Netizens and Communication: A new Paradigm
by Ronda Hauben

[Note: This is a slightly edited version of a talk presented on May 1, 2012 at a small celebration in honor of the 15th Anniversary of the publication of the print edition of the book *Netizens*]

I – Looking Back

Fifteen years ago on May 1, 1997, the print edition of *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* was published in English. Later that year, in October, a Japanese translation of the book was published. Today we are celebrating the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of this event.

In honor of this occasion I want to both look back and look forward toward trying to assess the significance of the book and of Michael Hauben's discovery of the emergence of the netizen. I want to briefly look at what has happened in the interim of these 15 years toward trying to understand what new advance this development makes possible.

By the early 1990s, Michael recognized that the Internet was a significant new development and that it would have an impact on our world. He was curious about what that impact would be and what could help it to have a beneficial impact.

The book was compiled from a series of articles written by Michael and by me which were posted on the Net as they were written and which sometimes led to substantial comments and discussion.

The most important article in the book was clearly Michael's article, "The Net and Netizens: the Impact the Net Has on People's Lives."

Michael opened the article with the prophetic words, which appeared online first in 1993:

"Welcome to the 21st Century. You are a Netizen (a Net Citizen) and you exist as a citizen of the world thanks to the global connectivity that the Net makes possible. You consider everyone as your compatriot. You physically live in one country but you are in contact with much of the world via the global computer network. Virtually, you live next door to every other single Netizen in the world. Geographical separation is replaced by existence in the same virtual space." [*Netizens*, Chapter 1, p. 3]

Michael goes on to explain that what he is predicting is not yet the reality. In fact many people around the world were just becoming connected to the Internet during the period in which these words were written and posted on various different networks that existed at the time.

But now fifteen years after the publication of the print edition of *Netizens*, this description is very much the reality for our time and for many it is hard to remember or understand the world without the Net.

Similarly, in his articles that are collected in the *Netizens* book, Michael looked at the pioneering vision that gave birth to the Internet, he looked at the role of computer science in the building of the ARPANET network, at the potential impact that the Net and Netizen would have on politics, on journalism, and on the revolution in ideas that the Net and Netizen would bring about, comparing this to the advance brought about by the printing press. The last chapter of the book is an article Michael wrote early on about the need for a watchdog function over government in order to make democracy possible.

By the time the book was published in a print edition, it had been freely available online for three years. This was a period when the U.S. government was determined to change the nature of the Net from the public and scientific infrastructure that had been built with public and educational funds around the world to a commercially driven entity. While there were people online at the time promoting the privatization and commercialization of the Internet, the concept of netizen was embraced by others, by many who supported the public and collaborative nature of the Internet and who wanted this to grow and flourish.

The article "The Net and Netizens" grew out of a research project that Michael had done for a class at Columbia University in Computer Ethics. Michael was interested in the impact of the Net and so he formulated several questions and sent them out online. This was a pioneering project at the time and the results he got back helped to establish the fact that the Net was having an important impact on a number of people's lives.

Michael put together the results of his research in the article "The Net and Netizens" and posted it online. This helped the concept of netizen to spread and to be embraced around the world. The netizen, it is important to clarify, was not intended to describe every net user. Rather netizen was the word to describe those on the Net who took up to support the public and collaborative nature of the Net and to help it to grow and flourish. Netizens at the time often had the hope that their efforts online would be helpful toward creating a better world.

Describing this experience in a speech he gave in Japan and which subsequently became the preface to the *Netizens* book, Michael explained:

"In conducting research five years ago online to determine people's uses of the global computer communications network, I became aware that there was a new social institution, an electronic commons, developing. It was exciting to explore this new social institution. Others online shared this excitement. I discovered from those who wrote me that the people I was writing about were citizens of the Net or Netizens." [Netizens, Preface, p. ix]

Michael's work which is included in the book and the subsequent work he did recognized

the advance made possible by the Internet and the emergence of the Netizen.

The book is not only about what is wrong with the old politics, or media, but more importantly, the implications for the emergence of new developments, of a new politics, of a new form of citizenship, and of what Michael called the "poor man's version of the mass media." He focused on what was new or emerging and recognized the promise for the future represented by what was only at the time in an early stage of development. For example, Michael recognized that the collaborative contributions for a new media would far exceed what the old media had achieved. "As people continue to connect to Usenet and other discussion forums, the collective population will contribute back to the human community this new form of news," he wrote. [*Netizens*, Chapter 13, p. 233] In order to consider the impact of Michael's work and of the publication of the book, both in its online form and in the print edition, I want to look at some of the implications of what has been written since about netizens.

II – Mark Poster on the Implications of the Concept of Netizen

One interesting example is in a book on the impact of the Internet and globalization by Mark Poster, a media theorist. The book's title is *Information Please*. The book was published in 2006. While Poster doesn't make any explicit reference to the book *Netizens* he finds the concept he has seen used online to be an important one. He offers some theoretical discussion on the use of the "netizen" concept.

Referring to the concept of citizen, Poster is interested in the relationship of the citizen to government, and in the empowering of the citizen to be able to affect the actions of one's government. He considers the "Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen" as a monument from the French Revolution of 1789. He explains that the idea of the Rights of Man was one effort to empower people to deal with governments. But this was not adequate and the concept of the rights of the citizen, he proposes, was an important addition.

"Human rights and citizenship," he writes, "are tied together and reinforce each other in the battle against the ruling classes." [*Information Please*, p. 68] He proposes that "these rights are ensured by their inscription in constitutions that found governments and they persist in their association with those governments as the ground of political authority."[Ibid, p. 68]

But with the coming of what he calls the age of globalization, Poster wonders if the concept "citizen" can continue to signify democracy. He wonders if the concept is up to the task.

"The conditions of globalization and networked media," he writes, present a new situation "in which the human is recast and along with it the citizen."[Ibid, p.70] "The deepening of globalization processes strips the citizen of power," he writes. "As economic processes become globalized, the nation-state loses its ability to protect its

population. The citizen thereby loses her ability to elect leaders who effectively pursue her interests." [Ibid, p. 71]

In this situation, "the figure of the citizen is placed in a defensive position." [Ibid] There is a need, however, to find instead of a defensive position, an offensive one.

Also he is interested in the media and its role in this new paradigm. "We need to examine the role of the media in globalizing practices that construct new subjects," Poster writes. "We need especially to examine those media that cross national boundaries and to inquire if they form or may form the basis for a new set of political relations." [Ibid, p. 77]

In this context, for the new media, "the important questions, rather are these," he proposes: "Can the new media promote the construction of new political forms not tied to historical, territorial powers? What are the characteristics of new media that promote new political relations and new political subjects? How can these be furthered or enhanced by political action?" [Ibid, p. 78]

"In contrast to the citizen of the nation," he notices, the name often given to the political subject constituted on the Net is "netizen." While Poster makes it seem that the consciousness among some online of themselves as "netizens" just appeared online spontaneously, this is not accurate.

Before Michael's work, netizen as a concept was rarely if ever referred to. The paper "The Net and Netizens" introduced and developed the concept of "netizen." This paper was widely circulated online. Gradually the use of the concept of netizen became increasingly common. Michael's work was a process of doing research online, summarizing the research, analyzing it and then putting the research back online, and of people embracing it. This was the process by which the foundation for the concept of "netizen" was established.

Considering this background, the observations that Poster makes of how the concept of "netizen" is used online represents recognition of the significant role for the netizen in the future development of the body politic. "The netizen," Poster writes, "might be the formative figure in a new kind of political relation, one that shares allegiance to the nation with allegiance to the Net and to the planetary political spaces it inaugurates." [Ibid, p. 78]

This new phenomenon, Poster concludes, "will likely change the relation of forces around the globe. In such an eventuality, the figure of the netizen might serve as a critical concept in the politics of democratization." [Ibid, p. 83]

III – The Era of the Netizen

While Poster characterizes our period as the age of globalization, I want to offer a different view. I want to propose that we are in an era demarcated by the creation of the

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Internet and the emergence of the netizen. A more accurate characterization of this period is as the "Era of the Netizen."

The years since the publication of the book *Netizens* have been marked by many interesting developments that have been made possible by the growth and development of the Internet and the spread of netizens around the world. I don't have the time to go into these today but I will refer to a few examples to give a flavor of the kind of developments I am referring to.

A recent article by Vinay Kamat in the Reader's Opinion section of the *Times of India* referred to something I had written. Quoting my article, the *Times of India* article said, "Not only is the Internet a laboratory for democracy, but the scale of participation and contribution is unprecedented. Online discussion makes it possible for netizens to become active individuals and group actors in social and public affairs. The Internet makes it possible for netizens to speak out independently of institutions or officials." [See "We are looking at the Fifth Estate", by Vinay Kamat, Reader's Opinion, *Times of India*, December 16, 2011, p. 2. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/opinion/edit-page/We-are-looking-at-the-fifth-estate/opinions/11133662.cms. The quote is taken from, The Rise of Netizen Democracy: A Case Study of Netizens' Impact on Democracy in South Korea by Ronda Hauben. For the URL, see http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120/other/misc/korean-democracy.txt]

Kamat points to the growing number of netizens in China and India and the large proportion of the population in South Korea who are connected to the Internet. "Will it evolve into a fifth estate?" the article asks, contrasting netizens' discussion online with the power of the 4th estate, i.e., the mainstream media.

"Will social and political discussion in social media grow into deliberation?" asks Kamat. "Will opinions expressed be merely 'rabble rousing' or will they be 'reflective' instead of 'impulsive'?"

One must recognize, the article explains, the new situation online and the fact that it is important to understand the nature of this new media and not merely look at it through the lens of the old media. What is the nature of this new media and how does it differ from the old? This is an important area for further research and discussion.

IV – Looking for a Model

While I was in South Korea in 2008, a friend asked if there is a model for democracy that could be helpful for South Korea – like in some country perhaps in Scandinavia. Thinking about the question I realized it was more complex than it seemed on the surface.

What I realized is that it isn't that one can take a model from the period before the Internet, from before the emergence of the netizen. It is instead necessary that models for a more democratic society or nation in our times be models that include netizen

participation in the society. Both South Korea and China are places where the role of netizens is important in building more democratic structures for the society. South Korea appears to be the most advanced in grassroots efforts to create examples of netizen forms for a more participatory decision making process. (1) But China is also a place where there are significant developments because of the Internet and netizens. (2) In China there have been a large number of issues that netizens have taken up online which have then had an impact on the mainstream media and where the online discussion has helped to bring about a change in government policy.

In looking for other models to learn from, however, I also realized that there is another relevant area of development. This is the actual process of building the Net, a prototype which is helpful to consider when seeking to understand the nature and particularity of the evolving new models for development and participation represented in the Era of the Netizen. (3)

V – Nerves of Government

In his article comparing the impact of the Net with the important impact the printing press had on society, Michael wrote:

"The Net has opened a channel for talking to the whole world to an even wider set of people than did printed books." [*Netizens*, Chapter 16, p. 299]

In my presentation today I want to focus a bit on the significance of this characteristic, on the notion that the Net has opened a communication channel available to a wide set of people.

In his study of the Net and Netizen, Michael recognized the new that was emerging. In trying to understand what impact the Net was having and would have on society, he also kept in mind that the technical processes of building the Net were important.

In order to have a conceptual framework to understand what these technical processes are, I recommend the book by Karl Deutsch titled, The *Nerves of Government*.

