The Amateur Computerist

Table of Contents

Introduction

Michael Hauben was born May 1, 1973. Had he lived, 2023 would have been his 50th birthday. In his memory and to honor his life and work, the editors of the *Amateur Computerist* put together this "Memories of Michael Hauben" issue.

In the first article, Jay Hauben tells some of the story of the life of his son, especially focusing on Michael's first encounters with computers and Michael's pioneering research when he was at Columbia University. The second article is "Memories of Michael from Japan" as told by Mieko Nagano who Michael first met with her husband Kenichi in 1995 when he was invited to Japan to speak about netizens. It is a sweet story of people to people friendship fostered by the Internet but including a reunion in

NYC. The third article is memories of Yvonne Yen Liu, a friend from the 1990s.

The next article is the text of the Wikipedia entry for "Michael Hauben." It tells a bit about Michael's life and gives an overview of Michael's development of the concept of netizens. The process of his research is highlighted and includes how Michael built on the work of Margaret Mead, Elizabeth Eisenstein, James Mill and the SDS activists who wrote the *Port Huron Statement*. There is a section on the influence of Michael's work and a section called "Legacy" which ends with a quote from Shirley Fedorak, "Hauben coined the term netizens, and he considered them crucial for building a more democratic human society. These individuals are empowered through the Internet and use it to solve sociopolitical problems and to explore ways of improving the world."

In the article, "An Introduction to Michael Hauben's Development of the Concept of Netizens," Ronda Hauben gives the background that gave rise to the *Netizens* book. Michael's work is then connected with pioneering vision of JCR Licklider that guided the early development of the Internet. Strengthened by that vision, Michael opposed the commercialization and privatization that the U.S. government was facilitating in the 1990s. To the question, "What then for the future?" the author quotes Michael, "Do not underestimate the power of the Net and the Netizens." That statement is from the "Proposed Declaration of the Rights of Netizens" which is the fifth article in this issue.

In the article, "Participatory Democracy: From the 1960s and SDS into the Future Online" Michael connects his study of netizens to the movements for more democracy in the 1960s exemplified by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). He observes that, "An important part of the SDS program included the understanding of the need for a medium to make it possible for a community of active citizens to discuss and debate the issues affecting their lives." Such a medium did not exist in the 1960s but Michael saw the "seeds for the revival of the 1960s SDS vision of how to bring about a more democratic society now exists in the personal computer and the Net." The article analyzes the SDS *Port Huron Statement*, its criticism of U.S. society and its development of the idea of participatory democracy. Michael concludes "that the development of the internet and of Usenet is an investment in a strong force toward making

direct democracy a reality."

The article, "Considerations on the Significance of the Net and the Netizens," was written in 2017, the 20th Anniversary of the *Netizen* book, to review the impact and relevancy of the book and the netizens concept. In those 20 years, the role of netizens in working for social change has been documented around the world. In particular, the role of netizens in working for social and political change has been an especially important aspect of South Korean experience for nearly the past two decades. The article also looks at contributions which help to provide a conceptual framework to understand this new social force. Karl Deutsch's theoretical understanding of the essential role of a two-way communication necessary for a well-functioning government is discussed, as is media theorist Mark Poster's work about netizens. In particular Poster concludes that the netizen phenomena, "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." An article in the Times of India by Vinay Kamat observers that, quoting Ronda Hauben, "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." Kamat wonders if they will become "a fifth estate." Both in theory and in practice netizens are appearing to provide for the development of more equitable and democratic societies.

The issue ends with Michael's 1997 analysis of effect of the net on culture, *Culture and Communication: The Impact of the Internet on the Emerging Global Culture*. The article explores the emerging participatory global culture made possible by the Internet. Michael draws on the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead, who observed that people of all cultures want to have their culture known around the world. Mead saw the sharing of cultures was not a homogenization but a new way to preserve diversity. Michael sees that the Internet makes possible new connections between people of different cultures which allows each culture to broaden itself based on the new understandings available from other places. He concludes that a "new global culture is forming in several ways, none of which is a generic corporate rubber stamp." But also that the new culture allows for, in Margaret Mead's words, "a vision of a planetary community

… (where) … there must be no outsiders."

