

Internet may be damaged by ignorance of users

Joshua Olson

If you think about it, the Internet is an amazing creation. I'd even call it one of mankind's greatest achievements in the last 30 years.

Unfortunately, there are few of mankind's achievements that another segment of mankind couldn't screw up, given the chance. Sure enough, just as the Internet is on its way to becoming the most globally useful tool since electricity, there are people who are working hard to undermine and destroy its usefulness for everyone else.

Not to worry, I'm not going to outline an elaborate conspiracy theory involving the White House, the KGB (it still exists, you know) and your dog, Sparky. The kind of damage being done to the Internet is presumably unintentional. And I'm not talking about kicking out transmission lines or dropping routing computers. I'm talking about good, old-fashioned ignorance.

You see, when the Internet was created (it was called ARPANet then), it was built for a scientific community of research and educational institutions. Its purpose was to provide a means for

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scientific collaboration among researchers and to allow sharing of computer resources across long distances.

In the earlier days of the Internet, there was a significant knowledge base required to be able to make use of its resources. Only government and educational researchers even had access to such technology. Any fool off the street couldn't just stroll into a computer lab and start chatting with his aunt in Duluth. Unless, of course, he was also in Duluth and his aunt happened to be in the same lab. My point is that the American public had little knowledge and even less use of the Internet.

These days, just mention the word "Internet" at a party and you'll appear suave and worldly (or maybe that has something to do with the sort of parties I go

to). It's the biggest and hippest thing since radio. Everyone and his grandmother has an e-mail address of some kind, and the term "information superhighway" has become perhaps our most-abused national cliché. These things all spell success for the Internet.

So what's the problem, you ask? Well, it begins with the fact that much of the flourishing popularity of all things net-like has to do with the recent development of online services like America Online (AOL), Prodigy, CompuServe, etc. AOL, for example, provides an easy-to-use interface to Internet mail and news, allowing users to access them with extreme ease. That's not the problem.

The problem is that users of these services suffer from Standing-On-The-Shoulders-Of-Giants Syndrome (or words to that effect). Before services like AOL began offering access to news groups to its users, there was a certain level of knowledge that was necessary for anyone to read and post news. In the process of learning how to access the necessary tools (logging into a mainframe, navigating its operating system, configuring and using the

newsreader, etc.), a certain general understanding of how the Internet operated was generally gained, as well as a respect that can only be acquired through that effort of learning.

I don't mean to pick on AOL; they certainly take enough grief from the Internet community. But an inordinately large percentage of posts from AOL users are inappropriate, insulting, ignorant or just plain unintelligible. There are certain behavioral codes for posting on news groups, of which AOL users probably just aren't aware, but which they consistently break. Many AOL users possess neither the background nor the acquired sense of responsibility to post intelligently on the Internet. This is because AOL allows them the privilege of news access without the responsibility of learning how to get there.

One of the Internet's greatest strengths is its open, sprawling architecture. This is the reason there are no authoritative numbers for the population of the Internet or the number of hosts within it. There is no central command station to count or control such statistics.

This is one reason the Internet is so appealing to commercial ser-

vice providers. They can unleash thousands of uninitiated users onto the existing services of the Internet and pay no more than the cost of connection, just like any other machine.

As if AOL hadn't caused enough wasted bandwidth with useless news posts alone, it has plans to provide World Wide Web services soon. Imagine thousands of AOL users cruising around the Web simultaneously, sucking gigabytes of images through the Internet's already bogged-down pathways.

Many people are very concerned about the government taking over the Internet. They should be concerned about corporations. Soon the research interests that have funded the Internet for so long will no longer be willing to pay for the unwashed heathen flooding the networks. And when a company like AOL owns the backbone of the Internet, do you think they'll let you use it for free? Don't count on it.

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HOUSING

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replacement of this unsafe housing."

Those in favor of saving the complex, however, say otherwise.

"We've won round one and we're going to persevere," said Daniel Stotter, the coalition's attorney. "A lot of people said this would be over a long time ago and we've hung in there. We have had tremendous support from the community and we aren't going away."

Stotter said he believes Friday's ruling by the board could send the decision as to whether the University had met the pre-application requirements for issuing a demolition permit back to the Eugene City Council. He also said the stay that the board put on Amazon to halt all demolition at the site is still in effect until Childs files the new report.

Although University officials claim they can proceed, Eyster said the demolition will not occur until the matter is resolved.

The University's plans to demolish Amazon have been at a standstill since the board issued a stay March 28 forbidding all demolition at the site until the coalition's appeal could be addressed at a hearing on April 27.

It has not been announced how long Childs has to write the new findings under the request of the board or when they will be released.

Both sides said Friday it is also unclear as to what Childs will propose in the new findings, but even if they do require the City Council to look at the coalition's appeal to the demolition permit again, University officials are confident.

"If it does have to go back, this is still so easy to comply with," Eyster said. "It would just be another verification that their efforts are obstructive and the only purpose they serve is delay."

The coalition is hoping, however, that the findings will provide a chance for the two sides to work together to reach "a win-win solution."

"We think we can find common ground like we did in moving the St. Vincent de Paul buildings," Stotter said. "It is this kind of compromise we look forward to for the rest of the complex."

Four, two-story buildings from the complex were transported to a city-owned site at 200 E. 19th Avenue by St. Vincent de Paul officials early Saturday morning.

As it stands now, only two buildings at the Amazon site have been demolished as part of the University's plan to replace Amazon with a new, 280-unit complex in two phases.

Phase one involves demolishing and rebuilding the buildings that have been vacant since Fall 1994. The rebuilt units are expected to be ready for occupancy by fall term 1996.

WORK

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Smith said the trend of more students working more hours will continue, mostly because of rising tuition.

According to Edmond Vignoul, director of the University's financial aid office, undergraduate tuition in the 1993-94 school year for residents was \$2,916. For nonresidents it was \$9,985. In 1995-96, the estimated undergraduate tuition for residents is \$3,387, and for nonresidents it is projected to be \$11,091.

Vignoul said that financial aid has also increased to offset rising tuition. However, many students said that high tuition and a high cost of living in the campus area has put them in an uncomfortable position.

A 22-year-old Environmental Science major at the University, who wished to remain anonymous, said he was in financial straits when he turned to dealing drugs after losing his job last year.

"I did it to pay the bills," he said. "I was dead broke. It's not easy though. I usually sell marijuana and hallucinogens, but it's hard to make money off pot in this town."

He said he does not sell drugs any-

more, but would turn to it again if he could not find any other source of income.

"It is really hard to find a job in this town that works with a class schedule," he said. "At least with dealing I can make my own hours."

Jennifer, a 20-year-old University student who asked to be identified by her first name only, also found herself broke and unable to find a job last year when she was a freshman.

She did not want to call her parents and ask for money. She thought they would criticize her for not being able to manage her finances.

So, she gathered up her courage and went down to the Eugene Plasma Corporation, located at 1071 Olive St., to donate plasma.

"It was kind of scary the first time," she said. "But they are very nice and it only took about an hour."

Jennifer received \$20 on her first visit and \$15 on each of the four visits she made after that. Although Jennifer admits to being embarrassed by her visits to donate plasma, Kathie Dickie, reception supervisor at the center, said the procedures are completely safe and that the negative stigma around donating is unfair. Dickie said students come by regularly to donate.

Even if there was such a thing as a sandwich school, we probably would've been drafted early and gone pro anyway.



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