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From: cdp!hfrederick@labrea.Stanford.EDU  
Message-id: <9103232116.AA18109@labrea.Stanford.EDU>  
To: fgg@asc.upenn.edu, ggerbner@labrea.Stanford.EDU  
Subject: World's Info-Rich and Info-Poor

/\* Written 11:13 am Mar 18, 1991 by hfrederick in cdp:mideast.media \*/  
/\* ----- "World's Info-Rich and Info-Poor" ----- \*/

I would appreciate any comments you might have on my approach here.  
Greetings! Howard

"The World Divided Between the 'Info-Rich' and the 'Info-Poor'"  
by

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World Peace University, Lost Valley, Oregon  
March 16, 1991

Imagine if you will the phone ringing early at a Swiss stock broker's office in Zurich. On the line is a client from Hong Kong nearing the close of his business day who wants to buy foreign currencies on the Swiss market. The broker takes the order, hangs up and calls another office by computer. Within a minute he transfers funds from one bank to another. He completes the transaction and sends a verification by electronic mail to Hong Kong.

A sophisticated remote-sensing satellite scans a seemingly desolate country eight hundred kilometers below. It takes detailed pictures, stores them on board and then transmits them into waiting antennas in South Dakota. An analyst from a transnational corporation buys those images and discovers what seem to be valuable mineral deposits in the middle of that vast land.

An environmentalist at her solar-powered computer on the north coast of Australia is writing how eco-activists in her country successfully fought an American lumber company on Papua New Guinea. She press a button and off the message goes to Brazilian activists fighting the same company--all for the price of a local phone call.

The President of the Free World sits in his study watching CNN. Reporters wonder why the President has not appeared. "Well," says an aide to President Bush, "CNN is doing all these interviews with Middle East experts. Some idea might pop up that the president could use."

These are not images from the future. They are examples of how international communication technologies are being used today throughout the world.

We spend a third of our waking life consuming mass media. A large part of the remaining two-thirds of our lives is spent communicating with other people. This compulsion to communicate makes it possible for us to speak of a sociosphere. Just as Earth's biosphere has its moving plates and colliding continents, Earth's sociosphere is dynamically active, with ideas moving about, crashing into one another and causing social earthquakes and revolutionary eruptions.

If we could see the flow of news and information around the world from some comfortable perch in space, it would look much like the human circulatory system. The blood veins are filled with indistinguishable bits and bytes of data. We see the arterial satellite links and undersea cables that span the continents filled each day with hundreds of hours of television programs, millions of individual phone calls,

*Frederick*  
*Now get*  
*Oct 19*  
*From*  
*Please*  
*send it*  
*well*  
*All*  
*part's*  
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*OK is*  
*has - call*  
*Bea sp.*

news agencies, newsfilm services, trillions of bits of data. Small paper objects with colored marks in the upper right-hand corners transverse difficult journeys across mountains and seas from sender to receiver.

This is called the gaiapolitics of communication. Geopolitics is giving way to gaiapolitics, a worldwide political movement on behalf of the biosphere and sociosphere we call Earth.

Where geopolitics of the post-war era helped forestall atomic war, it is the task of gaiapolitics to stop impending destruction of the biosphere (and sociosphere). Since 1850, more than a third of the world's forests have disappeared. Since the turn of the century, one-sixth to one-third of the planet's plant and animal species have disappeared. Burning of fossil fuels has increased thirty times. Production of carbon dioxide and fluorocarbons is changing our atmosphere. The greenhouse effect is affecting our climate with a rise in temperature and sea level.

Today's global problems are substantially different from any that have faced the world before. They are shaped by increasing ecological and economic interdependence spawned by a century of tremendous technological change. Proliferation of nuclear weapons, imbalanced use of resources leading to hunger and poverty, the destruction of the ozone layer: These and many other problems are so immense and have such geographically dispersed effects as to prohibit effective solutions on a local or even national scale. As a result, global cooperation and communication are essential in order to identify and forge solutions to these problems. Communication is intrinsic to global cooperative efforts, and communication technologies available today can greatly speed and enhance these efforts.

But there is also a dark side to this story. Information technologies also threaten the very life of the biosphere and sociosphere. The same technologies that brought us the image of the earth rising over the moon and instantaneous worldwide communication are propelling the current arms race. Technology is two-sided. To use the medical metaphor again, information and communication are both the lifeblood and the virus of modern society.

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Today I'm going to speak a bit about the dark side of the chip. Then I'm going to go on to describe one hopeful development that may presage a more democratic future.