In the preface to his book, Deutsch writes:

"This book suggests that it might be preferable to look upon government somewhat less as a problem of power and somewhat more as a problem of steering; and it tries to show that steering is decisively a matter of communication."[*Nerves of Government*, p. xxvii)

To look at the question of government not as a problem of power, or of democracy, but as one of steering, of communication, I want to propose is a fundamental paradigm shift.

What is the difference?

While power has to do with force, with the ability to exert force on something so as to affect its direction and action, democracy has to do with the participation and effect of people on the decisions made for society. Steering and communication, however, are related to the process of the transmission of a signal through a channel. The communication process is one related to whether a signal is transmitted in a manner that distorts the signal or whether it is possible to transmit the signal accurately. The communication process and the steering that it makes possible through feedback mechanisms are an underlying framework to consider in seeking to understand what Deutsch calls the "Nerves of Government".

According to Deutsch, a nation can be looked at as a self steering communication system of a certain kind and the messages that are used to steer it are transmitted by certain channels.

I want to propose that some of the important challenges of our times relate to the exposure of the distortions of the information being spread. For example, the misrepresentations by the mainstream media about what is happening in Libya and Syria.(3) The creation and dissemination of channels of communication that make possible "the essential two way flow of information" are essential for the functioning of an autonomous learning organization, which is the form Deutsch proposes for a well functioning system.

To look at this phenomenon in a more practical way, I want to offer some considerations raised in a speech given to honor a Philippine librarian, a speech given by Zosio Lee. Lee refers to the kind of information that is transmitted as essential to the well being of a society. In considering the impact of netizens and the form of information that is being transmitted, Lee asks the question, "How do we detect if we are being manipulated or deceived?" ["Truthfulness and the Information Revolution" *JPL* 31 (2011), p. 105]

The importance of this question, he explains, is that, "We would not have survived for so long if all the information we needed to make valid judgments were all false or unreliable." [Ibid] Also, he proposes that "information has to be processed and discussed for it to acquire full meaning and significance." [Ibid, p. 106]

"When information is free, available and truthful, we are better able to make appropriate judgments, including whether existing governments fulfill their mandate to govern for the benefit of the people," Lee writes. [Ibid, p. 108]

In his article "The Computer as a Democratizer" Michael similarly explores the need for accurate information about how government is functioning. He writes, "Without information being available to them, the people may elect candidates as bad as or worse than the incumbents. Therefore there is a need to prevent government from censoring the information available to people." [*Netizens*, p. Chapter 18, p. 316]

Michael adds that, "The public needs accurate information as to how their representatives

are fulfilling their role. Once these representatives have abused their power, the principles established by Paine and Mill require that the public have the ability to replace the abusers." [Ibid, p. 317]

Channels of accurate communication are critical in order to share the information needed to determine the nature of one's government. (4)

While in general I have focused on the implications of the concept of Netizen that have emerged in the decade and a half since the publication of the print edition of the book, it is also important to realize that not everyone is friendly to the concept of Netizen. An article in the online newsfeed section of *Time* magazine proposed that the word netizen should be banished from the media.

Katy Steinmetz, who does an online column for *Time* claimed, "The word has been around for almost three decades (sic – it is less than 2 decades-ed), but the likes of the *Los Angeles Times* were using it as recently as last month. Perhaps it's time to give it a rest…."

In the same article, she proposed to banish "occupy" and "# [the hashtag]". [See "POLL: What Words Should Be Banished in 2012? NewsFeed Time.com", *Time* magazine, January 11, 2012. http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/01/11/poll-what-word-should-be-banished-in-2012/]

The following week she acknowledges that there is very little sentiment to ban the word netizen.(5)

VI – Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to point to an article in a blog at the Foreign Policy Association website which has the title: "Institutions And New World 'Netizens': Act 1"

The author, Oliver Barrett, reminds his readers of a quote from Mohandas Gandhi:

"First They Ignore You – Then They Ridicule You — Then They Fight You – Then You Win"

Barrett asks, "Will technology fundamentally change the relationship between the nation state and citizens? He asks if Net connected citizens are "a threat or opportunity for government?"

In response to this question, he writes, "But I am not convinced that government officials, even in industrialized countries, are cognizant of how technological innovations like social media have forever robbed them of their positions as trusted sources of timely and legitimate information…. I dare say that netizens have started to short-circuit the politico-corporate communications wiring, raising the political and social justice consciousness of

the hyper-connected citizen in a way that might not be in the interest of the governing classes."

"How will governments respond to this situation?" he asks. (6)

"I look forward to witnessing how Act 2 of Revolution 2.0 will unfold," he concludes.

Barrett focuses on the opinions of those in government. Instead I propose that the important challenge is for Netizens. Netizens need to understand the conceptual nature of the information and communication changes represented by the Era of the Netizen so they will be able to successfully meet the new challenges these represent for our society.(7)

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Notes

(1) In South Korea there are many interesting examples of new organizational forms or events created by netizens. For example Nosamo combined the model of an online Fan club and off line gathering of supporters who worked to get Roh Moo-hyun elected as President in South Korea in 2002. Also, OhmyNews, an online newspaper, helped to make the election of Roh Moo-hyun possible in 2002.

Science mailing lists and discussion networks contributed to by netizens helped to expose the fraudulent scientific work of a leading South Korean scientist.

In 2008 there were 106 days of candlelight demonstrations contributed to by people online and off to protest the South Korean government's adoption of a weakened set of regulations about the import of poorly inspected beef into South Korea. The debate on June 10-11 over the form the demonstration should take involved both online and offline discussion and demonstrated the generative nature of serious communication. See for example, Ronda Hauben,. "On Grassroots Journalism and Participatory Democracy"

http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120/other/netizens_draft.pdf

(2) Some examples include the anti-cnn web site that was set up to counter the inaccurate press reports in the western media about the riot in Tibet, the murder case of a Chinese waitress who killed a Communist Party official in self defense, the case of the Chongqing Nail house and the online discussion about the issues involved. See for example, Ronda Hauben, "China in the Era of the Netizen"

http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2010/02/14/china_in_the_era_of_the_netizen/

(3) See for example "Libya, the UN and Netizen Journalism", The Amateur Computerist, Vol 21, no 1, Winter 2012.

http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/Back_Issues/Back_Issues%5b2011-2015%5d/ACn21-1.pdf

Jay Hauben, "On the 15th Anniversary of Netizens: Netizens Expose Distortions and Fabrications"

http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/Book_Anniversary/presentation_2.doc

(4) As Michael explains in *Netizens*:

"Thomas Paine, in *The Rights of Man*, describes a fundamental principle of democracy. Paine writes, "that the right of altering the government was a national right, and not a right of the government'." (*Netizens*, Chapter 18, p. 316)

(5) Katy Steinmetz, "Wednesdays Words: Readers' Choice for Banned Words of 2012 and More", *Time* Newsfeed, January 18, 2012.

http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/01/18/wednesday-words-readers-choice-for-banished-word-of-2012-and-more/

(6) Will the officials that govern the modern nation state engage their respective societies in meaningful ways, or will they continue to hide their heads in the sand? From what I've learned from history and the very erudite Mohandas Gandhi – I think I know the answer." Oliver Barrett

http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2012/01/12/institutions-and-new-world-netizens-act-1/ (4/25/2012)

(7) See for example: Ronda Hauben, "The Internet Model of Socio-Economic Development and the Emergence of the Netizen"

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The Expanding Commonwealth of Learning: Printing and the Net

by Michael Hauben

A revolution in human communications is happening. People around the world are connecting to each other via the new computer telecommunication networks now known as the Net. The Net, in a significant way, is a continuation of the important technological development of the printing press. The printing press might seem to be an unlikely choice for such a comparison considering the similarity that might be seen between the Net and, for example, television, the telephone, radio, or the news media. That is why it is important to compare the current networking developments with the history of printing to understand why the printing press should be seen as the forefather of the currently developing computer networks.

With the invention of the printing press in the second half of the fifteenth century, there arose print shops and printing trades. Printing and the distribution of printed works grew rapidly. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a global computer network has emerged which gives users the ability to post and distribute their views and news broadly and inexpensively. Comparing the emergence of the printing press to the emergence of the global computer network will reveal some of the fascinating parallels which demonstrate how the Net is continuing the important social revolution that the printing press had begun.

The printing press developed out of a scribal culture surrounding the hand-copying of texts. This scribal culture could only go so far in furthering the distribution of information and ideas. Texts existed, but were largely unavailable for use by the common people. There were very few copies of books as each copy of a book had to be laboriously hand-copied from a previous copy. Relying on scribal culture for access to and distribution of knowledge caused many problems. Texts were often inaccurate as scribes made mistakes while copying them. Since a single scribe usually had access to only one copy of the text he was copying, he had no way to know if he was duplicating mistakes other scribes had made before him. The effect of copying mistakes, or non-exact copies, led to numerous "versions" of the same text. Also, scholars who wanted to use various texts had to travel in order to have a good variety of material to study. The majority of people could not afford, nor did they have the time to pursue scholarly pursuits. In her book, The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe: Elizabeth Eisenstein writes: "[one] needs to recall the conditions before texts could be set to type. No manuscript, however useful as a reference guide, could be preserved for long without undergoing corruption by copyists, and even this sort of 'preservation' rested precariously on the shifting demands of local elites and a fluctuating incidence of trained scribal labor…wear and tear...moisture, vermin, theft or threat."[1] Under such conditions, scribal efforts did not preserve many valuable texts. Plenty did not survive.

Just as the printing press essentially replaced the hand-copying of books in the Renaissance, people using computer networks are essentially creating a new method of production and distribution of creative and intellectual written works today.

Around the same time that computer communications networks started to emerge from computer communications research communities in the early1970s, the personal computer (PC) was developed by students, hobbyists, and proponents of the free-speech movement on the West Coast of the United States. The personal computer became widely

available at prices many people could afford. The PC made the power of the multipurpose computer available to a wider cross section of people who otherwise would not have had access to time on a larger minicomputer or mainframe computer which were then owned by universities, businesses and the government. The personal computer movement made computers available to the mass of people in the United States. As computers are multipurpose, they can be used to accomplish many things. A PC can be made to duplicate the functions of a printing press, with the user having little or no professional printing experience. In the past, a skilled printer combined movable type and engravings (woodcut, or otherwise) to mass produce copies of a page combining varied images (text, graphics, etc). The personal computer brings this power from the master printer to the average individual –both in price and availability. The personal computer (e.g., Apple II family, Commodore, Atari, TRS-80, etc. leading to the IBM PC family, the Apple Macintosh family, Amiga, etc.) linked to an electronic printer (first dot-matrix and daisy-wheel, later laser printers) and even more recently to scanners which convert images into usable data – make the production and reproduction of information a common task available to all. Even if one does not own a PC, one can rent time on one in a store. Copy shops (in themselves part of the continual process that made publishing ubiquitous) have begun to have PCs available to rent time on. These advances make the act of publication immensely easier. The personal computer, printers and scanners, however, do not solve the problem of distribution.

The recent development, standardization and interconnection of computers via computer communications networks help to solve the problem of distribution. Examples of on-line utilities include file transfer (FTP), remote login to other computers (Telnet), remote execution of programs, electronic mail (e-mail), access to various information databases (gopher, WWW), other information searching utilities (archie, veronica, Lycos), real-time chat (IRC), and a distributed news service which allows people to share information publicly and become citizen reporters (Netnews). The two utilities most relevant to this revolution in human communication are e-mail and Netnews (or Usenet). E-Mail allows for the private and semi-private distribution of information and communications through messages to a particular person or persons, or to a designated set of people via electronic mailing lists. Netnews allows for the public dissemination of information, opinions and questions in an open forum. When a Netizen makes a contribution to any of the many defined subject areas (newsgroups), anyone from around the world who chooses to read that particular newsgroup will have a chance to read that message. Usenet's potential for inexpensive global distribution represents one major advance of Usenet beyond the printing press.