[Editor's Note: In the following article the author tells part of the story of the life of his son, Michael Hauben.]

Michael, Computers and the Net

by Jay Hauben

For my whole family, it was wonderful that Michael was born on May Day, May 1, 1973 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was one month early and was born early in the morning as the sun began to rise.

Michael went to nursery school and kindergarten in Boston. For his 5th birthday he surprised us by asking for a hand-held calculator as his birthday present. We bought him one in The Coop at MIT[1] nearby. Michael and I had great fun using that calculator to do iterations and other math tricks. Shortly after that we moved to Detroit. There Michael went to public school for one year. He was the only first grader with an exhibit in the school's Science Fair. The school was a rough place and the staff discouraged Michael from reading. So Ronda and I were his teachers for another year in what we called "home school."

He first saw computers in the Ontario Science Center in Toronto in 1980 when he was seven years old. There were hands-on computer exhibits and an exhibit of computer controlled robots. Michael tried many of them. He was soon asking for his own computer. By 1983 he bought himself a Timex Sinclair 1000 computer for $100 out of his birthday present money. The TS 1000 had 3K of memory. We used a tape recorder as the storage device and our TV as a monitor. Michael subscribed to some computer magazines. He typed in some of the "TRY THIS" programs and learned a lot from them. He and I worked on a program that used only the 3K memory. Using peeks and pokes, we were able to get planes to drop bombs on moving ships.

We enrolled him in a TAG (Talented and Gifted) summer program for junior high school kids (ages 12 and 13) in 1985. The first day, the

instructor (Mrs. Brown) took off the cover of an Apple II computer to show that it was just wires and components. She then showed some simple BASIC commands. That night Michael tried to write a BASIC program. Michael had us buy *The Applesoft Tutorial* and he read his way through that whole book. He succeeded in getting a graphic program to work. He called it "BOO." It was a skeleton that blinked its eyes and made faces. We took Michael once a week to the Wayne County Education Center where he began to try Apple IIE, Texas Instrument, Atari and Commodore computers. Mostly he tried to figure out what BASIC commands would work and asked questions about the features and advantages of each. Michael made friends with a neighbor, Tom, who was three times his own age. Tom used Commodore computers. When Tom bought a Commodore 64, Michael bought himself his next Timex machine (Timex Sinclair 2068). But Timex made a deal with Commodore and stopped supporting the 2068. Michael thought he had the better computer but the deal made his computer obsolete.

Michael participated in computer clubs and programming competitions in junior high school which must have been around 1986. Ronda had won a Compaq computer in 1985 in a drawing. She asked for a modem with the prize rather than a hard drive because she and Michael agreed that communication was more important than storage. Michael used the computer and modem to participate in local BBSs.[2] His first handle was "WizKid." He was from then on an active participant in the BBS communities in the Detroit area. To begin with, he was one of their youngest members. Somehow he found out about an online timesharing system set up near the University of Michigan, called M-Net.[3] He became an active member of that community even though the other members were college students or older.

At first I was opposed to Michael's being in discussions on M-Net of how to pick up women or things like that. He realized my opposition and wrote an essay about censorship in Nazi Germany that convinced me that censoring him was wrong. His argument was if the Nazi's had not been censored by the previous government, Hitler could not have come to power. The German people would have been inoculated against Nazism by the debate that would have occurred with it in the earlier days.

From M-NET, Michael heard, in the late 1980s, about Usenet, a

worldwide distributed online discussion system. At some point while still in Michigan, Michael felt he was no longer a kid and changed his handle to "Sentinel." After using his handle "Sentinel" for a while, Michael found a thread on one of the BBSs where posters were wondering whatever happened to "WizKid," the poster who made the discussions more serious and important. I think Michael was very happy to see that thread and he posted that he was "WizKid," now called "Sentinel."

When Michael was 13 or 14 years old he left word in some computer stores that he was willing to help people who were unsure what to buy and how to set up their computers. A few people called him and I had to drive him to his "jobs." He did not know what to charge but whatever he asked, his customers always gave him more.

