

# The Internet: Roadkill On The Electronic Superhighway

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

Well, there really are not that many bodies, not at the level of peasants anyway. A few rushed out early on to buy the latest and biggest guides, manuals, user's set, only to find that the publishers were advertising updates before the original order came in the mail. Frustrating, but as disastrous as getting the wrong software, at the wrong time, at the wrong place.

Our mini-disasters usually have a price tag under a hundred dollars, while big companies are risking hundreds of millions on new technology on which the paint is scarcely dry. True, these firms are equipped with very, very deep pockets, but keep in mind that they are well-experienced at recouping their losses out of our quite shallow pockets. Take, for instance, the recent billion dollar bidding at the government auction of the new radio frequency channels which "could" deliver vast new spectra of telecommunications -- right to our home, autos or office and without any cable or telephone wires.

Cool baby! Way out, whatever turns on your transmission towers. But, tell me, pretty please, who is going to furnish and pay the salaries of all the on-line operators that will be required at each household to register, sort, file and archive all the reams of information pouring in by the minute, twenty-four hours a day? A former student of mine, who works at Intel, informs me that it would take thirty-thousand dollars worth of specialized software to accomplish the task automatically.

Of course, no one is serious about stationing communication specialists at each home, but even without the hype and publicity from the advertising agencies, their psychologists and

consumer pitchmen, it has become more and more obvious that an inordinate amount of a person's time is being consumed by electronic intrusions (solicited or not). And don't mention the mail person who is walking bowlegged from the weight of even more "information" or the sleepless "onliner".

It was Marshall McLuhan who said, "The medium is the message". Well, you don't have to be a renowned professor from Montreal to get the message here. This serendipitous avalanche of alleged information will, if allowed, wrap one in a "World Wide Web" alright. "You may have access to our lines or airwaves 24 hours a day", they say. Will they nurse you through a nervous breakdown or bankruptcy? However, the message for some will be, "There's got to be money here somewhere".

On the lighter side, there are the children in your home (don't cringe). The family market is certainly booming and we may look forward to many enjoyable evenings of togetherness -- after we bring in the militia to sort out the time-share allocations for on-line shopping, banking, gossip, homework or any other of the electric electronics. Vistas at hand: And be wary of many of the new CD-ROMS.

And, of course, if you get really caught up in the game, you can learn how to create and distribute your own documents on the "World Wide Web". Also, you may go down to your favorite bookstore and spend from \$4.95 to \$495 on relevant books, manuals, guides, and "Yellow Pages" -- or just order them on The Net! What in the world was I thinking of? Have fun, and don't become "roadkill" -- the environment, you know.

## Citizens Committed to Community

A group called Citizens Committed to Community (the 3 C's) is working to bring economic development to the Portsmouth neighborhood of north Portland.

According to Pat Johnson, co-chair, the group is comprised of people from the Portsmouth Neighborhood Association, Columbia Villa/Tamaracks Residents Council, Housing Authority of Portland and the city.

"Our mission is to bring economic development of a commercial center to all residents of the Portsmouth neighborhood, Johnson said. "Some of your neighbors will be coming to your home with a survey for your opinion on what your needs are."

The group holds open evening meetings once a month. All are residents are welcome. Call Johnson at 735-3066 or co-chair Dolores Ireland at 283-3761 for information.

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