The printing press developed sometime in the 1460s and spread quickly throughout Europe. The broad distribution of presses ended the age of the scribal culture and ushered in the age of printing. "Unknown anywhere in Europe before the mid-fifteenth century," Eisenstein writes, "printer's workshops would be found in every important municipal center by 1500."[2]

Eisenstein points out that the printing press dramatically increased the total number of books, while at the same time decreasing the number of hours of labor necessary to create books. She argues that this made the transition from hand-copied manuscripts to machine-produced books one of a revolutionary nature, and not evolutionary as claimed in much of the literature about this transformation.[3] Understanding how the printing press unleashed a communications revolution provides a basis to assess if the establishment of worldwide computer communication networking is the next communication revolution.

New communication technologies facilitate new ways of organizing information and of thinking. The invention of the printing press changed the way texts were handled. From its outset, the men who controlled the presses, the printers, experimented with ways to use the printing press to change texts. Textual techniques such as "graduated types, running heads…footnotes…table of contents…superior figures, cross references…"[4] are examples of the ways in which the press broke through some boundaries which had previously limited the production of books in scribal culture.

Moreover, the new technologies changed the way books were written. The establishment of printing shops in the major European cities formed a common meeting place for scholars and authors from across the continent. The great number of printing presses and printing shops enabled more people to write books and produce works that would be duplicated by the presses. When these new authors traveled they would gather in printing shops to meet other writers and scholars. Thus the printing press facilitated the meeting of minds pursuing intellectual pursuits. The interconnection of people led to the quickening of the development of ideas and knowledge. These progenitors of the printing trade were in the forefront of the sweeping intellectual changes which the presses made possible.[5] Similar connections among people are taking place on the Net to day at a much faster rate. And, just as the printers were in the forefront of the printing revolution, so today the developers of computer communications software and hardware and netusers are the first to experience the increased connectivity with other people around the world afforded by the computer networks.

As printing spread, publishers realized the value of utilizing input from readers to improve their product. Since the press could turn out multiple copies of a first edition quickly, many people would see the first edition and could send by letter their comments, corrections and criticisms. Publishers and authors could then use this feedback to write and print second, and third editions, and so on. Mistakes would be caught by careful readers, and printers thus "were also able to improve on themselves." Eisenstein explains that copied mistakes and mistakes in copying common with scribal copies now could be caught by the increasing number of readers. She writes, "the immemorial drift of scribal culture had been not merely arrested but actually reversed."[6]

The Net likewise provides a ready mechanism for the interaction between authors and readers. On the Net, people often keep track of knowledge, such as lists of a musician's records (discographies), or FAQ files of answers to Frequently Asked Questions. Authors of these works often act as both editor and compiler. People send further information, which the keeper of the file often adds. This makes for a communal base of information which is often available to anyone minimally connected to the Net by at least electronic mail. The constant updating of information on the Net continues the tradition of revising intellectual work introduced by the printing press.

Eisenstein's description of how communal information was gathered is similar to how such procedures work on the Net. She writes: "But others created a vast network of correspondents and solicited criticism of each edition, sometimes publicly promising to mention the names of readers who sent in new information or who spotted the errors which would be weeded out."[7] People who ask questions on the discussion sections of the Net (either Netnews or Mailing-list) often summarize the answers they receive and post this summary back to the Net. When doing this, many compilers include acknowledgments to the people who supplied the information. Also when people send in corrections to an FAQ, the

keeper of the FAQ often makes a list at the end thanking these individuals.

Eisenstein details these networks of correspondence in an example of a particular text titled the "Theatrum".

By the simple expedient of being honest with his readers and inviting criticism and suggestions, Ortelius made his Theatrum a sort of cooperative enterprise on an international basis. He received helpful suggestions from far and wide, and cartographers stumbled over themselves to send him their latest maps of regions not covered in the Theatrum.[8]

On Usenet, too, making a contribution is an integral part of Netizen behavior. Netizens make a point of being helpful to others. Often the Net has made a positive difference in their lives and they return the favor by making their own contribution, perhaps by answering the questions of others or developing an archive. These individual and increasingly group contributions are what have built the Net from a connection of computers and computing resources into a vast resource of people and knowledge. People who use the Net have access to Net resources and can contribute to them. Thus the culture of the Net has been shaped by people actively contributing to the growth and development of the Net. The tale of the Theatrum shows there is a historical precedent in human nature for this "stumbling over oneself" in order to try and be helpful.[9]

The flow of information to the publishers of the Theatrum meant that at least 28 editions were published by the time of the publisher Ortelius' death in 1598.[10] In a similar way, Usenet is by its very nature constantly evolving. The basic element of Usenet is the post whose life is temporary. The Usenet software is designed to "expire" or delete messages after a certain time period. Without constant new contributions from people to Netnews, there would be no messages to read or discussions to take part in. So there is a constant evolution of Usenet. But, also the material in the more permanent information depositories is often updated so they evolve as well.

During the early days of the printing press, publishers' requests for information led to people starting their own research and work. "Thus a knowledge explosion was set off," Eisenstein exclaims.[11] The Net follows in the tradition of the press, by having one set of people asking questions, leading to another set of people conducting research. In this sense the Net can serve the role as a think tank for the ordinary person. So the advanced possibilities the printing press made possible in the sixteenth century is being replicated many times more by the Net today. It is important to recognize and value Netnews for its contribution to human society and the advancement of knowledge.

Eisenstein observed that the art of printing opened people's eyes to their previous ignorance. She quotes the German historian, Johann Sleidan, in his "Address to the Estates of the Empire" of 1542, describing the impact printing had in Germany, "[The] art of printing [has] opened German eyes even as it is now bringing enlightenment to other countries. Each man became eager for knowledge, not without feeling a sense of amazement at his former blindness."[12] This sentiment has been echoed by many Netizens on Usenet and in other on-line conversations. People have been amazed at what the Net made possible and how it was changing their lives.

Eisenstein comments in her book on the role of feedback to early authors and print publishers. She wrote that feedback helped to "define the difference between data collection before and after the communications shift. After printing, large-scale data collection did become subject to new forms of feedback which had not been possible in the age of the scribes."[13] Computer networks likewise make possible very easy and natural feedback. Once

one reads a message (either public or private), a simple keystroke allows the composition of an answer or response, and another keystroke is often all it takes to send the response. This takes less effort than writing to a publishing house or calling a television station. Since responding to other messages becomes such a natural part of the on-line process, the procedure becomes almost automatic.

Many people who use Usenet find television dull rather than thought provoking. Doug Thompson, a user of Usenet, wrote "TV is so bloody tame and boring in comparison to Usenet." Others, too, have described how they have completely stopped watching TV and reading the newspaper because of Usenet.

Eisenstein refers to the process of constant improvement which printing made possible, as observed by the Scottish philosopher David Hume, "The Power which Printing gives U.S. of continually improving and correcting our Works in successive Editions appears to me the chief advantage of that art."[14] Eisenstein expands on this idea adding, "The future seem [ed] to hold more promise of enlightenment than the past."[15]

This promise of a better future is also seen by those on the Net. People on-line are being enlightened by the interconnection of peoples around the world. The Net helps people to make social connections which were never before possible, or which were relatively hard to achieve. Geography and time no longer are boundaries. Social limitations and conventions no longer prevent potential friendships or partnerships. In this manner Netizens are meeting other Netizens from far-away and close by that they might never have met without the Net.

Eisenstein reports that the printing press too helped people interact with other people who they would not have met before its invention. "Vicarious participation in more distant events was enhanced," she writes, "and even while local ties were loosened, links to larger collective units were being forged."[16] Improvement of information about other parts of the world "by the output of more uniform maps containing more uniform boundaries and place names" helped people to know more of the facts of the world. "Similar developments affected local customs, laws, languages, and costumes."[17]

The Net similarly provides people with a broader view of the world by introducing them to other people's ideas and opinions. The Net makes it possible to access more and differing viewpoints than were normally available in a person's daily life.

Much as printer's houses in the sixteenth century served as places to stop when traveling, computers and phone lines connect people around the world as in our times. Eisenstein describes how such print shops, "point to the formation of polyglot households in scattered urban centers upon the continent." She observes that during the sixteenth century, "such printing shops represented miniature 'international houses.' They provided wandering scholars with a meeting place, message center, sanctuary, and cultural center all in one. The new industry encouraged not only the formation of syndicates and far-flung trade networks, similar to those extended by merchants engaged in the cloth trade, or in other large-scale enterprises during early modern times. It also encouraged the formation of an ethos which was specifically associated with the Commonwealth of Learning – ecumenical and tolerant without being secular, genuinely pious yet opposed to fanaticism, often combining outward conformity to diverse established churches with inner fidelity to heterodox creeds."[18]

The social networks made possible by Usenet and the emergence of the printing press are very similar. Even though Netnews has no official guiding body, Netizens have developed social rules which control and mediate the medium. As the forum is democratic,

there will be people who have nothing intelligent to add, or only want to be disruptive or offensive. Others will often debate these troublemakers and through argumentation and the posting of opposite opinions help others to make up their own minds as to the value of the original postings.

The printing press facilitated new cross-cultural networks which encouraged "forms of combinatory activity which were social as well as intellectual."[19] Differing ideas were more easily set against one another. The theories of Arabists were set against the theories of Galenists and those of Aristotelians against Ptolemaists. Eisenstein writes: "Not only was confidence in old theories weakened, but an enriched reading matter also encouraged the development of new intellectual combinations and permutations. Combinatory intellectual activity…inspires many creative acts."[20]

The Net helps people communicate with each other who might not have communicated before. Strangers meet each other because of interest in each other's ideas and this leads to new intellectual collaborations and combinations.

The connection of differing ideas and people meant the first century of printing is recognized for "intellectual ferment" and by what Eisenstein writes was a "somewhat wide-angled, unfocused scholarship."[21]

The new availability of different theories or opinions about the same topics led Eisenstein to conclude that the contribution a scientist like Copernicus was able to make was not that he produced a new theory, but rather he was "confronting the next generation with a problem to be solved rather than a solution to be learned."[22] Lastly on this subject, Eisenstein equates the quickening of science toward a "cognitive breakthrough of an unprecedented kind."[23] The Net is continuing and accelerating that advance.

The lure of being able to produce numerous copies of books cheaply, was that an author's words could be spread around the world. This proved to be powerful. Eisenstein quotes Maurice Gravier on the power the press presented to the Protestant reformers: "The theses…were said to be known throughout Germany in a fortnight and throughout Europe in a month…. Printing was recognized as a new power and publicity came into its own. In doing for Luther what copyists had done for Wycliffe, the printing press transformed the field of communications and fathered an international revolt. It was a revolution. The advent of printing was an important precondition for the Protestant Reformation taken as a whole; for without it one could not implement 'a priesthood of all believers.' At the same time, however, the new medium also acted as a precipitant. It provided the 'stroke of magic' by which an obscure theologian in Wittenberg managed to shake Saint Peter's throne.[24] This idea is repeated by the English writer Daniel Defoe (1660-1732), whom Eisenstein quotes, when he wrote "The preaching of sermons is speaking to a few of mankind, printing books is talking to the whole world."[25] The Net has opened up a channel for "talking to the whole world" to an even wider set of people than did printed books.

