**Handouts of Lecture 7 Professional Practices (IT)**

**Lecture Title: Networking (Cont)**

**Text Messaging**

Text messaging greatly increases the versatility of cell phones as information-sharing platforms. Some of the most impressive uses of text messaging are in developing countries, where people do not have easy access to the Internet, banks, and other services taken for granted by people in more developed countries.

**Transforming Lives in Developing Countries**

Text-message-based services such as M-PESA in Kenya allow people in developing countries to save money and pay bills using their cell phones, bypassing traditional banks. To pay a bill or transfer funds to a friend, the user simply types a text message that the recipient is able to turn into cash at any M-PESA office. For the past decade, Kenya’s Agricultural Commodities Exchange has partnered with Safaricom to provide information about crop prices to farmers via a text messaging service. Another service, iCow, uses voice and text messaging to help dairy farmers keep track of the gestation of their cows [31]. Counterfeit medicine is a serious problem in many African and Asian countries. Ghanian Bright Simons came up with the idea of putting scratch cards with unique codes on packages of medicine. After scratching the package to reveal the code, a customer can text the code to a designated number to learn if the drug is genuine.

**Twitter**

Twitter is a Web-based social networking service that allows its users to send out text messages known as tweets. Tweets are limited to 140 characters because that’s the maximum length of a cell phone text message. The service is popular because people who want their friends to know what they are doing find it more convenient to post a single tweet than to type a bunch of text messages. Many people also use Twitter as a blogging tool; they make their tweets public so that anyone can read them. Other Twitter members never post tweets, but they sign up to follow the tweets posted by other people they are interested in. More than 200 million people use Twitter, making it one of the most popular Web services in the world. Users posted 7,196 tweets per second at the conclusion of the exciting World Cup Final soccer match between the United States and Japan in 2011.

**Censorship**

Censorship is the attempt to suppress or regulate public access to material considered offensive or harmful. Historically, most censorship has been exercised by governments and religious institutions. For example, Roman censors banished the poets Ovid and Juvenal for their writings. During the Middle Ages the Inquisition suppressed the publication of many books, including the work of Galileo Galilei. Censorship became a much more complicated issue with the invention of the printing press. The printing press broke the virtual monopoly held by governments and religious institutions on distributing material to a large audience, and the increase in printed material resulted in a greater number of literate people. For the first time, private individuals could broadcast their ideas to others on a wide scale. In Western democracies, the gradual separation of church and state left the government as the sole institution responsible for censorship. In other parts of the world, such as the Middle East, religious institutions continue to play a significant role in determining what material should be accessible to the public.

**Forms of Direct Censorship**

Direct censorship has three forms: government monopolization, prepublication review, and licensing and registration. The first form of direct censorship is government monopolization. In the former Soviet Union, for example, the government owned all the television stations, radio stations, and newspapers. Private organizations could not even own a photocopy machine. Government monopolization is an effective way to suppress the flow of information. Modern computer and communication technology makes government monopolization much more difficult than in the past. Prepublication review is the second form of direct censorship. This form of censorship is essential for material the government wishes to keep secret, such as information about its nuclear weapons program. Most governments have laws restricting the publication of information that would harm the national security. In addition, autocratic governments typically block publication of material deemed injurious to the reputations of their rulers. The third form of direct censorship is licensing and registration. This form of censorship is typically used to control media with limited bandwidth. For example, there are a limited number of radio and television stations that can be accommodated on the electromagnetic spectrum. Hence a radio or television station must obtain a license to broadcast at a particular frequency. Licensing invites censorship. For example, the US Federal Communications Commission has banned the use of certain four-letter words.

**Self-censorship**

Perhaps the most common form of censorship is self-censorship: a group deciding for itself not to publish material. In some countries a publisher may censor itself in order to avoid persecution. For example, after US-led forces toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein in April 2003, CNN’s chief news executive, Eason Jordan, admitted that CNN had suppressed negative information about the actions of the Iraqi government for more than a decade in order to keep CNN’s Baghdad bureau open and protect Iraqi employees of CNN. In other countries, publishers may want to maintain good relations with government officials. Publications compete with each other for access to information. Often this information is available only from government sources. Publishers know that if they offend the government, their reporters may not be given access to as much information as reporters for rival publications, putting them at a competitive disadvantage. This knowledge can lead a “free” press to censor itself. Publishers have adopted ratings systems as a way of helping people decide if they (or their children) should access particular offerings. For example, television stations in the United States broadcast shows with “mature content” late in the evening. Voluntary rating systems help people decide if they (or their children) will see a movie, watch a television show, or listen to a CD. The Web does not have a universally accepted ratings system. Some Web sites practice a form of labeling. For example, the home page may warn the user that the site contains nudity and require the user to click on an “I agree” button to enter the site. However, other sites have no such warnings. People who stumble onto these sites are immediately confronted with images and text they may find offensive.