Michael appreciated zoos and museums. One time we were in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. There was an announcement near closing time of a tour of the museum's weapons and armor collection. Michael wanted to go on the tour but Ronda and I were tired, so he went alone. Almost one hour later, the tour guide and Michael returned. The guide said to us, "This kid asked more and better questions, than most of the adults I have taken around."

In 1987, at age 14, Michael participated in the founding meetings of the *Amateur Computerist*. One discussion was what to name the new newsletter. "Beginning Computerist" was suggested. Michael suggested that the newsletter would be for all lovers of computing not just beginners. Since an amateur does something for the love of it, not for financial gain, his suggestion of Amateur Computerist won the approval of all. Michael was also one of the most prolific contributors of articles and editorial suggestions.

From his contacts on M-Net Michael was able for most of his high school years to work at the Detroit Mercy College. He was well loved for the care with which he set up computers and taught people how to use them. Michael went on to earn his Columbia College work-study income by doing computer support work in the student labs there.

When Michael first dialed into M-Net in the mid 1980s he was actually using the Internet. He first explored Usenet and took full advantage of e-mail when he started as a freshman in Sept., 1991 at Columbia University in NYC. Michael attended Columbia from 1991 to

1997. And, as he has written, that is when he started his research about the value of the net to people. During all his undergraduate years besides his studies, he was an active employee of the CU computer services department. Just before his sophomore year in 1992, he initiated the Usenet alt.amateur-comp newsgroup on the U.S. Labor Day.

In 1992, Michael started an independent study for one of his courses. He wanted to know if the net made a difference in people's lives. He posted a series of questions which are in the appendix to Chapter One of his and Ronda's book. From the responses, he discovered there were Netizens, people who saw that the newly emerging net held the promise of a fuller more interesting life for everyone who could get connected. Michael became very enthusiastic about the Net. It gave him a renewed personal hope much the way the fall of the Berlin Wall had done three years earlier. Michael shared his enthusiasm with his professor at Columbia. The professor told Michael he would fail the course if he did not rework his data and analysis. The professor did not realize the importance of what Michael had done. But Michael also shared his enthusiasm with the online world. He gathered the documentation to prove his scientific discovery was valid. His work inspired especially Ronda and that was the genesis of the *Netizen* book originally called "Netizens and the Wonderful World of the Net."

In 1994, Michael and Ronda were excited to put their first draft of the book *Netizens* online. They did a book reading on Jan 12, 1994 and were happily surprised when Michael's old friend Tom attended. Michael and Ronda also both spoke at Columbia University about netizens.

In his years at Columbia, Michael did much of his original research and writing. He was also a DJ of ambient music on WBAR, a student radio station. Michael was an avid music fan, contributing one of the original web sites for band listings and reviewed music performances, analyzed trends in the youth music culture and sent out pointers to upcoming events. After Michael received his BA in Computer Science in 1995, he was, for one year, a Columbia e-mail postmaster. He went on to earn a master's degree from Teachers College in Technology and Communications in 1997.

Michael's pioneering research while at Columbia University led to his being invited to Japan in 1995. At the Hypernetwork '95, Beppu Bay

Conference in Oita, he spoke about "The Netizens and Community Networks." In Oita and Tokyo, Michael met computer and network enthusiasts to discuss the growing importance of this new medium and his vision of netizenship. Michael also appeared in documentaries about the Internet on TV. A chapter by Michael appeared in Japanese in the 1996 book *The Age of Netizens*. In 1997, the Japanese translation of the *Netizens* book was published. Michael considered it an honor to speak at conferences in Japan, Canada, the U.S. and Greece and to be welcomed by online people in London and Berlin who knew his work. He took joy in seeing his work appear in journals and books and in the hardcover edition of *Netizens* in 1997.

A Netizens mailing list grew out of Michael's invitation to speak about netizens in Japan. One Japanese student reasoned that if there are netizens there must be some netizens association that was international. The student asked to join the Netizens Association. Michael answered that one did not exist. He and the student talked about starting such an association. Michael suggested that a first step would be a Netizens Association mailing list. The student's name is Hiroyuki Takahashi and the story of the origin of the Netizens mailing list is at: http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/text/netizen-a-call.html.