A social role which grew to be crucial in this new world of printing was that of the master printer. His was the business of running a print shop, and finding and promoting potential authors. In the course of this work his workshop became a center of intellectual excitement. Eisenstein explains that the master printer's "workshop became a veritable cultural center attracting local literati and celebrated foreigners, providing both a meeting place and message center for an expanding Commonwealth of Learning."[26]

This development of an intellectual family started to bring the world closer together. "In the late sixteenth century," Eisenstein maintains, "for the first time in the history of any

civilization, the concept of a Concordia Mundi was being developed on a truly global scale and the 'family of man' was being extended to encompass all the peoples of the world."[27] The hospitality which the printers provided to travelers and intellectuals helped to make this happen.

The Net continues in this tradition of uniting the world. It is easy to hold conversations and develop relationships with others from around the world. The Net speeds this transaction as the conversation is brought from the print shop into a Netizen's home. A major advancement which the personal computer and the Net make possible is accessibility of publishing. Anyone who owns a personal computer can develop and print their own books, pamphlets, signs, and so forth. The Net comes in to help with distribution.

Eisenstein talks about one result that standardization of printing brought about. "One might consider," she writes, "the emergence of a new sense of individualism as a by-product of the new forms of standardization. The more standardized the type, indeed, the more compelling the sense of an idiosyncratic personal self."[28] Similarly, because Usenet and Mailing-list only present people via their ideas and writing styles, people have to write the way they want themselves to be viewed. Thus people develop their own styles. Reading posts can therefore at times be an enjoyable experience. A famous cartoon printed in the New Yorker magazine in 1993 show a dog at a computer. He says to another dog, "On the Internet, no one knows you're a dog." In fact, no one knows if you are white or black, yellow or purple, ugly or beautiful, short or tall. Discrimination based on appearance and visual impressions loses its basis. People can still be verbally harassed if they act stupid, or prove unhelpful to the Net. One problem, however, which has not yet been solved is harassment based on user name. For example, women with user names that are clearly identifiable as a woman's still receive some attention and sometimes harassment.

The printing revolution affected both tool making and symbol manipulation, which led to new ways of thinking. As Eisenstein notes, "The decisions made by early printers, however, directly affected both tool making and symbol making. Their products reshaped powers to manipulate objects, to perceive and think about varied phenomena." Computers, too, are in general directly affecting tool production and symbol manipulation. The tools on the Net are new tools – and thus lead to radical ways of thinking and dealing with information. People's thought processes can expand and develop in original ways. New ways of manipulating information, such as Unix tools, hypertext media and search engines for searching distributed data sources foster new means of intellectual activity.

Printing made consultation of various texts much easier – no longer did someone have to be able to be a "Wandering Scholar" to gain access to various information. With the development of the Net, information access becomes much more varied and widespread. The local public library, along with libraries around the world, other data banks and knowledgeable people are becoming accessible via the Net, for some netusers even from their homes. Only a few libraries currently offer electronic access to any of the actual texts of their holdings, but that is rapidly changing. Undertakings such as Project Gutenberg and various digital library initiatives are trying to make library resources available from any computer hooked into the Net.

Both the printing revolution and the Net revolution have been a catalyst for increased intellectual activity. Such activity tends to provide pressure for more democracy. When people have the chance and the means to start thinking, ideas of self-rule appear. Eisenstein describes how, "Puritan tradesman who had learned to talk to God in the presence of their

apprentices, wives, and children were already on their way to self-government."[30] Many social and political questions are being discussed on Usenet newsgroups especially questions like censorship and Net access which affect the Net directly. Based on these discussions, Netizens are exerting pressure on their governments to form new democratic structures like the NTIA on-line conference.[31]

Mass production via printing makes it possible to have sufficient books so that everyone who wants a copy can borrow one from a library or buy one. Eisenstein presents Thomas Jefferson's view of this "democratizing aspect of the preservative powers of print which secured precious documents not by putting them under lock and key but by removing them from chests and duplicating them for all to see." According to Eisenstein, "The notion that valuable data could be preserved best by being made public, rather than being kept secret, ran counter to tradition, led to clashes with new censors, and was central both to early modern science and to Enlightenment thought."[32] The democratizing power and effect of the printing revolution, Eisenstein contends, is overlooked in most historical writings.[33]

With the advent of printing, the Law was affected by the onset of the ability to duplicate numerous copies of a single document cheaply. People saw that this capability would be helpful in making the Law available for the common person to read and understand, and therefore the common person would be able to watch carefully if it was administered fairly. John Liburne, a person who lived in England during the Stuart Monarchy felt that legal documents should be freed from the confines of Latin and old French so that "every Freeman may reade it as well as the lawyers." People like him also held that knowledge which had been esoteric, "rare, and difficult," should be transformed into a form where it could be useful to all. Eisenstein also quotes Florio, who made translations and dictionaries in English. He symbolized the democratic possibilities of the printing press saying, "Learning cannot be too common and the commoner the better…. Why but the vulgar should not know all."[34]

Legal decisions are now being made available on the Net so that anyone with a computer and modem and net connection will have access to them. Also there are legal newsgroups on Usenet like misc.legal where various laws are examined and discussed. This provides a helpful perspective for understanding the value of the Net. The culture that is currently characteristic of the Net supports the principle that much of it should be available openly for the rest of the world to use. There is a collective communal democratic aspect of it, too. The simple fact of the matter is that every single person who is connected to the Net and has Usenet access can make a post to Netnews and every net user can send electronic mail to any other person who is on-line.[35]

The scribal tradition restricted who made the choice of what was copied to the Church or those who had substantial property. "As long as texts could be duplicated only by hand, perpetuation of the classical heritage rested precariously on the shifting requirements of local elites."[36] With the spread of the printing press, the monopoly of these elites was broken. Netnews is a similar advance over today's mass media. In the 'traditional' forms of mass media, the content is decided by the national 'elites'. However, on Netnews there is no control over the whole and the content is contributed to by every single person who is active on the Net.

Eisenstein compares this control of elites over what manuscripts were copied to the role of the printer and publisher who have it in their interest to unleash all sorts of books. Eisenstein writes: "The politics of censorship made [the printers] the natural opponents not

only of church officials but also of lay bureaucrats, regulations and red tape. As independent agents, they supplied organs of publicity and covert support to a 'third force' that was not affiliated with anyone church or one state. This third force was, however, obviously affiliated with the interests of early modern capitalists."[37]

These publishers were "the natural enemy of narrow minds," and "encouraged the adoption of a new ethos which was cosmopolitan, ecumenical, and tolerant without being secular, incredulous or necessarily Protestant…."[38] The Net has offered a parallel encouragement by providing a new kind of public space separate from either commercial purposes or religious or political limitations or ideas.

The printing press provided a new way for people to challenge the status quo. Eisenstein asks the question, "Did printing at first serve prelates and patricians as a 'divine art,' or should one think of it rather as the 'poor man's friend'?"[39] She answers it might have served in both roles, but that literacy seemed more "compatible" with the life of a peasant than that of a noble or lord.[40]

We can pose the same question about the Net. Should one think about the Net as a 'poor man's friend'? If we think of the Net as an alternative to the current media of Television, Radio, and Newspapers and Magazines – the answer is yes. People who have a lot of money can afford to own a segment of the mass media described above, and control the content of that media, whereas the Net is controlled by the mass of people connected to it, so it is 'the poor man's' version of the mass media.

The printing revolution fostered the spread of education. Books were used by apprentices and students to learn more than was offered by their teachers. The Net similarly makes multiple resources available for people interested in learning. People can access more information resources and, even more important, other people. This increased accessibility of people to each other means we can all gain and learn from the interests and knowledge of others, more so than from any single teacher.

The impact of the new print technology on science was enormous. Collaboration and cooperation over longer distances were made possible by the power of print. In particular, Eisenstein refers to the impact on the science of Astronomy. The change she sees happened within Copernicus's lifetime. "Copernicus was not supplied, as Tycho's successors would be, with precisely recorded fresh data," she notes. "But he was supplied, as Regiomontaus's successor and Aldus Manutius's contemporary, with guidance to technical literature carefully culled from the best Renaissance Greek manuscript collections, and for the first time, made available outside library walls.[41]

The progress of science is much faster because of the speed of communication afforded by the Net. Articles to be published in scientific journals are often available as electronic preprints – and thus have wider distribution earlier than was the norm before the Net. An outstanding example of this increased speed of scientific activity occurred when researchers all over the world tried to reproduce the result of the two University of Utah researchers who had announced that they had achieved cold fusion. A newsgroup sci.physics.fusion was very quickly set up and researchers' questions and results and problems were posted regularly and feverishly. As a result, what might have taken years to retest and figure out was sorted out in a three or four month period. The physicists found the rapid exchange of data and results invigorating and encouraging and felt they were more productive and sharper in their work because of the Net. Also, they argued that the use of the Net saved much valuable research time which might have been wasted if the original claims

had not been shown to have been faulty in such a short amount of time and to such a wide body of scientists.

The invention of the printing press, which led to many developments not possible before the power of printing, "laid the basis for modern science…and remains indispensable for humanistic scholarship." Eisenstein poignantly claims that printing is responsible for "our museum without walls."[42] As a storehouse of information and living information contained in other people, the Net could also be seen as a living "museum without walls." In her conclusion Eisenstein states that "Cumulative processes were set in motion in the mid-fifteenth century, and they have not ceased to gather momentum in the age of the computer printout and the television guide."[43] We, too, are in an age of amazing changes in communications technologies, and it is important to realize how these changes are firmly based on the extension of the development of the printing press which took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Notes for Chapter 16

1. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,
1993, p. 78.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 13.
4. Ibid., p. 22.
5. Ibid., p. 45.
6. Ibid., p. 73.
7. Ibid., p. 74.
8. Ibid.
9. See "The Net and the Netizens". ***
10. The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, p. 74.
11. Ibid., p. 75.
12. Ibid., p. 150.
13. Ibid., p. 76.
14. Ibid., p. 77.
15. Ibid., p. 78.
16. Ibid., p. 95.
17. Ibid., p. 56.
18. Ibid., p.101.
19. Ibid., p. 45.
20. Ibid., p. 44.
21. Ibid., p. 45.
22. Ibid., p. 223.
23. Ibid., p. 225.
24. Ibid., p. 154.
25. Ibid., p. 157.
26. Ibid., p. 25.
27. Ibid., p. 182.
28. Ibid., p. 56.
29. Ibid., p. 64.
30. Ibid., p. 167.
31. See "The Net and the Future of Politics", Chapter 13.***
32. The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, p. 81.
33. Ibid., Chapter 1, "An Unacknowledged Revolution."

34. Ibid., p. 165.
35. See Chapter 18, "The Computer as Democratizer." ***
36. The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, p. 125.
37. Ibid., p. 178.
38. Ibid., pp. 177, 178.
39. Ibid., p. 31.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p. 209.
42. Ibid., p. 275.
43. Ibid., p. 276.

