

Restricting e-mail: whose job is it?

**Brendon Neal, Opinion Editor,
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Writer**

Last week's mass electronic-mailing of the letter to the Clackamas Print and much of the school staff raised concerns about the uncontrolled use of e-mail.

We believe that regulations should be based on set, pre-determined guidelines. Warnings could then be issued, and repeat offenders would lose their e-mail rights.

The actual regulations should be determined by a combination of administrators and ASG members. Students and staff would then vote on the final draft. A two-thirds majority should be required for each to pass. Such a high vote would weaken claims against the constitutionality of any regulations passed and help insure that they are fair. Each restriction would be voted on and failed or passed individually on its own merits.

Complaints would be filtered out by the Computer Department Chair Baldwin VanderBijl, or if it became too time-consuming, hire an individual to cover e-mail and Internet (when it becomes available) problems or complaints.

If the complaints are determined to be legitimate, they could then be sent to a group of individuals made up of a combination of members of ASG student representatives and administrators who would deal with the situations.

One of the more common e-mail problems is unwanted mass mailing, especially e-mail bombing. They waste the readers' time, because they have to at least read far enough into the mail to decide whether to finish it or not. E-mail bombing is the act of sending extremely large amounts of mail or an extremely high number of messages to other account (s). It can also be

used to spread libel. Libel is defined as a written statement that damages by defaming a person's character or reputation.

E-mail bombs could be mostly prevented by putting a limit on the number of copies sent. Programs can be set up to limit the number of copies sent at one time. If someone needed to mass-mail for a legitimate reason, they could get temporary passwords from school officials to get around the mass-mailing block. The school is currently asking users to limit their sendings to 10 copies, but they currently do not have any system running to stop mass-mailing.

The more difficult portion of regulation would be content. We are not encouraging censorship, defined as the act of suppressing information deemed objectionable; however, if people do find e-mail sent to them unacceptable they need an avenue of complaint. This could not be directly policed because the unwanted action would have to be done before administrators would know it was occurring. Receivers of the unacceptable e-mail would need to contact the regulators.

Correspondents using e-mail need to have a consensus of what they feel is acceptable. If we agree that censorship is an acceptable in the mass form then users must censor their own messages to each other in order to keep misunderstandings from occurring.

While censorship is unacceptable, regulation is necessary to avoid misuse of e-mail. Censorship stops the sending of specific topics; regulations would only affect e-mail that is complained about by the receiver. Regulations wouldn't stop misuse of e-mail, but it would discourage senders from misusing e-mail.

Censoring the 'net' and e-mail

**Brad Zimmerman
Staff Writer**

America Online sells itself as a "family service" - the common person's gateway to the wealth of the Internet; using that image, AOL has added many members and made a great deal of money. In order to keep that revenue coming, AOL strives to eliminate discussion, ideas or materials that interfere with its mission to provide a service with a family environment.

AOL's censorship is based around its "Terms of Service" (ToS), the contract that all AOL members supposedly agree to when they create their accounts.

The ToS is a set of documents that cover a variety of subjects, ranging from software licensing to purchasing products online to online conduct. Much of this agreement is written in legalese which is not only difficult to understand but also very vague. It is quite clear, however, that under the agreement, AOL is the sole judge of what is "acceptable" and what is a "violation" of the ToS.

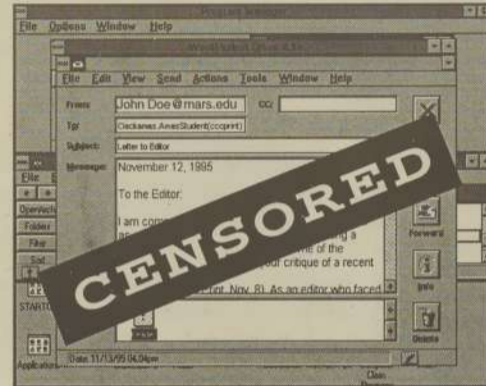
The ToS bans many broad

forms of online expression. The central contract states, "Member is prohibited from posting on or transmitting through the AOL Service any unlawful, harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, profane, hateful, racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable material of any kind, including, but not limited to, any material which encourages conduct that would constitute a criminal offense, give

ther restrictions, due to the fact that, besides restriction on sexual slang, it also restricts words referring to homosexuality.