In the mid 1990s, Michael was overjoyed that the Internet kept spreading. But he was disappointed with the privatization and commercialization of the net that he had warned about. He continued to use the net for the purposes he thought was its essence. He was on and contributed to many mailing lists, especially those having to do with music and the efforts of young people to form communities around their common interests in different music genres. On these lists Michael reviewed music performances, analyzed trends in the youth music culture and sent out pointers to upcoming events. He also participated actively in the events so his online life was coupled with his off line life.

For a long time, Michael received inquires and requests for help. Perhaps averaging one every two weeks, they were from people all over the world who knew of Michael's work from online sources and felt he was the expert or the best source of the help they needed.

Michael watched with interest the spread all over the world of the concept of net citizens, Netizens. Michael spoke of his hope and plans for

a paperback edition of the book *Netizens*. He gave thought to a new introduction or epilogue which would begin, "It is now the beginning of the 21st Century … ." His fond wish was that the details of Internet technology be popularized and that the fight for universal free or low-cost access to Usenet, e-mail, chat groups and all the other wonders of the net be continued.

The concept of netizens lives on as Michael's work is being quoted today. There is an increasing new interest in Usenet or in Usenet-like systems as an alternative to the commercial Facebook, Twitter, TikToc, etc.[4] is being sought. Also, some net users in all country's critique their governments, watch their politicians, organize protests, defend free speech and an open internet and involve themselves in socio-political issues. This netizenship lives on and is a tribute to Michael and his pioneering research.

Notes:

1. We did not know it at the time but The Coop at MIT was a business cooperative started by students in 1882.
2. These early Bulletin Board Systems were in many ways some precursors to what are now called social networks. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulletin_board_system
3. M-Net is a public-access Unix-based computer conferencing system based on software written by Marcus Watts in 1983. It was the prototype for the important early virtual community in California, The Well. In the late 1980s, users of M-Net formed a community that Michael was part of. Today, M-Net is reported to be the world's longest running public access UNIX system. It is run entirely by volunteers and funded by various supporters.
4. See, for example, the July 23, 2021 speech "The Tragedy of the Digital Commons" by Tristan Miller. In his speech, he describes the difference between early cooperative network platforms like Usenet and more recent commercial and private platforms like Facebook and Twitter. To describe the difference he quotes the *Netizen* book referring to Michael as having chronicled the cooperative culture of Usenet in the 1990s. His speech can be accessed at: https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/audio/the-tragedy-of-the-digital-commons/

[Editor's Note: In Fall 1995, Michael Hauben visited various cities in Japan. In Oita where he spoke at the Hypernetwork '95 Beppu Bay Conference, Michael met Mieko and Ken Nagano, members of COARA. Mieko and Kan remained friends with Michael from

then on. Following is the text of two blog entries Mieko Nagano made about Michael, his parents and Netizens. The blog entries can be seen at: https://miehp.com/98usa/525h.htm, https://miehp.com/hauben/hauben.htm and https://miehp.com/hauben/michael.htm. Also below, following the blog entries, is the text of an email message Mieko and Ken sent to Michael's parents for the 2012 celebration of the 15th Anniversary of the *Netizens* book that Michael and Ronda co-authored.]

Memories of Michael from Japan

<div align="right">by Mieko Nagano</div>

I. Exchange with the Haubens,The Advocates of Netizenship, May 25, 1998

Three years ago, Mr. Michael Hauben was invited to Beppu Bay Conference as an advocator of a new concept "Netizen" and made an impressive speech that fascinated many participants. Until then, I have been keeping contact with him. Upon my connection through an e-mail, Jay and Ronda Hauben, Michael's parent, kindly visited my hotel at ten in the morning to say hello. Michael himself is busy today because of his move and will come later. We are guided to Columbia University in N.Y. from which Mr. Michael Hauben graduated.

