BT306 IT in Society

Assignment 1

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Question

Explain why the Internet and other technologies are on information overload and are having important social effects. What is their depth of impact on society?

Miasma

The depth of impact on society by the Internet is constantly felt and examined and the information overload is psychologically unknown beyond speculation. Technological revolutions are both helpful to humankind, and inherently dangerous. Gross (1997) states that despite James Madison foreseeing the dangers of 'factions' they were in full bloom by the time of Alexis de Tocqueville's visit to America in 1831. De Tocqueville reported that 'political associations' and the 'freedom of association', while important to prosperity and liberty, had the potential to be 'perverted and carried to excess by others' (de Tocqueville, 1835:81) and to contrive a 'tyranny of the majority'. Whilst many these interest groups transformed themselves into invaluable civil rights movements, others, notably business-oriented associations, and in our observation computer manufacturers, remained dedicated to narrow goals, often contrary to the common weal. These 'lobby groups', ably conducted by Information and Communication Technologies (ITCs), are starting to appear to represent a tyranny of the minority, holding a grip on modern politics that forces legislation against the interests of the majority. The important lesson here is that increasing democratisation, a feature already much in evidence since the beginning of the computer revolution, does not necessarily mean increasing liberty or the long-term global introduction of the kind of Kantian ethical standards envisaged by consumer software proliferation and it's businesses. The 'tyranny of the minority' is demonstrated aptly by terrorist organisations using Internet access to the Middle Eastern majority.

Surely the Robespierre's French 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité', examined by de Tocqueville, required a dictatorial conclusion? Much like communist Russia needed Stalinesque obsequence. Note Robespierre's words were publicly misconstrued as "unity, indivisibility of the Republic; liberty, equality or death" in Paris in 1793. That supposed Égalité led to the Napoleonic Wars, perhaps emulating the Parisians' last word. 'Death' was omniscient to Napoleon, let alone the proceeding Reign of Terror. The ICT community displays its' improvement to modern life, but also itself lends to widely human behavioural history. Philosophy is as cognitive in ITC as it mostly has been. Note that MS Word does not understand linguistic differences, whilst the legal construction of global affairs is largely a Latin comprehension. Cultural behavior is as confusing in a technically enhanced environment as it has been in democratic growth. Dictatorships have been historically enhanced by communication expediency. Society might well be both developed and mitigated by ICTs. Examination of information overload and society we have studied for long years. Computers, and notably the

Internet's, impact are experimental. But the thoughts of people such as Descartes and de Tocqueville, and the history of society, are still highly relevant. But the miasma of the Internet and other technologies is ongoing.

Not a computing pariah in itself

In a more positive respect I have remained in contact with my girlfriend over 7000 miles due to ITC means. The resulting marriage, and human benefit, was enabled primarily through constant Internet communication. I can certainly vouch for ITC's assistance in psychological and social exuberance, as do Rowe and Thompson (1996) and Mackenzie and Wajcman (1999). Seemingly the social world can take advantage as much as Liang and Wang's (1999) supposed governmental benefit and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (2001) detriment. Koren (2001:1) describes software engineering as 'a complicated….and many-sided discipline', which is literally immutable with it's usage. The social consequences of the widespread diffusion of communication and information technologies are general. The outstanding goals of the French Revolution are as debateable as de Tocqueville's (1856) benefits to democracy. Perhaps love, that magnificence of human emotion, in the ITC community, is like CS Lewis's description of war, a 'permanent human situation' (Lewis, 2001). One dissociated by time and distance. One that can gives us human unity. My wife and I think so. Perhaps Post's (1999:147) notice of ITC control 'shaping human social behaviour' is not as hypercritical as he originally conceives, although the decentralisation is an obstacle unless overcome by emotion. Multinational communication is not a pariah, although the Internet, or email, can disrupt as well as heighten multiethnic understanding, depending largely on communal requirement: Liang and Wang see it as a way of financial and military improvement; I do not. Social impact, either way, is vast.

But a human computing pariah

The applications available during the development of ITC have given rise to the idea that the IT community might have to police itself. This is a sensible supplication considering the sustained police force does not have the manpower available to observe the number of 'pedestrians' on the Internet. These pedestrians can commit crime outside civil or national boundaries. The law of their land may not be applicable to Internet to Internet applications or downloadable software. A recent case of child pornography mentioned on the BBC News gives both fear and loathing, and encouragement to criminals, to society. This is the kind of fear that inaugurated gun laws in the early United States. Note of the immortality of the ITC available is recorded by BBC (2006) which records that despite financial or Internet firms claiming to 'stamp out' commercial child pornography 'reports of child pornography passed to the US National Center for Missing & Exploited Children CyberTipline have increased from 24,000 reports in 2001 to more than 340,000 in 2005'. These increases are disconcerting despite the attempt to 'stamp out'. Again, criminal behaviour and terrorism are accessible online, in communication if not in an anti-social or illegal sense. It is likely that the law will need constant renewal. Even if technically legal, privacy still needs to be upheld. Privacy and autonomy are misused in Internet behaviour without consent.