The most affected by these restrictive guidelines has been AOL's public messaging areas. If a forum host finds a message unacceptable, he or she can immediately delete the post without notice. These deletions are subject completely to the whims of the forum host; objectionable words or conversations can be deleted without notice. Words tamer than the ones mentioned in AOL's "vulgarity guidelines" have resulted in the deletion of posts.

All of this AOL censorship should be kept in mind as the college formulates its own restrictions on e-mail. The people who are drawing up e-mail guidelines should keep in mind that one can easily cross over the line of "restriction" to "censorship", which is actively searching (and eradicating) that which is deemed objectionable. The restriction of e-mail would result in punishment for what has been agreed upon as objectionable. Such actions would not only be detrimental to CCC's learning environment, but to free speech itself.



rise to civil liability or otherwise violate any applicable local, state, national or international law." The determination as to what exactly fits any of these categories is entirely up to AOL and its administrators.

AOL also maintains a list of words that it considers vulgar. This list has resulted in even fur-

Student has concerns about newspaper practices

To the Editor:

I am compelled as a student of political science and as someone with eight years experience editing a community newspaper to address some of the problematic issues raised by your critique of a recent letter to the editor (The Clackamas Print, Nov. 8). As an editor who faced weekly deadlines, real community issues and real consequences I am concerned with the apparent lack of professional quality of the "community" owned publication. The leadership quality seems to be lacking any true experiential knowledge. The students operating this publication deserve a clear understanding of the penalties they face by exercising faulty judgement in executing their editorial decisions. This understanding will be critical to their success. Criticism comes not only from readers but from publishers, advertisers and public officials. Public officials expect professionalism and if they don't get it they tend to keep the journalist "out of the loop." Faculty advisors who ignore this are woefully derelict in their responsibilities. This general complaint is based on knowledge I earned facing the real problems of newspapering and dealing with daily issues surrounding civic government, elitist power backers, and the community welfare.

Specifically, I take issue with the manner and message of your editorial response. Personal responses to readers are unwise at best. It demonstrates immaturity that obscures judgment and ultimately damages credibility. The final judgment made by readers

and advertisers is based on the credibility and actions of the publication itself. That is, there is no reason to take criticism personally and there is absolutely no reason to respond by deconstructing the reader's letter. If the criticism lacks merit, then you will prove yourself through your actions. By responding personally, you prove yourself insecure and immature. Let reader's comments stand alone on their own merit.

Secondly, if readers bring up issues they consider important and you are criticized for ignoring these issues, then you must reevaluate whether or not your coverage was complete and satisfactory in the first place. Any response should be made by either covering the issues raised or not covering them. By responding in the manner that you did, you raise questions rather than answer them, and the appearance is then created that you are indeed a "lapdog" for the administration. If not a lapdog press you certainly would not rely on the administration alone for your answers. Digging beyond the pat answers and locating the truth is the job of journalists. The heart of any "free" press is the role it plays as watchdog.

Thirdly, be careful what you level as a threat. Asking a legitimate question and then suggesting that the ACLU might be interested in the answer is not a threat, unless of course, there is something wrong with the answer. In this case, the so-called threat comes from a citizen demanding appropriate justification

for use of public funds. There is nothing at all to fear or feel threatened by except your answer to the question. As journalists, you should be more concerned with the answers and not the questions.

Fourth, don't bandy terms like "libel" and "defamation" around loosely. Above all, never label or insinuate that a reader's criticism of you is libelous or defamatory. If it was libelous or defamatory you shouldn't have printed it in the first place. The publication that prints the offending piece is culpable for any damage it causes. It would be argued that you defamed yourselves. Additionally, who cares if you don't appreciate being called "so-called" journalists? That is exactly what you are until you earn the respect the title carries. And Finally, even if the letter was libelous, you, the publication's representatives, are public figures. You are funded publicly and you

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