Mr. Jay and Mrs. Ronda are involved in computer related works in the university. I tried to connect COARA's home page using a computer open to students. Unfortunately I couldn't read the content because the computer doesn't support Japanese characters. I guessed to call COARA's "Seeing is believing" page to show my home page to the Haubens. A female student kindly took a look at my home page together and took our picture.

Then we visited Michael's new apartment in East Village. I am very glad to see him for the first time in three years. We took commemorative pictures. Left picture; from the left, Ken wearing a Netizen hat which was prepared in commemoration of Michael's visit to Oita three years ago, Michael Hauben, the inventor of word Netizen, Mieko. Right picture, from the left, Jay, Michael, and Ronda Hauben.

His original concept of "Netizenship" seems to spread widely under the help of his parents throughout the Internet. Michael kindly put an autograph on the spread cover page of his book (Japanese version) written

jointly with his mother, Ronda, titled *Netizens*.

His apartment is just like one appeared in "West side story" movie. It was a fun for me to learn that the back stair is equipped outside of the window. He complained the apartment is too small, but I was impressed to see the apartment is provided perfect with a bed room, a living room, a working room, a kitchen, and a bathroom.

The Haubens took us to see around East Village which seemed somewhat uneasy for me alone. I took a look here and there. We took Afghan style lunch on the street seat, looking passengers. It was an unusual experience for me.

After the lunch we enjoyed window shopping in SOHO district. In the evening, we discussed eagerly about the Internet, our governments' involvement in it, and NTT in Japan over a Vietnamese dishes. We promised to continue our discussion on 28th evening.

II. A Memory of Michael Hauben, the Inventor of "Netizen," August 6, 2001

When we got the first news on the sudden death of Michael Hauben, we heard ourselves saying, "No, we never! We thought, and still think, it was a false report, as his innocent gentle smile is still alive in our hearts."

We keep our treasures in our bookshelf. The items on Michael Hauben are among them. This is an album of October 1995 when we joined a Hyper Network Conference in Beppu City, Oita Japan. Here are many pictures of Michael.

The Conference was held November 24-25, 1995. We first met Michael there after some exchange of e-mails. The main theme of the Conference was Netizen Revolution and Regional Information Infrastructure. Michael was invited this Conference as a main guest.

He was the youngest guest speaker among many prominent guests such as David Faber of Pennsylvania University EFF, Kyong-Hee Yu of Korean Info-Communications Association, Dr. Harry Saal of Smart Valley, and Howard Rheingold. Michael is second from right in the front line wearing a dark suit. His presentation was: The Netizens and Community Networks.

We COARA members prepared such Netizen goods in order to boost

up his presentation in the Conference. The Netizen caps were presented to the speakers and stickers were distributed to the participants.

When we learned that Michael became a guest speaker, we soon E-mailed him saying, We are very happy to see you. We will wait you at the lobby of the Conference hall. We found a young guy the same age as our son. This was Michael Hauben. We soon exchanged calling cards.

He brought a lovely cooking book for me all the way from the USA as a present. I was really delighted. It reads "To Mieko, Thank you very much for being the first person to welcome me to Japan. See you, Michael Hauben." He had visited my home page in advance and leaned I loved cooking and making cookies. He selected the tiny book for me. I was deeply moved by his careful consideration. Later, I actually made cookies illustrated in the book. It was very tasty.

Michael's presentation was very easy to understand for an ordinary housewife like me. I was really moved by his thought. He was also interviewed by a local paper *Nisshi-Nippon Press*. My husband helped him in translation. The Press published a special issue on Michael's Netizen-ship three days later. My husband translated it and sent it to Michael. During busy schedule, Michael showed us wonderful bright smiles, yes, he is really a nice guy.

Howard Rheingold, Mieko Nagano, and Michael Hauben.

After the Conference, COARA members joined a drinking party with Karaoke. Michael looks like really relaxed after a great work. He wore Yukata robe with Hanten coat on it and enjoys Japanese Sake. Yes, this is

a Japanese style entertainment.

As I was busy in taking pictures, Michael kindly sent me a picture he took through the hotel window of a beautiful sunset of Beppu Bay.