An ominous development is taking place. A handful of immense corporations dominate the world's mass media. If present trends continue, by the turn of the century, as former UC journalism dean Ben Bagdikian has predicted, "five to ten corporate giants will control most of the world's important newspapers, magazines, books, broadcast stations, movies, recordings and videocassettes." These "lords of the global village" exert a homogenizing influence over ideas, culture and commerce.

Information and communication within national societies reflect the needs, interests and aims of prevailing social forces. The channels and content of a nation's media cannot be viewed in isolation from the conditions in which they arise. In every society, media are controlled by certain groups and are used to perpetuate the dominance of certain groups both within that society and in relation to other societies in the world. Just as U.S. media are infused with free market ideology and filled with commercial advertisements, media throughout the world reflect the ruling ideas prevalent in their societies.

Technology is not politically neutral. Quite the opposite, it plays an important role in the international distribution of power and the exercise of political, social and economic controls. Like all products of human labor, technology has a social origin. As Dutch communication researcher Cees Hamelink quips, "the barrel of a gun can, if one insists, be used to stir one's tea. It is, however, better at killing, and will certainly be used primarily for that application." Or as Cuban theorists Enrique Gonzalez Manet opines: Technologies "can foster liberation or deepen dependency and domination, depending on the objectives of and social environment in which they are applied."

Just as the world is divided between the haves and the havenots, the world of communication also is divided into the haves and the have nots. We will call them the info-rich and the info-poor. Since UNESCO began publishing its first comparative worldwide survey of media in 1962, dozens of analyses have shown that the disparities have not changed. In virtually every medium, the disparities are dramatic.

There are some rudimentary measuring sticks for communications development. UNESCO set basic standards for newspapers, radio and cinema: Every country should have one hundred newspaper copies, fifty radio receivers and twenty cinema seats for every one thousand inhabitants. Remarkably, the latest statistics reveal that only one developing country, Cuba, has met all three minimum standards. Let us examine some of the important channels of communication.

While developing countries have three-quarters the world's population, they own only half of the world's daily newspapers and can manage only thirty percent of the world's newspaper output. No daily newspapers are published in thirty-four countries and territories. Another twenty nations had only a single newspaper. Even in Europe, Albania, Gibraltar, Italy, Spain and Portugal have not yet met the UNESCO standard.

The Third World's share of total global book production continues to remain disproportionately low. The developing countries (with seventy-five percent of world population) had only twenty-seven percent of worldwide book. About sixty-five percent of the world's population experiences an acute book shortage.

Developed countries consumed eighty-eight percent of the world's production of cultural paper (newsprint and printing/writing paper). Indeed, the average North American consumes more newsprint in five days than the average African does in one year. Readers of the Los Angeles Times exceed the African yearly per capita average each Sunday.

I could go on to mention similar statistics in the cinema, radio, television, videocassettes, audiotapes, satellites, telephone, telex and postal services. But in the interest of time let me mention just two more.

There is no area of communications where the disparities are more dramatic than in advertising. The United States alone spends one-and-a-half times more on advertising than the other sixty-four other countries listed in the 1986 UNESCO statistics. Put another way, only seventeen countries in the world had a Gross National Product larger than total U.S. advertising expenditures. At \$102 billion in 1986, this figure was about equal to Mexico's entire foreign debt!

Finally, computers. Ninety-five percent of all computers are in the developed countries. Only 3.5 percent are in Latin America, 1.6 percent in Asia and .5 percent in Africa.

This situation was apparent twenty years ago and it led to a crisis in such international organizations as UNESCO. More than a hundred nations agreed with Hans Singer, who once said: "If you do not

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Analyses  
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have information to begin with, or know what new information could be assembled, initial inferiority is bound to be sharpened and perpetuated." Indeed, the majority of the world's nations actually called for a rearrangement of the present information and communication order. Their underlying complaints, as expressed in UNESCO's famous 1980 MacBride Report.

Well, this is the subject for another lecture. But history of the MacBride Commission, New International Information Order Debate, and the U.S. withdraw from UNESCO, and the global monopolization of the media are subjects that every informed citizen should know about and that are systematically being censored from the American public.

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Let me begin the next part of my presentation by stating that what we are involved in at the Institute for Global Communications in San Francisco is a sustained effort to reverse these trends. We are putting into action what UNESCO and Non-Aligned delegates have demanded for years: a truly alternative global news and information system to promote peace, human rights and environmental preservation.