One could argue that the 'freedom of information' is sacrosanct, although there has been recent question about that social question in the wake of the Danish publication of cartoons of Allah. If the validity of the Press is questionable between ethnic groups, individual rights are not suitable for mass computer use. That can be seen almost daily in Iraq. The Guardian (2003) records that 'according to some, exaggerated fears over a possible cyber-terrorist attack is part of that attempt to exert control over the internet'. From the ex-regime that stated that 'Saddam has responded by closing down the Internet and purging all such communications' we can now see the Shia'a/Sunni divide broadening into semi-daily warfare under democratic bans to not close Web access. In the same way that democracy supposedly spreads using mass communication methods, so does Hollywood inspired criminal 'glamour'. Clearly the same fears were felt inside the Islamic world although 'the internet wasn't some sort of inherently "pure" channel, but could be used by all sides to spread disinformation and propaganda'. Iran seems to see the use of the Internet with the same prospect as Liang and Wang do. The OpenNet Initiative (2005) tells that the Republic of Yemen has instigated Internet Filtering to it's population. Whilst some of the filtering is profoundly safety conscious, some is very undemocratic.

In their introduction Craig, Garrot & Amernic (2001) describe the features of Web designs that 'draw attention to their potential to influence social cognition.' They discuss the worldwide power of Microsoft, noted by Bill Gates himself as 'on top of the world'. That comment insinuates to myself that Microsoft almost has political ability navigated by ITC. It also brings into mind the celebrated liberal axiom that 'power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' Financial and political reward, not to mention E-Learning, may be contributed to our society by the Internet on a corporate basis. Bennett and Entman (2001) discuss the computerised mediation of politics in a democratic environment, noting Microsoft once. Of course, a vast majority of the world does not have democratic government, and so much Internet space may be given to what is detrimental to democratic belief.

Teeple (2000) points to the possible advent of a Second Bourgeois Revolution as a consequence of the information age. This, he debates, combines with capitalism's dependence on technology improving human life. A reliance of this sort leaves the Internet as guardian of human existence; one that devolves philosophical guidance from which we have never devolved, regardless of technological amenity. One that cannot replace religious, intellectual, physical or emotional stimulation and understanding, no matter what capitalism or socialism's promises. One that humanity, in it's recognisable essence, cannot relate to, or enjoy. That lack of pleasure could well lead to a Second Bourgeois Revolution if ITC encapsulates us like other dictatorships have. IT in society may well lend aid to war, as society is quite capable of given under dictatorship under transmitted communication. Hitler was propelled to power by public relations, as Al Queda is in our technically proficient world. MI5 (2004) warns of Internet misconception leading to support of terrorism. Governmental control using ICT is peripheral in both the United States and Iran, and even less trusted factions. Propaganda is strongly dispersed propaganda using the Internet. Why aid these factions because our society is their enemy? Hijazi (2004) notes governmental forces attempting to confuse the enemy using public Web proliferation in warfare. 'Unrestricted warfare' again using unrestricted computers. Teeple (2000) relates the 'decline of social reform' with 21st Century technology and Brain (2004) observes the increased requirement on his staff under 'cyber crime' increases. Whilst

the Module Descriptor writes of 'technology as a theoretical framework' one should note that theory is not necessarily conclusive and hypotheses are debateable by nature.

On a more positive note, Kotz & Gray (1999) envisaged a mobile agent benefit for all Internet users with an exponential growth in the information available. On a educational basis this is theoretically good for those with limited access to potent schooling and libraries. Mobile agents will also decrease the amount of time required to process information. The real downside is that mobile code can give you data you do not find essential and allow unmitigated data that is merely an attempt to sell anything the propagating company desires. There are increasing numbers of cases reported where children use their parent's credit cards with ease. Mobile technology can improve lives and Kotz & Gray see it as the future of the Internet. By Tanner, Jadbabaie & Pappas (2003) had noticed the problem of motion in multiple autonomous agents, particularly in biology, social behaviour, statistical physics and computer graphics. Despite considerable effort to understand autonomous agents, Internet use ramifications pragment. It is likely this uncertainty of blending Internet performance will guide people wrongly and towards unwanted output. Human behaviourism is most difficult to augment on the Web, and Kotz & Gray's positivity is demonstrative of the Internet's changing pace.

Summary

The international and multi-ethnic world both worry about Internet use, though any form of conniption is conceivably warranted under differing laws. Perception is free from true perception under governmental or ITC control. The defence of the key principle of actively shaping technological change is not intercontinental. Internet use is conductive to communication, but also other mass societal behaviours. Like any new technology, the affects are uncertain until sufficient time has passed. Affectation of information overload to society will be as varied as differing society is itself. Multinational friends are more interesting, but one must appreciate their differences, as well as appreciate their finery: an examination of ITC, which we are slowly getting to know, and of society, which remains remarkably historic. Please read Bynum's (2001) opinion that computer ethics will continue to presuppose traditional systems.

Words: 1934 (excluding Glossary and References)

Glossary

de Tocqueville, Alexis (1805-1859)	French historian and political scientist.
Descartes, René (1596-1650)	Rationalist philosopher and mathematician.

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