After the Conference in Oita, another conference was held in Kobe as Internet Wave '95. Michael made a presentation again. Some of the COARA members joined the meeting. I also made a presentation on my home page.

On the Christmas, we got a wonderful card from Michael. A picture taken in Beppu Conference was beautifully set in it. It reads:

Dear Mieko and Kenichi,

Thank you for the kind welcome to Japan and Oita that you gave me. It was quite special to meet other Netizens from across the globe. I hope to meet you both again in Oita and New York City.

Mata aimasyou [Let's meet again].

Michael Hauben

Yes, we met him again in New York City together with his parents in 1998. We have had pleasant two days with them. Michael presented me a copy of his book (Japanese version) with a autograph on it. Michael's signature dated May 25, 1998. We visited his apartment in East Village. It seems me to be just a couple of days ago that I looked through his old room.

The Haubens invited me to an ethnic restaurant in Soho district for lunch. We also had a chance to look through Columbia University from which Michael graduated. His parents enthusiastically told us on the future development of Internet and Netizenship.

We understand their deep sorrows completely, as we also had lost our nine-month-old-son more than 30 years ago. WE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF MICHAEL's SOUL. Jay and Ronda, please accept our sincerest condolences.

August 6, 2001. Mieko and Kenichi Nagano; Oita, Japan

III. My Dear Old Memory of Michael Hauben, 15th Anniversary of the Hardcover Book *Netizens*

Celebration. Netizens Around the World Stand With You Now, April 26, 2012

In 1995 April, I heard that Mr. Michael Hauben, the inventor of the word "Netizens" was scheduled to visit Oita, a small local city in southwest part of Japan. I was very excited and decided to welcome him. A boyish-looking young man who has just grown up to an adult appeared through the conference room door and said hello. It was Mr. Michael Hauben from the USA.

First, I had sent him a welcome message through the e-mail saying please come to Oita Japan. Michael kindly checked the Internet in advance to learn what I was and what I was interested in. He prepared "A little New York Cookbook" and presented it to me. I was really delighted to see the lovely, tiny book filled with beautiful illustrations of cookies and other simple foods. I picked up some of them and actually cooked them in home. I took the pictures of the dishes and posted to the Internet. Michel was delighted as well.

New York is my long-cherished city. In 1998, I sent him a message I would visit NYC and finally could meet not only him but also his parents in the city. I carried his book *Netizens* Japanese version with me and asked him to put the author's message on it. I also visited his apartment and exchanged greetings. This was a great memory in my life.

I don't like to use the subjunctive mood if he were alive, but he had passed away too early, too young. I wish him to watch the developing Internet world and network citizens much and much more. If he were here, he would have invented another new concept of Netizens.

I highly value the memory of Michael Hauben and pay my respects to Michael's parents Jay and Ronda who strongly promote the Netizenship all around the world. I and my husband Ken are very proud of being the everlasting friends of Michael Hauben who is now smiling and silently watching us from Heaven. Yes, Michael lives forever in our hearts.

[Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from an email message the author sent to Jay and Ronda Hauben in response to their invitation to her to a Zoom presentation in honor of Michael Hauben's life and his work on May 6, 2023. It is followed by excerpts from a post the author made on her Facebook account on May 9, 2023. With her post, she

included photos of happier times with Michael. The first two were during his 27th birthday celebration with friends and family. The third and fourth picture was at the winter pageant in the Lower East Side. The last three were from a group trip to a music festival in the Sahara Desert in Morocco at the turn of the millennium. (Link to the photos on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=802238388137821&set=pcb.8022 38654804461)]

Memories of Michael from a Friend

by Yvonne Yen Liu

From Email Message: To Jay and Ronda Hauben

I can't believe that yesterday would have been Michael's 50th birthday. I really wish he could have lived to this day and much more. He was a brilliant thinker, ahead of his time, and a good friend. He deserved a long life, where he could have developed his ideas around netizens. We all deserved to have more of Michael in our lives.

I'm not sure if I've ever shared this with you both but losing Michael was a significant turning point in my life. It made me realize that I need to tread carefully and treat with kindness the people I encounter. Then, September 11th that fall convinced me that I needed to engage actively and deeply in the world around me, to make it a better place.