**Challenges Posed by the Internet**

Five characteristics of the Internet make censorship more difficult: 1. Unlike traditional one-to-many broadcast media, the Internet supports many-to-many communications. While it is relatively easy for a government to shut down a newspaper or a radio station, it is very difficult for a government to prevent an idea from being published on the Internet, where millions of people have the ability to post Web pages. 2. The Internet is dynamic. Millions of new computers are being connected to the Internet each year. 3. The Internet is huge. There is simply no way for a team of human censors to keep track of everything that is posted on the Web. While automated tools are available, they are fallible. Hence any attempt to control access to material stored on the Internet cannot be 100 percent effective. 4. The Internet is global. National governments have limited authority to restrict activities happening outside their borders. 5. It is hard to distinguish between children and adults on the Internet. How can an “adult” Web site verify the age of someone attempting to enter the site?

**Governmental Filtering and Surveillance**

Despite the difficulties facing those who would seek to censor Internet content, studies reveal that governments around the globe are in fact limiting access to the Internet in a variety of ways. One approach is to make the Internet virtually inaccessible. The governments of Cuba and North Korea make it difficult for ordinary citizens to use the Internet to communicate with the rest of the world. In other countries, Internet access is easier but still carefully controlled. Saudi Arabians gained access to the Internet in 1999, after the government installed a centralized control center outside Riyadh. Virtually all Internet traffic flows through this control center, which blocks pornography sites, gambling sites, and many other pages deemed to be offensive to Islam or the government of Saudi Arabia. Blocked sites and pages are from such diverse categories as Christian evangelism, women’s health and sexuality issues, music and movies, gay rights, Middle Eastern politics, and information about ways to circumvent Web filtering. The Chinese government has blocked access to the Internet during times of social unrest. For example, in July 2009, China responded to ethnic riots in the autonomous region of Xinjiang by turning off Internet service to the entire region for ten months. China has also built one of the world’s most sophisticated Web filtering systems. The Great Firewall of China prevents Chinese citizens from accessing certain Internet content by blocking messages coming from blacklisted sites. The government employs human censors to identify sites that should be blacklisted. Meanwhile, Western nations have different standards about what is acceptable and what is not. For example, Germany forbids access to any neo-Nazi Web site, but Web surfers in the United States can access many such sites.

**Ethical Perspectives on Censorship**

It is interesting that Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, who had quite different ethical theories, had similar views regarding censorship.

**KANT’S views on censorship**

As a thinker in the tradition of the Enlightenment, Kant’s motto was, “Have courage to use your own reason”. Kant asks the rhetorical question, “Why don’t people think for themselves?” and answers it: “Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction, nevertheless remain under lifelong tutelage, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so easy not to be of age. If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay—others will readily undertake the irksome work for me”. The Enlightenment was a reaction to the institutional control over thought held by the aristocracy and the Church. Kant believed he was living in a time in which the obstacles preventing people from exercising their own reason were being removed. He opposed censorship as a backward step.

**MILL’S views on censorship**

John Stuart Mill also championed freedom of expression. He gave four reasons why freedom of opinion, and freedom of expression of opinion, were necessary. First, none of us is infallible. All of us are capable of error. If we prevent someone from voicing their opinion, we may actually be silencing the voice of truth. Second, while the opinion expressed by someone may be erroneous, it may yet contain a kernel of truth. In general, the majority opinion is not the whole truth. We ought to let all opinions be voiced so that all parts of the truth are heard. Third, even if the majority opinion should happen to be the whole truth, it is in the clash of ideas that this truth is rationally tested and validated. The whole truth left untested is simply a prejudice. Fourth, an opinion that has been tested in the fire of a free and open discourse is more likely to have a “vital effect on the character and conduct”. Therefore, Mill, like Kant, fundamentally supported the free exchange of ideas, with the conviction that good ideas would prevail over bad ones. Applying their philosophy to the World Wide Web, it seems they would support the free exchange of opinions and oppose any kind of government censorship of opinions.

**MILL’S principle of harm**

However, a lack of government censorship can also lead to harm. Under what circumstances should the government intervene? Mill proposed the principle of harm as a way of deciding when an institution should intervene in the conduct of an individual. Principle of Harm “The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.” In other words, the government should not get involved in the private activities of individuals, even if the individuals are doing something to harm themselves.

**Freedom of Expression**

In the United States, freedom of expression is one of the most cherished—and most controversial—rights. In this section we explain the history behind the adoption of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. We also explore why the freedom of expression has not been treated as an absolute right.

Restrictions on freedom of speech in England date back to 1275 and a law called De Scandalis Magnatum. According to this law, a person could be imprisoned for spreading stories about the King that could have the effect of weakening the loyalty of his subjects. The scope of the law became much broader through numerous revisions over the next two centuries. Eventually it encompassed seditious words and words spoken against a wide variety of government officials, including justices . De Scandalis Magnatum was administered by the Court of Star Chamber, or “Star Chamber” for short. The Star Chamber reported directly to the King, and it did not have to obey traditional rules of evidence. Rulings of the Star Chamber demonstrated that a person could be convicted for making a verbal insult or for something written in a private letter. The Star Chamber was abolished in 1641, but the law continued to be enforced through Common Law courts. At the end of the eighteenth century, freedom of the press in England and its colonies meant freedom to print without a license. In other words, there were no prior restraints on publication. People could publish what they pleased. However, those who published material found to be seditious or libelous would face severe consequences.