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[Move to transparencies and standard IGC script]  
[Introduction to the Institute for Global Communications]

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Let me conclude by echoing Dean-Emeritus George Gerbner of the Annenberg School of Communication. Gerbner and others leaders in this field are pushing for the creation of a Cultural Environmental Movement. The reasoning is that the cultural environment, must like the physical environment, is threatened with toxic wastes and degradation. For the first time in human history, a child is born into an alien cultural environment, largely independent of the home, school, church and community, the local culture, even of the native country. Most of the stories most of the time are brought to most children not by parents, teachers, clergy or community with their own stories to tell but by distant conglomerates with something to sell. This astounding development frame what we know, think and do in common. It cultivates conceptions of reality according to its own image.

We in the Cultural Environmental Movement are concerned that market-driven toxic ideas are permeating and destroying our native culture. They cultivate behaviors that drug and kill thousands every day. They portray our lives as stereotypes, marginalizing, dehumanizing and stigmatizing us. They inundate us with a cult of media violence that desensitizes, intimidates and terrorizes us and, when they call us up, we willingly incinerate, pulverize and devastate other peoples. The hucksterism of disposable trash bags and McLean Hamburgers blind us to the ruination of our environment. Our public schools, criminal justice system and arts are crumbling as make-believe media politics masquerade as democracy. We wage war on everything but injustice in our midst and unfolding economic conditions that can only be described as the emergence of an American Third World.

We are a lost people unless we make an end-run around these monopolies of violence and greed. PeaceNet and its partner networks are trying to make that end-run and to construct a truly alternative information infrastructure for the challenges that lie ahead.

In essence, what we are doing is reinventing democracy. We are building a system that will move us away from what Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis has called "Newtonian democracy, based on mechanistic understanding of science and culture" one that can be

manipulated by the crassest of means from the top. We are moving toward another kind of "democracy based on systems theory--interaction and flexible feedback with no fixed flow of information and power from top to bottom." And it is information systems such as PeaceNet which provide a model of what a preferred world order and a society in peace might look like.

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[Personal note: If you read all the way to the end, I don't mind telling you that I gave this speech on the occasion of a banquet at the Eugene Hilton where awards were bestowed to the following persons (all of whom were present): World Citizen Humanitarian Award to Sri Chinmoy, 20th Century's First Global Man; Distinguished World Citizen Award to Dr. Eulalia Bernard, Costa Rican Educator and Poet; Distinguished Service Award to Debra Lathan, General Manager of Radio for Peace International. I also received the Distinguished World Citizen Award.]

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Message-id: <9103232116.AA18101@labrea.Stanford.EDU>  
To: labrea!FGG@asc.upenn.edu  
Subject: re: April 5 meeting

How nice of you to let me know. Haven't you used your ggerbner account yet on PeaceNet? I posted in mideast.media a speech I gave in Oregon last week where I came out very much in favor of CEM. I'll include it here just in case getting onto PeaceNet right now is a hassle.

As for April 5, I'll be in Crystal City all day at the Latin American Studies Association. I'll be in the exhibit area sitting with the Latin American Database. Thursday, April 4, I will be speaking (along with Sandra Braman) in Hamid's class. Saturday April 5 I don't have plans yet. So let me know what you had in mind.

Have you seen the latest Revista Mexicana de Comunicacion special issue on Guerra en el Desierto . . . Guerra de los Medios. Miguel Angel Sanchez de Armas is editor.

One last thing: The California Council for the Humanities has a grant program called Political Dialogue and the Common Good for \$200,000 projects focussed on the challenges of the 90s. I am putting together a joint application by PeaceNet and the two Pacifica stations and any other components we can draw in in order to provide alternative information such as Inter Press Service (in English or Spanish) to the California electorate. The basic thesis is that the electorate have lost all critical judgement due to the monopoly of the information transnationals and the

unredenting government propoganda we face. It fits perfectly in my mind into the CEM movement as a practical thing to do. But given that California is also the world's eighth largest economy and an international actor in its own right, we are calling this The Global California Project. Obviously everyone on the network whether in this country or around the world will have instant access to all the benefits that we are pumping into California.

More on this later,

Howard @ Pasadena

P.S. How about a personal question: A Canadian correspondent told me recently that Dallas Smythe told him that he (Dallas) had "reservations" about Howard's work. Do you have any idea what this might refer to? I do know that Herb S. doesn't like me much and may have had Dallas' ear, or maybe Dallas had some principled objection to using computers. Thought you might have some insight.

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File name = SP/PAUL

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Subject: assistantship application  
To: fgg@ASC.upenn.edu  
From: SCARLS@asc.upenn.edu  
Date: 24 Mar 91 19:38:50 EDT

Just checking to make sure you got my assistantship application....  
I can put another in your mailbox if not.  
paulc

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The technologies that brought us  
together and illuminate some of the  
darkest corners of human life  
can also tear us apart and  
increase the gaps ~~that~~ between our  
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