The Computer as a Democratizer

by Michael Hauben

"...only through diversity of opinion is there, in the existing state of
human intellect, a chance of fair play to all sides of the truth."
(John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty,"
Three Essays, Oxford, 1975, p. 60)

"In a very real sense, Usenet is a marketplace of
ideas." (Bart Anderson, Bryan Costales, and
Harry Henderson, *Unix Communications*,
Indiana, 1991, p. 224)

Political thought has developed as writers presented the theoretical basis behind the various class structures from aristocracy to democracy. Plato wrote of the rule of the elite Guardians. Thomas Paine wrote why people need control of their governments. The computer connects to this democratizing trend through facilitating wider communications among individual citizens to the whole body of citizens.

James Mill, the father of John Stuart Mill, takes a look at democracy in his article "Liberty of the Press" from the 1825 Supplement to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He writes about the question of a government that works as it should – for the advantage and gain of the people instead of the advantage and gain for those in control. Mill sees the government necessarily being corrupted if the chance exists. Those in the position of rule, would abuse that power for their advantage. Mill describes, "If one man saw that he might promote misrule for his own advantage, so would another; so, of course would they all." (James Mill, "Essay on Liberty of the Press," p. 20) Mill says that the people need a check on those in government. People need to keep watch on their government in order to make sure this government works in the interest of the many. Mill thus concludes, "There can be no adequate check without the freedom of the press. The evidence of this is irresistible." (Mill, p. 18)

What Mill often phrases as freedom of the press, or liberty of the press, is more precisely defined as the uncensored press. The uncensored press provides for the dissemination of information that allows the reader or thinker to do two things. First, a person can size up the issue and honestly decide his or her own position. Second, as the press is uncensored, this person can make his distinctive contribution available for other people to consider and appreciate. Thus what Mill calls "freedom of the press" makes possible the free flow and exchange of different ideas.

Thomas Paine, in *The Rights of Man*, describes a fundamental principle of democracy. Paine writes, "that the right of altering the government was a national right, and not a right of the government." (p. 341) Mill also expresses that active participation by the populace is a necessary principle of democracy. He writes:

"Unless a door is left open to the resistance of the government, in the largest sense of the word, the doctrine of passive obedience is adopted; and the consequence is, the universal prevalence of the misgovernment, ensuring the misery and degradation of the people." (Mill, p. 13) Another principle Mill links democracy to, is the right of the people

to define who can responsibly represent their will. However, this right requires information to make a proper decision. Mill declares:

"We may then ask, if there are any possible means by which the people can make a good choice, besides **liberty of the press**? The very foundation of a good choice is knowledge. The fuller and more perfect the knowledge, the better the chance, where all sinister interest is absent, of a good choice. How can the people receive the most perfect knowledge relative to the characters of those who present themselves to their choice, but by information conveyed freely, and without reserve, from one to another?" (Mill p. 19) Without information being available to the people, the candidates for office can be either as bad as the incumbents or worse. Therefore there is a need to prevent the government from censoring the information available to people. Mill explains:

"If it is in the power of their rulers to permit one person and forbid another, the people may be sure that a false report, – a report calculated to make them believe that they are well governed, when they are ill-governed, will be often presented to them." (Mill, p. 20)

After electing their representatives, democracy gives the public the right to evaluate their chosen representatives in office. The public continually needs information as to how their chosen representatives are fulfilling their role. Once these representatives have abused their power, Paine's and Mill's principle allows the public to replace those abusers. Mill also clarifies that free use of the means of communication is another extremely important principle:

"That an accurate report of what is done by each of the representatives, a transcript of his speeches, and a statement of his propositions and votes, is necessary to be laid before the people, to enable them to judge of his conduct, nobody, we presume, will deny. This requires the use of the cheapest means of communication, and, we add, the free use of those means. Unless everyman has the liberty of publishing the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, the people can have no security that they are fairly published." (Mill p. 20)

Ignorance, Thomas Paine calls the absence of knowledge and says that man with knowledge cannot be returned to a state of ignorance. (*The Rights of Man*, p. 357) James Mill shows how the knowledge man thirsts after leads to a communal feeling. General conformity of opinion seeds resistance against misgovernment. Both conformity of opinion and resistance require general information or knowledge. Mill explains:

"In all countries people have either a power legally and peaceably of removing their governors, or they have not that power. If they have not that power, they can only obtain very considerable ameliorations of their governments by resistance, by applying physical force to their rulers, or, at least, by threats so likely to be followed by performance, as may frighten their rulers into compliance. But resistance, to have this effect, must be general. To be general, it must spring from a general conformity of opinion, and a general knowledge of that conformity. How is this effect to be produced, but by some means, fully enjoyed by the people of communicating their sentiments to one another? Unless the people can all meet in general assembly, there is no other means, known to the world, of attaining this object, to be compared with freedom of the press." (Mill, p. 18)

In the previous quote Mill places his championing of the freedom of press as a realistic alternative to Rousseau's general assembly, which is not possible most of the time. Mill expands on the freedom of the press by setting the rules. An opinion cannot be well founded until its converse is also present. Here he sets forth the importance of developing your own opinion from those that exist. Mill writes:

"We have then arrived at the following important conclusions, – that there is no safety to the people in allowing anybody to choose opinions for them; that there are no marks by which it can be decided beforehand, what opinions are true and what are false; that there must, therefore, be equal freedom of declaring all opinions both true and false; and that, when all opinions, true and false, are equally declared, the assent of the greater number, when their interests are not opposed to them, may always be expected to be given to the true. These principles, the foundation of which appears to be impregnable, suffice for the speedy determination of every practical question." (Mill, p. 23)

The technology that is the personal computer, international computer networks, and other recent contributions embody and put into practice James Mill's theory of liberty of the press. The personal computer makes it affordable for most people to have an information access station in their very own home. There are international computer networks that exist which allow a person to have debates with other people across the world, search for data in various data banks, or even play a computer game.

If a person is affiliated with a university community, works at a business which pays to connect to the Internet, or pays a special service fee, he or she can connect to a network of computer networks around the world. A connection to this international network empowers a person by giving him access to various services. These services include electronic mail, which means the ability to send private messages electronically to people across the world who also have electronic mail boxes. The public alternative to this is a service called Usenet News. This service is an example of James Mill's democratic principles.

Usenet News consists of many newsgroups which each cover a broad, but yet specific topic. People who utilize Usenet News typically pick certain newsgroups or topics to focus on. Every group has several items of discussion going on at the same time. Some examples of newsgroups include serious topics such as talk.politics.theory, – people "talking" about current issues and political theory, sci.econ – people discussing the science of economics, soc.culture.usa – people debating questions of United States society; and recreational topics (which might also be serious) such as alt.rock-n-roll – discussing various aspects of rock music, rec.sport.hockey– a discussion of hockey and rec.humor – jokes and humor. The discussions are very active and provide a source of information that fulfills James Mill's criteria for both more oversight over government and a more informed population. In a sense, what was once impossible, is now possible; everyone's letter to the editor is published. (Hauben, Interview with Staff Member, *The Amateur Computerist*, vol. 4 no.2-3 p. 14) What is important is that Usenet News is conducted publicly, and is uncensored. This means that everyone can both contribute and gain from everyone else's opinion.

The importance of Usenet News also exists in that it is an improvement in communications technology from that of previous telecommunications. The predecessors to computer networks were the Ham Radio and Citizen Band Radio (CB). The computer network is an advance in that it is easier to store, reproduce and utilize the communications. It is easier to continue a prolonged question and answer session or debate. The newsgroups on Usenet News have a distribution designation which allows them to be available to a wide variety of different size areas – local, city, national, or international. This allows for a variety of uses. The problem with the Internet is that in a sense it is only open to those who either have it provided to them by a university or company that they are affiliated with, or who pay for it. This limits part of the current development of the computer networks.

An example of a public enterprise, however, is a computer service called Freenet in Cleveland, Ohio. Freenet is operated by Case Western Reserve University as a community service. Anyone with a personal computer and a modem (a device to connect to other computers over existing phone lines) can call a local phone number to connect to Freenet. If members of the public do not own computers, they can use Freenet at the public library. Besides Usenet News, Freenet provides free access to a vast variety of information databases and community information. Freenet is just one example of the computer networks becoming much more readily available to broad sectors of society. As part of its databases, Freenet includes Supreme Court decisions, discussion of political issues and candidates, and debate over contemporary laws. Freenet is beginning to exemplify Mill's principle that democracy requires the "use of the cheapest means of communication, and, we add, the free use of those means." (Mill, p. 20)

This is an exciting time to see the democratic ideas of some great political thinkers beginning to be practiced. James Mill wrote that for government to serve the people, it must be watched by the people utilizing an uncensored press. Freedom of the press also makes possible the debate necessary for the forming of well-founded opinions by the people. Usenet and Freenet are examples of the contemporary electronic practice of the uncensored accessible press required by Mill. These networks are also the result of hard work by many people aspiring for more democracy. However, they still require more help from those dedicated to the hard fight against tyranny.

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Netizen Journalism
The Emergence of New Forms of News that Can Improve the Policy Making Process

Ronda Hauben

I - Preface

In this paper I want to explore the new news that is emerging and how this new form of news is making it possible to improve the policy making process. This new news is part of the phenomenon I refer to as netizen journalism.

In exploring this question I will discuss a case study as an example to consider toward looking at the potential for both the present and future of journalism that this new phenomenon represents.

II - First some background

In October of 2006, I began covering the United Nations as a journalist for the English edition of the South Korean online newspaper, *OhmyNews International*. When *Ohmynews* ended its English edition in 2010, I became a correspondent covering the UN for an English language blog – http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog at the web site of the German newspaper Die Tageszeitung. Both *OhmyNews International* and my blog at the taz.de web site are online publications.

With Michael Hauben, I am co-author of the book *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* (Hauben & Hauben, 1997). The book was first published online in January 1994. Then, on May 1, 1997, the print edition of the book *Netizens* was published in English and in October, a Japanese translation was published. This was the first book to recognize that along with the development of the Internet, a new form of citizenship, called netizenship has emerged. This is a form of citizenship that has developed based on the broader forms of political participation and empowerment made possible by the Net.

I want to share a brief overview of the origin, use and impact of the netizen concept and its relation to what I call netizen journalism before presenting a case study about the impact netizen journalism has had on the UN Security Council's conflict resolution process.

III-Introduction

While now many people are interested in the impact of the Internet on society, pioneering research was done by my co-author Michael Hauben in the early 1990s when the Internet was first beginning to spread and to connect people around the world. In his research, Hauben recognized that there were people who appreciated the communication the Internet made possible and that these people worked to spread the Net and to do what they felt needed for it to help to create a better world. Taking the common network term, 'net.citizen' used online at the time, Hauben proposed that these people who worked to contribute to the Net and the bigger world it was part of were 'netizens.'

In an article he wrote on the impact of the Net on journalism, he recognized that many people online were frustrated with the mainstream media and that the netizens would be creating a broader and more widespread media. As Hauben recognized in the early 1990s "the collective body of people assisted by (the Net)…has grown larger than any individual newspaper…. " (Hauben, M., 1997b: 233). Predicting the important impact the Net and Netizens would have on the future of journalism and the media, Hauben (1997a: 3-4) wrote:

A new world of connections between people - either privately from individual to individual or publicly from individuals to the collective mass of many on the Net is possible. The old model of distribution of information from the central Network Broadcasting Company is being questioned and challenged. The top-down model of information being distributed by a few for mass-consumption is no longer the only news. Netnews brings the power of the reporter to the Netizen. People now have the ability to broadcast their observations or questions around the world and have other people respond. The computer networks form a new grassroots connection that allows the excluded sections of society to have a voice. This new medium is unprecedented. Previous grassroots media have existed for much smaller sized selections of people. The model of the Net proves the old way does not have to be the only way of networking. The Net extends the idea of networking - of making connections with strangers that prove to be advantageous to one or both parties.

