions to their performances they become less socially inhibited and more likely to be rude* (Baron, 1984, p. 18).

If individuals choose not to be rude or short, they do have many other powerful ways of avoidance.

I believe that the average individual in the U.S. that can afford access will become highly acclimated to the Internet, and its use will be a very important part of most people's lives. I am not trying to suggest that we end the addiction but that we pay attention to the previous critiques and revelations about the control of information. It is clear that if people take the Internet, as seriously as I have suggested and quoted, social control would be very simple to implement. It is possible that people would flock to be controlled. Given the ability of Prodigy and Microsoft to monitor online conversations, no matter whether in a public chat room or a private one or e-mail, people's lives would not be private at all.

The recent stance that the government has taken on electronic communication's privacy shows that it would not take much effort for an officer to monitor what one individual says to another in private. There has not been a court precedent that decides whether information obtained in a private chat room or e-mail is considered admissible as evidence in court against an individual, without the authorities needing a warrant. The lack of a specifically written and clear law is dangerous. At one time an individual in a chat
room is enjoying a false sense of belonging, privacy, intimacy, and at the same time is being monitored by another individual who runs the particular online service to which he or she subscribes. It only takes a few steps to where big brother and little brother are a true phenomenon.

Implosion of Information

It is useful to once again ask how relevant are the mass databases of information on the Internet to the way people run their daily lives? It could be argued that the Internet could make people's lives easier, but is it necessary? Could in fact, our reliance on easily obtained information make a person's life more difficult because, that person feels a need to now rely on these luxuries in order to have a meaningful existence? For instance, most people no longer know how to make their own clothing, soap, or how to grow or hunt for their own food. With all of these luxuries and services, do we possibly enslave ourselves willingly to a system, which supports further destruction of our self-reliance?

To look at it in a different perspective (Postman, 1992) asks, what is the problem in the Middle East, or South Africa, or Northern Ireland? Is it the lack of information that keeps these conflicts at fever pitch? Is it lack of information about how to grow food that keeps millions at starvation levels? Is it lack of information that brings soaring crime rates and physical decay to our cities? Is it lack of information that leads to high divorce rates and keeps the beds of mental institutions filled to overflowing? (p. 60)

Where schools are touted as the great equalizer, the invention of what is called a curriculum was a logical step toward organizing,
limiting, and discriminating among available sources of information. Schools became technocracy's first secular bureaucracies, structures for legitimizing some parts of the flow of information and discrediting other parts. Schools were in short, a means of governing the ecology of information. Where people are dying of starvation, it does not occur because of inadequate information. If families break up, children are mistreated, crime terrorizes a city, or education is minimal, it does not happen because of inadequate information. Mathematical equations, instantaneous communication, and vast quantities of information have nothing whatsoever to do with any of these problems. The computer is useless in addressing them.

Neither is it enough to simply facilitate information retrieval with the ability to gather data from governmental files, libraries, and other information providers. We must also ensure that the systems of the future allow interpersonal communication and facilitate the coming together of groups of people. Ordinary citizens must be able to be producers as well as consumers of network activity. Otherwise, the information process becomes one way, and that way can be tailored to fit one opinion and one interpretation of the truth. This power could allow a controller to leave out any mode of information that the controller does not want others to have access to. All the while the illusion that everything is available to be accessed is created, in effect, appeasing the masses who cannot view what is happening behind the scenes.
Technology is Not the Solution to the World's Problems

Technology, like wealth, makes many things easier, but it does not automatically solve most human issues associated with life and living. "Santa Monica's system has an active conference to discuss the problems of the city's homeless that involves heavy input from the homeless Santa Monica citizens who use public terminals" (Rheingold, 1993b, p. 10). The world will not become a better place unless people act upon the suggestions. As discussed earlier, I doubt these kinds of programs will be implemented nationwide, because no company has anything to gain, and the me generation mentality wants nothing to do with social spending because it takes away money that could be spent on themselves. Technology will not ensure that all children live in safe and stable homes with adequate food and adult support. It can not guarantee world peace or even the elimination of local wars. It will not end crime or emotional problems.

