Internet Fundamentals

Lecture-2

Culture of Internet

The Culture of the Internet

Technology is produced by society

Society is informed by culture

➢ The internet was shaped by the culture of its producers

➢ Its producers were also its first users

➢ Call them producers/users

- Those whose practice of the Internet feeds directly back into the technological system.

➢ Distinguish them from consumers/users

- Those who use the applications and systems
- Do not interact directly with the development
- Except through aggregate effect on evolution of system

Remainder of lecture focuses on producers/users

The Culture of the Internet

What is culture?

➢ Set of values and beliefs informing behaviour

➢ Repetitive patterns of behaviour generate customs
  that are enforced by institutions
  (as well as informal social organisations)

➢ A collective construction that transcends individual preferences

Internet Culture: Four-layer structure

1. Techno-meritocratic culture

2. Hacker culture

3. Virtual communitarian culture

4. Entrepreneurial culture

   • Example: Bill gates

     • Denounced hackers as thieves

     • Asserted primacy of property rights

     • Put money making before technological innovation (contrast google)

Techno-Meritocratic Culture

Historically Internet grew from academia – hence academic values

Believe scientific and technological development are key to progress of mankind

Community of technologically competent members; acknowledging each other as peers

Formal or informal rules:

➤ Openness in all scientific discoveries with due credit to all contributors

➤ All findings open to criticism

➤ Resources not to be used for own exclusive benefit

➤ Individual advancement of technological skills acceptable

Membership of the community is established by individual performance; reputation is central to seniority in community ranking

Merit results from contributing to the technological advancement of the community for common good and obeying the rules

Some members are authoritative and set tasks and goals

Ranking of a discovery:

➤ Depends on contribution to problem solving objectives defined by the community

➤ Determined by peer review among members

Hacker Culture

Community of expert programmers and networking wizards

Programmers collaborating online on self-defined projects

➢ No institutional or commercial assignments

Nurtures technological innovation

Bridges gap between knowledge originated in techno-meritocratic culture and the entrepreneurial spin-offs that diffuse the Internet in society at large

"Script kiddies" and "warez doodz" are a small part of overall hacker culture (crackers)

Hacker culture typified by Linux development (Open Source)

Hacker Culture

Features of hacker culture:

All features of techno-meritocratic culture apply

Freedom to

- ➢ Create
- ➢ Appropriate whatever knowledge is available
- ➢ Modify code
- ➢ Redistribute knowledge in any form by any channel
- ➢ Commercialise

Gift culture – give to community to gain esteem

Joy of creation – close to world of art

- ➢ No dependence on institution, but on self defined community

Organisation is informal – not enforced by institution

Money, proprietary rights and institutional power are excluded as sources of authority

Informality and virtuality differentiate it from academic culture; e.g. hackers rarely meet in the physical world, rarely use real names

Subcultures – e.g. freedom of speech: Electronic Frontier Foundation

Virtual Communitarian Culture

Virtual Communities: early users created:
news groups, bulleting boards, mailing lists, chat rooms, multi-user games, conference systems

Non-skilled users

Contributed to evolution of internet, especially commercial manifestations

Makes the Internet a medium of selected social interaction and belonging

Diverse communities: culture does not represent a coherent system of values and social rules

Still, some shared cultural features

➢ Free communication

➢ Self-directed networking (search for information or post information)

Entrepreneurial Culture

Diffuse Internet practices in all domains of society

➤ Commercial uses initially built on communal, hacker and techno cultures

➤ Since then Internet largely shaped around commercial uses

Entrepreneurial innovation rather than capital was driving force

Made money out of ideas

Established companies lost money due to lack of ideas

Transform technological know-how and business vision into financial value - and use this value to make vision a reality

➤ Traditional money seeking cultures (e.g. Wall Street) try to make money by predicting future market behaviour

➤ Internet Entrepreneurs try to sell the future because they believe they can make it

➤ Strategy: Change the world through technology and be rewarded with money and power

Two types: techno-business entrepreneur and venture capitalist

Internet Culture - Interaction of Layers

Techno-meritocratic culture

- Born of big science and academia
- Try to dominate world by power of knowledge

Hacker culture

- Specifies the Techno-meritocratic
- Freedom ultimate value

Virtual communitarian culture

- Like hackers except used Internet for social life rather than technology for its own sake

Entrepreneurial culture

- Used power that came with technology to make money and hence dominate the world and make the internet the backbone of our lives