This broader collective of netizens and journalists empowered by the Net are participating in generating and transmitting the news toward creating a better society. This is a basis for developing a conception of netizen journalism.

I want to look at a news event about Korea and the UN in the context of this description of the news the Net makes possible and then consider the implication of this case study for the kind of journalism that I propose netizens and the Internet are making possible.

IV - Korea

First some background about South Korea and the Net and Netizen. In February of 2003, I was glancing at the front page summaries of the articles in an issue of the *Financial Times*. I saw a surprising headline for an article continued later in the issue. The article said that in 2002 netizens in South Korea had elected the President of the country, Roh Moo-hyun. He had just taken office on February 25, 2003. The new President promised that the Internet would be influential in the form of government he established. Also I learned that an online Korean newspaper called *OhmyNews* and South Korean netizens had been important making these developments possible. Colleagues encouraged me to get in contact with *OhmyNews* and to learn more about the netizens activities in South Korea and about *OhmyNews*.

I subsequently learned that both South Korea and China are places where the role of netizens is important in building more democratic structures for society. I began to pay attention to both of these netizen developments. South Korea, for example, has been

advanced in grassroots efforts to create examples of netizen forms for a more participatory decision making processes. I wrote several research papers documenting the achievements and activities of Korean netizens (Hauben, R., 2005; 2006a; 2007a)

V - Reporting on the UN

By October 2006 the second 5 year term for Kofi Annan as the Secretary General of the United Nations was soon to end. One of the main contenders to become the 8th Secretary General of the UN was the Foreign Minister of South Korea, Ban Ki-moon. By 2006, I was writing regularly as a featured columnist for *OhmyNews International*, the English language edition of *OhmyNews*. On October 9, 2006, Ban Ki-moon won the Security Council nomination. This nomination was to be approved by the General Assembly on October 13. I thought this would be a historic event for South Korea. I asked the Editor of *OhmyNews International* (OMNI) if I could cover the UN for it. He agreed and I was able to get my credential in time to go to the General Assembly meeting when the General Assembly voted to accept the Security Council's nomination of Ban Ki-moon.

I was surprised that some of the speeches welcoming Ban Ki-moon as the Secretary General elect were meaningful speeches referring to actual problems at the UN such as the need for reform of the Security Council. A significant focus of the comments to the new Secretary General from member states emphasized the importance of communication at the UN. That it was critical for the incoming Secretary General to listen to all states and to hear their views Witnessing the vote for a new Secretary General who was from South Korea, I wondered if the Internet would be able to have any impact on the new Secretary General and on what happened at the United Nations, since the Internet had been able to make it possible for netizens in South Korea to impact politics.

The very next day, on October 14, the Security Council took up to condemn the recent nuclear test by North Korea. This had been North Korea's first nuclear test. The Security Council imposed sanctions on North Korea, not giving the North Korean Ambassador to the UN, Pak Gil Yon a chance to respond until after the sanctions had been voted on. When the North Korean Ambassador responded, he referred among other issues, to financial sanctions that the had imposed on North Korea. No one in the Security Council asked him what he was referring to or how this affected the issues the Security Council had just acted on (Hauben, R., 2007c)

It impressed me that just as a new Secretary General from South Korea was being chosen at the UN, at the same time sanctions were being imposed on North Korea. The Security Council acted against North Korea before hearing its views on the issue they were considering. This was in sharp contrast to the emphasis member nations put on the importance of hearing the views of all members when they welcomed Ban Ki moon to the United Nations in the meeting just one day earlier in the General Assembly.

> The article I wrote for *OhmyNews International* described this situation. It explained:
>
> The urgent problem facing the UN at this juncture in history is not whether North Korea has developed and tested a nuclear device. It is the breakdown reflected by

the lack of participation and investigation by the international community into how a crisis will be handled once it develops, and whether the concerns and problems of those involved in the crisis will be considered as part of the process of seeking a solution. It is how the UN functions when tensions reach a point where serious attention is needed to help to understand and solve a problem. (Hauben, R., 2006b)

VI - The Phenomenon of Netizen Journalism

In the research I have been doing and the experiences I have had exploring the potential of what I call netizen journalism, several questions have been raised:
What is this new form of news and what are its characteristics? Is this something different from traditional journalism?

Is there some significant new aspect represented by netizen journalism? Traditionally, the press can function as a watchdog for society by exposing the use and abuse of power. Or, the press can act to support the abuse of political power. If netizen journalism can provide a more accurate understanding of conflicts, it can help make more likely the peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

VII-The Cheonan-Some Background

The Cheonan conflict which was brought to the UN in 2010 provides an important example of how netizen journalism has helped to make a significant contribution to a peaceful resolution of a conflict by the Security Council. The Cheonan incident concerns a South Korean naval ship, a Navy Corvette, which broke in two and sank on March 26, 2010. Forty-six of the crew members died in the tragedy. At the time the Cheonan was involved in /South Korea naval exercises in an area in the West Sea/Yellow Sea between North Korea and China. The sinking of the Cheonan and the South Korean government's investigation have been the subject of much discussion on the Internet.

Initially, the South Korean government and the government said there was no indication that North Korea was involved. Then at a press conference on May 20, 2010, the South Korean government claimed that a torpedo fired by a North Korean submarine exploded in the water near the Cheonan, causing a pressure wave that was responsible for the sinking. Many criticisms of this scenario have been raised.

First, there was no direct evidence of any North Korean submarine in the vicinity of the Cheonan. Nor was there any evidence that a torpedo was actually fired causing a pressure wave phenomenon. Hence the South Korean government had no actual case that could be presented in a court of law to support its claims. In fact, if this claim of a pressure wave were true, even those involved in the investigation of the incident acknowledge that "North Korea would be the first to have succeeded at using this kind of a bubble jet torpedo action in actual fighting." (Lee, Y., 2010)

VIII - The Cheonan Press Conference and the Local Election

A press conference was held by the South Korean government on May 20, to

announce that North Korea was responsible for the sinking of the Cheonan. May 20, it turns out, was also the start of the local and regional election period. Many South Koreans were suspicious that the accusation was a ploy to help the ruling party candidates win in the elections. The widespread suspicions about the government's motives led to the ruling party's losing many of the local election contests. These election results demonstrated the deep distrust among the South Korean population of the motives behind the South Korean government's accusations about North Korea's responsibility for the sinking of the Cheonan.

In their article, "Blogging as 'Recoding': A Case Study of the Discursive War over the Sinking of the Cheonan", Kim, Jeong, Khang and Kim (2011), document that in the period between the day of the accident, March 26, 2010 and June 16, 2010 there were more than 120,000 posts by netizens about the sinking of the Cheonan. Though they reduced these to a sample set of 354, they found that the majority of the posts were critical of the Korean government's claims about the sinking of the Cheonan. Many netizens were critical of the investigation that the South Korean government conducted and sought to challenge the conclusions.

Significantly, netizens demonstrated how they were able to have an impact on the framing of the Cheonan story. They also were to have an impact on how the issue was to be treated at the UN Security Council.

IX-The Cheonan and Netizen Journalism

While there was a substantial response to the Korean government's claims among Korean netizens, the issue also spread internationally. Netizens who live in different countries and speak different languages took up to critique the claims of the South Korean government about the cause of the sinking of the Cheonan. This netizen activity appears to have acted as a catalyst affecting the actions of the UN Security Council in its treatment of the Cheonan dispute.

Among the responses were substantial analyses by non-governmental organizations like Spark, PSPD, Peaceboat and others, which were posted on the Internet, either in English and or in Korean or in both languages. Some of these online posts were in the form of letters that were also sent to the members of the UN Security Council (Hauben, R., 2010a; 2010c).[1] At the time, I saw discussions and critiques of the Korean government's claims at American, Japanese and Chinese web sites, in addition to conversation and postings about the Cheonan on South Korean web sites.

One such critique included a three part analysis by the South Korean NGO People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD).[2] This analysis raised a number of questions and problems with the South Korean government's case. The PSPD document was posted widely on the Internet and also sent to the President of the United Nations Security Council for distribution to those Security Council members interested and to the South Korean Mission to the UN.

While there were many blog comments about the Cheonan incident in Korean, there were also some bloggers writing in English who became active in critiquing the South Korean investigation and the role of the in the conflict. One blogger, Scott Creighton who uses the pen name Willy Loman, or American Everyman, wrote a post

(Creighton, 2010a) titled "The Sinking of the Cheonan: We are being lied to." The South Korean government had claimed that a diagram it had displayed at the press conference on May 20 was from a North Korean weapons sales brochure which offered a torpedo similar to the torpedo part it claimed to have found near where the ship sank. The torpedo was identified as the CHT-02D. In a post he titled "A Perfect Match?", Creighton showed how there was a discrepancy between the diagram displayed by the South Korean government in the press conference, and the part of the torpedo it had on display in the glass case below the diagram
http://willyloman.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/not-a-perfect-match-updated2.jpg). He demonstrated that the diagram did not match the part of the torpedo on display. He pointed out several discrepancies between the two. For example, one of the components of the torpedo shown was in the propeller section, but in the diagram, the component appeared in the shaft section. There were many comments in response to this post, including some from netizens in South Korea. Also the mainstream conservative media in South Korea carried accounts of this blogger's critique. Three weeks later, at a news conference, a South Korean government official acknowledged that the diagram presented by the South Korean government was not of the same torpedo as the part displayed in the glass case. Instead the diagram displayed was of the PT97W torpedo, not the CHT-02D torpedo as claimed.

In a post titled "Thanks to Valuable Input" describing the significance of having documented one of the fallacies in the South Korean government's case, Creighton (2010b) writes:

> (I)n the end, thanks to valuable input from dozens of concerned people all across the world…. Over 100,000 viewers read that article and it was republished on dozens of sites all across the world (even translated). A South Korean MSM outlet even posted our diagram depicting the glaring discrepancies between the evidence and the drawing of the CHT-O2D torpedo, which a high-ranking military official could only refute by stating he had 40 years military experience and to his knowledge, I had none. But what I had, what we had, was literally thousands of people all across the world, scientists, military members, and just concerned investigative bloggers who were committed to the truth and who took the time to contribute to what we were doing here.
>
> "'40 years military experience' took a beating from 'we the people WorldWide' and that is the way it is supposed to be."

This is just one of a number of serious questions and challenges that were raised about the South Korean government's scenario of the sinking of the Cheonan.

Other influential events which helped to challenge the South Korean government's claims were a press conference in Japan held on July 9 by two academic scientists. The two scientists presented results of experiments they did which challenged the results of experiments the South Korean government used to support its case. These two scientists also wrote to the Security Council with their findings.[3]

Another significant challenge to the South Korean government report was the

finding of a Russian team of four sent to South Korea to look at the data from the investigation and to do an independent evaluation of it. The team of naval experts visited South Korea from May 30 to June 7. The Russian team did not accept the South Korean government's claim that a pressure wave from a torpedo caused the Cheonan to sink.[4] Acquiring a leaked copy of the Russian Team's report, the *Hankyoreh* newspaper in South Korea reported that the Russian investigators determined that the ship had come in contact with the ocean floor and a propeller and shaft became entangled in a fishing net. Also the investigators thought it likely that an old underwater mine had exploded near the Cheonan adding to the factors that led to the ship sinking.