One could say that if one Internet service refuses to recognize a person's rights, all one would have to do is join a new online community. Yet, it is difficult to believe the new forms of electronic association will be an adequate substitute for the old-fashioned, face-to-face affiliations built on friendship, loyalty, and trust. Networks are based on choice. When they get uncomfortable, it is easy to opt out of them.

Elements of communities teach tolerance, co-existence, and mutual respect. We need to develop the Internet to become one of these elements. "I fear that calling a network a community leads
people to complacency and delusion, accepting an inadequate substitute because they've never experienced the real thing and they don't know what they're missing" (Miller, 1996, p. 336). To add to that point, I think if one follows the monopolistic trend of many current companies and markets, more than likely, the Internet will soon only offer a few choices when it comes to service providers. Many of these providers are actually owned and managed by the same parent company already.

Fighting to Keep the Internet Free of Commercialization

The Internet still has the ability to become a leader in community. We just have to fight to keep it free from commercialization being the only focus. Users should demand to keep public funding for profit-free sights, and stress the importance of educational sites. If users vote with their economical dollars and not pay for providers who knowingly censor and monitor sites, e-mail, and chat groups, possibly the Internet could become balanced between profit and social responsibility.

It is not as if the online groups right now can fight to resist what is going on. Miller (1996) says that virtual groups do not handle controversial topics very well, often degenerating into flame wars that are as likely to kill the group as to lead to any relevant insights. Strangers do not always feel a need to be polite with each other, especially because there is almost no long term penalty for rushing off an insulting response to a position you dislike, or flooding a discussion group with thoughtless bombast. (pp. 336-37)

So without the sheer numbers, without the community, and with-
out the unity, how is the Internet going to stay free and clear of the forces of the future?

Licklider dreamed about, and we often can attest to the truth, of his prediction that life will be happier for the online individual because the people with whom one interacts most strongly will be selected more by commonality of interests and goals than by accidents of proximity (Rheingold, 1993b).

As I said earlier, a polar relationship is not going to foster a healthy relationship, because there is very little depth of character. This is because people are far too developed to live in one category of thinking. What people must come to realize is that they do have something in common: keeping the Internet a censor-free mode of information. If people combine under one ideal, that individualism is important, along with having the freedom of speech and privacy, the power behind such a unity could make the Internet community a powerful force with which to contend.

"The Internet will also be a place that people often end up revealing themselves far more intimately than they would be inclined to do without the inter-mediation of screens and pseudonyms" (Rheingold, 1993b, p. 27). This again means that the control of information is important in order to keep people's lives private and to keep the Internet free.

Virtual Reality opens new spaces for exploration, colonization, and exploitation, returning to a mythic time when there were worlds without limits and resources beyond imaging. Technologists
speak of the navigational system necessary to guide us through this uncharted realm.

Before we go off to conquer new virtual worlds, we as a country should engage in human investments. Miller (1996) states, to serve the full range of human needs we have to create an infrastructure that doesn’t simply fall into the easiest path to profits but one that consciously promotes values that short term profit seekers do not always support. This is not a rejection of markets, but it is a recognition that markets are created by humans, that we must shape our markets to serve our desired goals, and that we must be prepared to use non market activity when needed. (p. 15)

The Future Impact of the Internet

I see the Internet being responsible for many future changes in the U.S. What I see as the most pressing problem facing the U.S. is the gradual but profound disengagement of middle class people, especially suburban whites, from problems of the underclass, from African American and Latino citizens, and from poor or working class whites. Out of the ashes arises an ultra-elite technological class that will be virtually untouchable without the right password or education.

In order to preserve and strengthen our democracy, in order to ensure that technological decisions serve the general good, we need to take control of the decision-making process that guides technological research and development. Technology can be presented in an intelligible manner with the choices expressed in plain English for ordinary citizens to grasp. The simple truth is that the real issues are not the bytes and bits but the underlying values and
the social goals that we seek to achieve. If the Internet is state or federal funded and monitored, then the Internet will have to fall under constitutional rule; and until the constitution is amended, the Internet will have to stay relatively free from censorship within the rules of the U.S. constitution.