**First amendment to the United States constitution**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

**Freedom of Expression Not an Absolute Right**

The primary purpose of the First Amendment’s free speech guarantee is political. Free speech allows an open discussion of public issues. It helps make government responsive to the will of the people. However, the First Amendment right to free expression is not limited to political speech. Nonpolitical speech is also covered. There are good reasons for protecting nonpolitical as well as political speech. First, it is sometimes hard to draw the line between the two. Asking a judge to make the distinction turns it into a political decision. Second, society can benefit from nonpolitical as well as political speech. Hence the free speech guarantee of the First Amendment also promotes scientific and artistic expression. For the same reason, the definition of “speech” encompasses more than words. Protected “speech” includes art and certain kinds of conduct, such as burning an American flag. Decisions by the US Supreme Court have made clear that freedom of expression is not an absolute right. Instead, the private right to freedom of expression must be balanced against the public good. Those who abuse this freedom and harm the public may be punished.

**FCC v. Pacifica Foundation et al.**

To illustrate limits to First Amendment protections, we consider the decision of the US Supreme Court in the case of Federal Communications Commission v. Pacifica Foundation et al. In 1973 George Carlin recorded a performance made in front of a live audience in California. One track on the resulting record is a 12-minute monologue called “Filthy Words.” In the monologue Carlin lists seven words that “you couldn’t say on the public, ah, airwaves, um, the ones you definitely wouldn’t say, ever”. The audience laughs as Carlin spends the rest of the monologue creating colloquialisms from the list of banned words.

On the afternoon of October 30, 1973, counterculture radio station WBAI in New York aired “Filthy Words” after warning listeners the monologue contained “sensitive language which might be regarded as offensive to some”. A few weeks after the broadcast, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) received a complaint from a man who had heard the broadcast on his car radio in the presence of his son. In response to this complaint, the FCC issued a declaratory order and informed Pacifica Foundation (the operator of WBAI) that the order would be placed in the station’s license file. The FCC warned Pacifica Foundation that further complaints could lead to sanctions. Pacifica sued the FCC, and the resulting legal battle reached the US Supreme Court. In 1978 the Supreme Court ruled, in a 5–4 decision, that the FCC did not violate the First Amendment. The majority opinion states, “Of all forms of communication, it is broadcasting that has received the most limited First Amendment protection.” There are two reasons why broadcasters have less protection than booksellers or theater owners:

1. “Broadcast media have a uniquely pervasive presence in the lives of all Americans.” Offensive, indecent material is broadcast into the privacy of citizens’ homes. Since people can change stations or turn their radios on or off at any time, prior warnings cannot completely protect people from being exposed to offensive material. While someone may turn off the radio after hearing something indecent that does not undo a harm that has already occurred. 2. “Broadcasting is uniquely accessible to children, even those too young to read.” In contrast, restricting children’s access to offensive or indecent material is possible in bookstores and movie theaters.

**Case Study: Kate’s Blog**

* Kate: Maintains a popular “life on campus” blog
* Jerry: Another student; active in Whig Party
* At private birthday party, someone gives Jerry a Tory Party T-shirt as a gag, and Jerry puts it on
* Kate uses cell phone to take picture of Jerry when he isn’t looking, posts it on her blog
* Story read by many people on and off campus
* Jerry confronts Kate and demands she remove photo; she complies, and they remain friends
* Kate’s blog and Jerry both become more popular

**Kantian analysis**

By uploading Jerry’s photo to her blog without first asking his permission, Kate didn’t respect Jerry’s autonomy. Instead, she treated him as a means to her end of increasing the readership of her Web site. Therefore, her action was wrong according to the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative.

**Social contract theory analysis**

The birthday party was held in the apartment of one of Jerry’s friends. In this private setting and among friends Jerry had a legitimate expectation that what happened during the party would not be broadcast to the world. By secretly taking a photo of Jerry doing something out of character and posting that photo on her blog, Kate violated Jerry’s right to privacy. For this reason Kate’s action was wrong.

**Act Utilitarian Analysis**

* Benefits
  + Popularity of Kate’s blog increased (definitely)
  + Jerry become more popular on campus (definitely)
* Harms
  + Jerry’s anger at Kate (only temporary)
  + Photo could discredit Jerry at some point in future (unlikely)
* Benefits greater than harms, so Kate did a good thing

***Reference:***

***Lecture topic: Networking slides***

***Gao, Y. (2012). Ethics for the Information Age by Michael J. Quinn. World Libraries, 20(1).***