Such efforts along with online posts and discussions by many netizens provided a catalyst for the actions of the UN Security Council concerning the Cheonan incident.

When the UN Security Council took up the Cheonan issue in June, I learned that some of the members of the Council knew of the critiques of the South Korean government investigation which blamed North Korea for sinking the ship.

X - The Cheonan and the UN Security Council

After doing poorly in the local and regional elections in South Korea, the South Korean government brought the dispute over the sinking of the Cheonan to the United Nations Security Council in June 2010. A Presidential Statement was agreed to a month later, in July (Hauben, R., 2010b).

An account of what happened in the Security Council during this process is described in an important article that has appeared in several different Spanish language publications (Guerrero, 2010) The article describes the experience of the Mexican Ambassador to the UN, Claude Heller in his position as president of the Security Council for the month of June 2010. (The presidency rotates each month to a different Security Council member.)

In a letter to the Security Council dated June 4, South Korea asked the Council to take up the Cheonan dispute (United Nations Security Council, 2010a). Park Im-kook, then the South Korean Ambassador to the UN, requested that the Security Council consider the matter of the Cheonan and respond in an appropriate manner. The letter described the investigation into the sinking of the Cheonan carried out by South Korean government and military officials. In the letter South Korea accused North Korea of sinking the South Korean ship. How would the Mexican Ambassador as President of the Security Council during the month of June handle this dispute? This was a serious issue facing Ambassador Heller as he began his presidency in June 2010.

Ambassador Heller adopted what he referred to as a "balanced" approach to treat both governments on the Korean peninsula in a fair and objective manner. He held bilateral meetings with each member of the Security Council which led to support for a process of informal presentations by both of the Koreas to the members of the Security Council. He arranged for the South Korean Ambassador to make an informal presentation to the members of the Security Council. Ambassador Heller also invited the North Korean Ambassador to make a separate informal presentation to the members of the Security Council. Sin Son Ho was then the UN Ambassador from North Korea.

In response to the invitation from the President of the Security Council, the North

Korean Ambassador to the UN sent a letter dated June 8 to the Security Council, which denied the allegation that his country was to blame (United Nations Security Council, 2010b). His letter urged the Security Council not to be the victim of deceptive claims, as had happened with Iraq in 2003. It asked the Security Council to support his government's call to be able to examine the evidence and to be involved in a new and more independent investigation of the sinking of the Cheonan.

In its June 8 letter to the Security Council, North Korea referred to the widespread international sentiment questioning the conclusions of the South Korean government's investigation. The North Korean Ambassador to the UN wrote: "It would be very useful to remind ourselves of the ever-increasing international doubts and criticisms, going beyond the internal boundary of south Korea, over the 'investigation result' from the very moment of its release…."

What Ambassador Heller called "interactive informal meetings" were held on June 14 with the South Koreans and the North Koreans in separate sessions attended by the Security Council members, who had time to ask questions and then to discuss the presentations. At a media stakeout on June 14, after the day's presentations ended, Ambassador Heller said that it was important to have received the detailed presentation by South Korea and also to know and learn the arguments of North Korea.[5] He commented that "it was very important that North Korea approached the Security Council." In response to a question about his view on the issues presented, he replied, "I am not a judge. I think we will go on with the consultations to deal in a proper manner on the issue." Ambassador Heller also explained that, "the Security Council issued a call to the parties to refrain from any act that could escalate tensions in the region, and makes an appeal to preserve peace and stability in the region."

Though at the time, it was rare for the North Korean Ambassador to the UN to hold press briefings, the North Korean UN delegation scheduled a press conference for Tuesday, June 15, the day following the interactive informal meeting. During the press conference, the North Korean Ambassador presented his government's refutation of the allegations made by South Korea.[6] Also he explained North Korea's request to be able to send an investigation team to the site where the sinking of the Cheonan occurred. South Korea had denied the request. During its press conference, the North Korean Ambassador said that there was widespread condemnation of the South Korean government's investigation in both South Korea and around the world. The press conference held on June 15 was a lively event. Many of the journalists who attended were impressed and requested that there be future press conferences with the North Korean Ambassador.

During his presidency of the Security Council in the month of June, Ambassador Heller held meetings with the UN ambassadors from each of the two Koreas and then with Security Council members about the Cheonan issue. On the last day of his presidency, on June 30, he was asked by the media what was happening about the Cheonan dispute. Ambassador Heller responded that the issue of contention was over the evaluation of the South Korean government's investigation. Ambassador Heller described how he introduced what he refers to as "an innovation" into the Security Council process. As the month of June ended, the issue was not yet resolved, but the "innovation" set a basis to build on the progress that was achieved during the month of his presidency.

The "innovation" Ambassador Heller referred to, was a summary he made of the

positions of each of the two Koreas on the issue, taking care to present each objectively. Heller explained that this summary was not an official document, so it did not have to be approved by the other members of the Council. This summary provided the basis for further negotiations. He believed that it had a positive impact on the process of consideration in the Council, making possible the agreement that was later to be expressed in the Presidential statement on the Cheonan that was issued by the Security Council on July 9 (United Nations Security Council, 2010c). His goal, Ambassador explained, was to "at all times be as objective as possible" so as to avoid increasing the conflict on the Korean peninsula. Such a goal was consistent with the Security Council's obligation under the UN Charter.

In the Security Council's Presidential Statement (PRST) on the Cheonan, what stands out is that the statement follows the pattern of presenting the views of each of the two Koreas and urging that the dispute be settled in a peaceful manner (United Nations Security Council, 2010c). In the PRST, the members of the Security Council did not blame North Korea. Instead they refer to the South Korean investigation and its conclusion, expressing their "deep concern" about the "findings" of the investigation. The PRST explains that "The Security Council takes note of the responses from other relevant parties, including the DPRK, which has stated that it had nothing to do with the incident." With the exception of North Korea, it is not indicated who "the other relevant parties" are. It does suggest, however, that it is likely there are some Security Council members, not just Russia and China, who did not agree with the conclusions of the South Korean investigation.

Analyzing the Presidential Statement, the Korean newspaper Hankyoreh noted that the statement "allows for a double interpretation and does not blame or place consequences on North Korea."(Lee, J., 2010) Such a possibility of a "double interpretation" allows for different interpretations.

The Security Council action on the Cheonan incident took place in a situation where there had been a wide ranging international critique, especially in the online media, about the problems of the South Korean investigation, and of the South Korean government's failure to make public any substantial documentation of its investigation, along with its practice of harassing critics of the South Korean government claims. The Security Council action included hearing the positions of the different parties to the conflict. The result of such efforts is something that is unusual in the process of recent Security Council activity. The Security Council process in the Cheonan incident provided for an impartial analysis of the problem and an effort to hear from those with an interest in the issue.

The effort in the Security Council was described by the Mexican Ambassador, as upholding the principles of impartiality and respectful treatment of all members toward resolving a conflict between nations in a peaceful manner. It represents an important example of the Security Council acting in conformity with its obligations as set out in the UN Charter.

In the July 9 Presidential Statement, the Security Council urged that the parties to the dispute over the sinking of the Cheonan find a means to peacefully settle the dispute. The statement says:

The Security Council calls for full adherence to the Korean Armistice Agreement and encourages the settlement of outstanding issues on the Korean peninsula by peaceful means to resume direct dialogue and negotiation through appropriate channels as early as possible, with a view to avoiding conflicts and averting escalation.

The mainstream media for the most part, chose to ignore the many critiques which have appeared. These critiques of the South Korean government's investigation of the Cheonan sinking have appeared mainly on the Internet, not only in Korean, but also in English, in Japanese, and in other languages. An article in the Los Angeles Times on July 23 noted the fact, however, that the media in the had ignored the critique of the South Korean government investigation that was being discussed online and spread around the world (Demick & Glionna, 2010).

In this case, the netizen community in South Korea and internationally were able to provide an effective challenge to what they believed to be the misrepresentations by the South Korean government on the Cheonan incident.

In his article "Social Sciences and the Social Development Process in Africa," Charly Gabriel Mbock (2001) proposes that there is a need for netizens in different countries to work together across national borders to solve the problems of our times. Perhaps the response of netizens to the problems raised by the investigation of the Cheonan incident is but a prelude to the realization of this potential.

XII - Conclusion

Much of the research about journalism is concerned with the elements of creating and spreading a narrative, with concepts like "framing", "agenda setting" and "news diffusion" providing a means to analyze and understand the processes that are components of the news process. For example, if the framing of a news story relies on officials of the government or of powerful corporations, the story is likely to be significantly different from where the framing focuses on the perspective of the victim of some abuse by government or corporate entities. Similarly, students or workers are likely to have a different perspective of a conflict from that of an investment banker or real estate tycoon. The broad range of online posts about the Cheonan incident provided a diversity of information and views that enriches the news environment. .(Touri, 2009: 177)

In South Korea, there is ready access to posting on the Internet and responding to others views. (Im, et al., 2011: 606-607). In the Cheonan incident, netizens were active offering their critiques of the summary report the government released. (Kim, 2011: 101) A blogger with a background in reading blueprints made his views known about the illegitimacy of the claims by the South Korean government that the part of the torpedo they produced and the diagram they presented to demonstrate the torpedo's North Korean origins were from the same torpedo.
(Creighton, 2010a)

With academic scientists evaluating the South Korean government's scientific claims and finding them faulty, (Lee & Suh, 2010; Cyranoski, 2010) with NGO's studying the investigation claims and writing analyses which they then send to the UN Security Council members by e-mail, these are the signs that there is an important process at play.

What had formerly been a process with static components is being transformed into a process where the components are now dynamic and changing. (Im et al: 608-609) Traditionally the news event is framed by the journalist and his or her editor. That narrative is then spread by the news channels of that media. The narrative was traditionally static. When the Internet and the netizens are part of the news process, this is no longer the case.(Zhou and Moy, 2007:82-83; Im et al.: 608-609) And the growing power and capability of communication processes and of how the news is reported and disseminated (diffused) has an effect on how policy is created and how it is implemented. (Gilboa, 202: 736-7,743; Touri, 2009:

(174)

Those responsible for making policy can be influenced by the news, by distortions spread as the news or by a more accurate framing of the news which the net and netizens at times can make possible.

If it is clear that there are conflicting narratives at the roots of a conflict, the effort to determine the accurate narrative can help lead to a resolution or at least a calming of the conflict.

The widespread discussion of diverse views of the Cheonan conflict helped to support the effort by Ambassador Heller to realize that he wasn't to act as a judge, but he would try to determine an understanding of the conflict, of the issues that were in contention. The widespread public discussion in this situation helped to clarify the issues and what was in contention, and hence led to a policy at the Security Council of hearing all sides of the issue, much as the member states of the UN had urged Ban Ki-moon to do when he was being welcomed to the UN.

In this case study of the Cheonan incident, my earlier question of whether it was possible for South Korean netizens to have an impact on what happened at the UN was answered in the affirmative. And the South Korean netizens were supported by other netizens from around the world. This is an important example of the UN, of the Security Council, functioning in a way to help to calm a conflict. And the widespread public discussion online of the conflict was, I argue, a helpful support for this process.