To protect the general public from the censoring power of commercial sponsorship, the government needs to fund the creation of a national source of noncommercial material for use by local online groups, as it has done for public TV and radio. Miller (1996) says that

unfortunately, cyberspace's tradition of noncommercial mutual aid is already being eroded as its growing popularity and accessibility attract people who don't care about its traditions or the cooperative ethics that underlie the online community. (p. 324)

I think that the Internet's position is being currently painted as a new frontier by companies jumping on the bandwagon to make money off of the Internet. Sociologists seem to look the other way, ignoring the very real hyper-reality that is being created by intelligent mass marketers, furiously swarming to create a new, more controllable market. Poster (1989) says that

the mode of information...as a linguistically based theory, rejects the priority given to labor in Marx's writings, labor continues to play a crucial role in societies with highly complex technologies, but the concept of labor is inadequate by itself to serve as the focus of analysis of domination in these societies. (p. 131)

Instead, now it is who controls the mode of information, and in my opinion, who controls the ability to tell consumers what is reality and what is not that is more important in today's economy. Those
who wish to remain in power must shift from owning the means of production to the control of the flow of information. If my Panopticon model is implemented, the Internet will bring with it a unique way to dominate the flow of information without having people realize it, because customers end up being dominated by engaging in online activities.

Yet all is not lost because the Internet still has some positive effects. Some people, many people, do not do well in spontaneous spoken interaction but can make valuable contributions to a conversation where they have time to think about what to say. These people, who might constitute a significant proportion of the population, can find written communication more authentic than the face-to-face kind. This could lead to more people getting involved with daily social and political activities.

The Internet allows boundaries: temporal, spatial, associative, and identity forming to dissolve due to its vastness and concern for individual ambiguity. People at this moment can be free to express their opinions without fear of overt oppression. There is a prevalence of narcissism, alienation, cynicism, and anomie on the net. These extremes of human behavior and discourse at both the individual levels and collective levels show that the Internet can be used as a vehicle for people to relax and discuss the problems and issues that are on their minds. Individuals discussing their problems will know that someone will listening because of the vastness of the audience available. It is much like the phenomenon of
people telling strangers their darkest secrets because they know they will never see the stranger again.

It is likely that the Internet will be neither as good nor as bad as the prophets currently predict, although cynical realism would suggest that we are likely to experience more of the negative than the positive. Realizing a utopian vision requires that a large number of things all succeed and work together; realizing a negative future simply requires a few things to go wrong. Perhaps this is why the public is wary about the entire Internet project. Miller (1996) states that

A recent Gallup poll of white collar workers found that even though 65 percent of them used personal computers, nearly half have an attitude that Gallup describes as cyberphobic centering around loss of privacy, a feeling of being overwhelmed by information, losing face to face contact, having to learn new skills, and the fear of being passed over for promotion. (p. 16)

A suggestion I will make to improve the future of the Internet is to make the mode of information managed for the people, by the people. An important example of the kind of principles needed in the code of fair information was developed in 1973 for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The code involves five principles. In 1990 Marx stated that

there must be no personal data record keeping whose very existence is secret. There must be a way for a person to find out what information about him is in a record and how it is being used. There must be a way for a person to prevent information that was obtained for one purpose from being used or made available for other purposes without his consent. There must be a way for a person to correct or amend a record of identifiable information about himself. Any organization creating maintaining, using or disseminating records of identifiable personal data must assume the reliability of the data for
their intended use and must take precautions to prevent mis-
uses of data. (p. 13)

Where has this code gone? It was a law that I believe needs
to be enforced. There is no way to find out how many people have
information on a person. I use the case of my experience at Western
Michigan University as a perfect example of the misuse of informa-
tion and how it can go against these ethical rules. Maybe it is not
secretive at all times, but I was never informed by Western regard-
ing their practice of selling a list with my name on it to magazine
subscription companies. I did not learn about this until I com-
plained to one of the companies and wanted to know how I got on
their list. They immediately suggested I contact my college. When
I talked to Western, sure enough, they felt they had the right to
sell my name as a part of a list. They have broken the law, but it
will never come to trial, or be enforced, because U.S. citizens like
me do not have the time, resources, or will to do the necessary
class action suits or file legal documents. One can clearly see
that Western only had monetary intentions, not harmful ones. Yet,
when someone who has access to private information databases has the
wrong intent, good intention could easily ruin a person.