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Notes

[1] About letters to UN Security Council, records at the UN show that the practice of sending such correspondence to the Security Council dates back to 1946. This is the date when the symbol S/NC/ was introduced as the symbol for "Communications received from private individuals and non-governmental bodies relating to matters of which the Security Council is seized." The Security Council has the practice of periodically publishing a list of the documents it receives, the name and organization of the sender, and the date they are received. The Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council states that the list is to be circulated to all representatives on the Security Council. A copy of any communication on the list is to be given to any nation on the Security Council that requests it. There are over 450 such lists indicated in the UN records. As each list can contain several or a large number of documents the Security Council has received, the number of such documents is likely to be in the thousands. Under Rule 39 of the Council procedures, the Security Council may invite any person it deems competent for the purpose to supply it with information on a given subject. Thus the two procedures in the Security Council's provisional rules give it the basis to find assistance on issues it is considering from others outside the Council and to consider the contribution as part of its deliberation

[2] PSPD Report that was Sent to Security Council was posted online in three parts:

http://www.peoplepower21.org/Peace/584228
http://www.peoplepower21.org/Peace/584287
http://www.peoplepower21.org/Peace/584296

[3]) The press conference was held on July 9 at the Tokyo Foreign Correspondents Club. The program was titled "Lee and Suh: Inconsistencies in the Cheonan Report".
http://www.fccj.or.jp/node/5810 . See also, (Cyranoski, 2010), (Lee, S., & Suh, J. J. 2010).

[4] The Russian team proposed a different theory for how the Cheonan sank. They had observed that the ship's propeller had become entangled in a fishing net and subsequently that a possible cause of the sinking could have been that the ship had hit the antennae of a mine which then exploded. "Russian Navy Team's Analysis of the Cheonan Incident", (*Hankyoreh*, 2010b). The Russian Experts document is titled "Data from the Russian Naval Expert Group's Investigation into the Cause of the South Korean Naval Vessel Cheonan's Sinking." See also "Russia's Cheonan Investigation Suspects that Sinking Cheonan Ship was Caused by a Mine," (*Hankyoreh*, 2010a).

[5]) Media Stakeout: Informal comments to the Media by the President of the Security Council and the Permanent Representative of Mexico, H.E. Mr. Claude Heller on the Cheonan incident (the sinking of the ship from the Republic of Korea) and on Kyrgyzstan. [Webcast: Archived Video - 5 minutes]
http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/stakeout/2010/so100614pm3.rm

[6] Video of North Korean Ambassador Press Conference
http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2010/pc100615am.rm

Proposed Declaration of the Rights of Netizens

We Netizens have begun to put together a Declaration of the Rights of Netizens
and are requesting from other Netizens contributions, ideas, and suggestions of
what rights should be included. Following are some beginning ideas.

The Declaration of the Rights of Netizens:

In recognition that the net represents a revolution in human communications that was
built by a cooperative non-commercial process, the following Declaration of the Rights
of the Netizen is presented for Netizen comment.

As Netizens are those who take responsibility and care for the Net, the following are
proposed to be their rights:

o Universal access at no or low cost
o Freedom of Electronic Expression to promote the exchange
    of knowledge without fear of reprisal o
Uncensored Expression
o Access to Broad Distribution
o Universal and Equal access to knowledge and information o Consideration of
one's ideas on their merits
o No limitation to access to read, to post and to otherwise contribute o Equal quality of connection o
Equal time of connection o No Official Spokesperson
o Uphold the public grassroots purpose and participation o Volunteer

Contribution - no personal profit from the

contribution freely given by others
o Protection of the public purpose from those who
would use it for their private and money making purposes

The Net is not a Service, it is a Right. It is only valuable when it is collective and universal. Volunteer
effort protects the intellectual and technological common-wealth that is being created. DO NOT
UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE NET and NETIZENS.

Inspiration from: RFC 3 (1969), Thomas Paine, Declaration of Independence (1776),
Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), NSF Acceptable Use Policy,
Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the current cry for democracy worldwide.

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May 21, 1995

Graduation Presentation

My graduation did not end at this year's University Commencement ceremonies. I did receive my Diploma on Wednesday, but my graduation was not completed until Friday. On Friday, I was interviewed about the Internet by a Japanese camera crew for a television documentary to be shown on TV Tokyo. In speaking with these people the result of my four years both here at Columbia and connected to the outside world was revealed.

During the interview I described Netizens and the world-wide community which the Internet and Usenet News make possible. Netizens are people who use the various computer communications networks and feel they are citizens of this net. People desire to communicate with others around the world. In order to communicate, to share information and to have a discussion, it is necessary to share a common space and to accept differences. People who connect to the Internet willingly help others and work collectively to have a place which allows their personal speech and which allows the speech of others. It is in this spirit of an open forum that we are holding this party today. The Internet and other communications networks are about people and are about people communicating with each other. It is this understanding and experience which I shared with the interviewers. The Internet is not about computers and isolated experiences, it is a very social human experience.

I entered Columbia asking the question "Why are people, so complacent in this country?" I asked this question on my application essay in 1990 considering that people in Eastern Europe and China were fighting their governments for a better life and a better world, while here at home little seemed to be happening to combat the worsening times.

In thinking about this question, I chose the joint Philosophy/Economics major as my prospective major. My introduction to the Columbia bureaucracy came about when upon visiting campus. I discovered this major had been turned upside down, and was now based in the Economics Department rather than the Philosophy Department and was renamed Economics and Philosophy. The emphasis was: similarly shifted from classical philosophy to contemporary economics.

In arriving at Columbia and setting up my computer account, I connected to the world by using Usenet Newsgroups. My Unix account, hauben@columbia.edu, gave me access to Usenet Newsgroups which are public discussion forums that are circulated around the world. It was in discussions on these newsgroups that I developed my academic study. I was fascinated by the Internet and Usenet News and wanted to find out more about this network which connected people from around the world.

It was on the Internet and Usenet where I posed questions and conducted research into what other people found valuable about being on-line and how it was important in their lives.

In researching these questions during different history and literature classes, along with several independent studies, I became an active participant of the Usenet Newsgroups and mailing lists. I submitted questions and thought pieces to these forums, and people around the world responded with their opinions and thoughts. I became interested in the Net itself, and I posed questions about it online. Many people online found they shared this interest, and they connected to me and contributed their understandings of the value of the Net to their lives. Many of these private electronic mail messages and public Usenet responses were extremely thoughtful. I also raised questions about how it was possible for such a medium to develop where people were helpful to total strangers. In starting to research the history of the Internet and Usenet News, students and professors who were part of that history sent me personal accounts and supporting documentation.

My papers and research about the Internet and Usenet have been guided and helped by many real people around the world. When I finished my papers, I contributed back to the Net by making them publicly available and asking for comments and criticism. In addition to various responses of that sort, I also received much encouragement and support. People wrote thanking me for making my writings available. Also, I received various requests from professors and others to reprint and make my writings available to classes and other more public forums. This support was of course in addition to help and encouragement from my parents. All of this support came outside of Columbia. There were two professors in the Computer Science Department, namely Professor Unger and Professor Greenleaf, and Professor Garton from the Music Department who were helpful, but there was very little help from the University or computer science department as a whole. My connection to the outside world and online community is what has both made my research possible, and provided feedback that this research was important and valuable to others. I have mainly enjoyed the time I have spent at Columbia because of the feedback I received from other people saying they appreciated my effort, and that my writings have been useful for more than just a grade.

Identification of this value to society came slowly but surely. People sent various e-mail messages, and this was helpful, but did not feel to be lasting. These past two years have been marked by various events which have helped to solidify my understanding of the value. The word Netizen started to appear both online and in print. Papers I wrote were published in three journals. Ronda and I gave several presentations in New York City and Michigan from the book we put together. A radio station in California interviewed me last semester. And currently Ronda and I are negotiating with a publisher to publish our online book in a printed form. Lastly,

professors from a Global Communications Institute in Japan have been communicating with me about my participating at a conference in Japan later this year. The Interview on Friday was the culminating event which identified that this work has been recognized as important.

After four years, I feel I have answered the question with which I entered Columbia. The Internet and Usenet News provides a place where people can communicate with other people at a grassroots level to make their lives better and to attempt to make the world a better place. By connecting to others with similar interests, questions and problems, along with people with different understandings, it is now possible to try and do something about the world, and to gain some power in how one lives his or her life.

All in all, while Columbia has been a difficult place to live for the last four years, it has been an honor to be able to contribute to the world some understanding of how to make a better future.

Netizens Providing Hope for Future Development

In his article "Social Science and the Social Development Process in Africa" Charly Gabriel Mbock, critiques the structural adjustment model of development that has pauperized Africa. He describes how loans were made by western countries which benefitted a small segment of African society and the western nations that made the loans. These left a debt of not only the loan but also continuing interest payments which the people of Africa have to pay back despite the fact they never benefitted from the loans themselves. (1)

In place of the "structural adjustment program" that brought the people of Africa so much trouble, Mbock proposes a "democratic adjustment program".
(2)

"No one can stop the globalization process," Mbock writes, "But perhaps a world of global netizens could help to mitigate the consequences of the global economy." (3)

Will the situation improve," Mbock asks, "if the future brings 'netizenship' to Africans?"

He writes (4):

Michael and Ronda Hauben are of the opinion that the Net and the new communications technologies will encourage people to shifting from citizenry to netizenry, away from 'geographical national definition of social membership to the new non-geographically based social membership (Hauben and Hauben, 1997, pp. x-xi)

"The dream of worldwide 'netizenry', Mbock writes, "is the creation of a global community devoted to a more equitable sharing of world resources through efficient interactions."

Quoting from Netizens, he writes:

A Netizen (Net citizen) exists as a citizen of the world thanks to the global connectivity that the Net makes possible. You consider everyone your compatriot. You physically live in one country but you are in contact with much of the world via the global computer network. Virtually you live next door to every other single Netizen in the world. Geography and time are no longer boundaries (...) A new, more democratic world is becoming possible as a new grassroots connection that allows excluded sections of society to have a voice. (Mbock referring to Hauben and Hauben, 1997, pp. 3, 4-5)

"If such a global community were to become reality, then community ways would prevail over market values," writes Mbock. As an efficient and democratic breakthrough, technological innovation would lead to deep-seated social transformations resulting in global change...." (p.
165)

"The hypothesis of a new world order," he proposes, "is an opportunity for catch-up of countries in Africa to create "a forum through which people influence their governments, allowing for the discussion and debate of issues in a mode that facilitates mass participation." (Hauben and Hauben,

1997, p. 56)

"The outcome would be net democracy," Mbock writes, "with a three-pronged system of dialogue; dialogue among the citizens of a given country, dialogue among these citizens and their local or national

government, and dialogue among 'netizens'. The world as a global community of 'netizens', would then, 'at last' possess its long-awaited engine for effective and social development in Africa." (p. 165)

"To Sean Connell," Mbock writes, referring to a quote from Connell in Netizens, "the Net is a highway to real democracy, "a means to create vocal, active, communities that transcend race, geography and wealth", a mechanism through which everybody can contribute to the governing of his or her country" (Hauben and Hauben, 1997, p. 249).

Mbock argues that:

(A)s a new paradigm shift from citizenship to genuine 'netizenship' is the worldwide innovation that social scientists should herald, and not only for Africa. This implies looking beyond national citizen passports, to negotiate global, 'netizen' ones."(5)

Notes
(1) Charly Gabriel Mbock, "Social Science and the Social Development Process in Africa", Social Science and Innovation, OECD, 2001, p. 161.
(2) Ibid, p. 160.
(3) Ibid, p. 165.
4..Ibid. p. 166.
(5) Ibid.