I wish you both comfort, consolation, and community during this time. I hold you both in my thoughts.

From Facebook Post: My Best Friend Michael Hauben

Michael was brilliant; he authored an early book on the civic impact of the Internet, Netizens.

I met him in the late 1990s through the close-knit raver community in NYC. Being the geeky ravers we were, we would go to parties and concerts, and then post lengthy reviews on the NYC raves list.

Michael had an encyclopedian knowledge of music, not just electronic. He introduced me to many different genres: one of the best concerts I remember going to was seeing Pharoah Sanders with Michael at Lincoln Center.

He had an outsized influence on me, a club kid at the time, sharing for instance the histories of the Port Huron Statement and the Flint

sit-down strike. I didn't appreciate the substance of his intellectual and political work, until after he was gone.

I really wish Michael could have lived to be 50 and much more. He deserved more time, to receive treatment for his depression, to further his work on netizens, and to grow old with gray hair. We all deserved more of Michael in our lives.

Rest in power, my friend. May you found peace.

[Editor's Note: The following is the text of the Wikipedia entry for Michael Hauben at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Hauben. The original of this page was put on Wikipedia in 2016. An earlier Michael Hauben Wikipedia page disappeared.]

Michael Hauben

Michael Frederick Hauben (May 1, 1973 – June 27, 2001) was an American Internet theorist and author. He pioneered the study of the social impact of the Internet. Based on his interactive online research, in 1993 he coined the term and developed the concept of Netizen to describe an Internet user who actively contributes toward the development of the Net and acts as a citizen of the Net and of the world. Along with Ronda Hauben, he co-authored the 1997 book *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*.[1] Hauben's work is widely referenced in many scholarly articles and publications about the social impact of the Internet.

Early Life

Hauben was born on May 1, 1973, in Boston, Massachusetts, son of Jay and Ronda Hauben. He was an active participant in the Bulletin Board System (BBS) communities in the Detroit/Ann Arbor area in Michigan where his family had moved.

Work and Scholarship

Hauben participated in the founding meetings of the *Amateur Computerist*[2] in 1987. From 1991 to 1997 he attended Columbia Univer-

sity (C.U.) in NYC, earning a BA in Computer Science (Columbia College 1995) and a MA in Communication (Teachers College 1997). During his studies at C.U., Hauben did much of his original research and writing. He was all that time an active employee of the C.U. Academic Information Systems (AcIS), serving for one year as a Postmaster and Consultant for Electronic Mail.

Hauben was coauthor of the book *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*, a draft of which was put online in 1994. Print editions in English (IEEE Computer Society Press) and Japanese (Chuokoron-Sha, Inc.[3]) were published in 1997. Based on his interactive online research, Hauben coined the term 'Netizen' and introduced it into popular use. In the Preface to *Netizens*, Hauben wrote:

> My initial research concerned the origins and development of the global discussion forum Usenet … . I wanted to explore the larger Net and what it was and its significance. This is when my research uncovered the remaining details that helped me to recognize the emergence of Netizens. There are people online who actively contribute toward the development of the Net. These people understand the value of collective work and the communal aspects of public communications. These are the people who discuss and debate topics in a constructive manner, who e-mail answers to people and provide help to newcomers, who maintain FAQ files and other public information reposito- ries, who maintain mailing lists, and so on. These are people who discuss the nature and role of this new communications medium. These are the people who as citizens of the Net I realized were Netizens. The word citizen suggests a geo- graphic or national definition of social membership. The word Netizen reflects the new non geographically based social membership. So I contracted the phrase net.citizen to Netizen.[4]

His 1993 article "Common Sense: The Impact the Net Has on People's Lives"[5] was an analysis of responses Hauben received to questions he posted on newsgroups and mailing lists. The article begins,

> 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.

This article became Chapter One of *Netizens*.

While still an undergraduate, Hauben began to develop a theoretical framework for his vision of the social impact of the net and the netizens. In his article "The Expanding Commonwealth of Learning: Printing and the Net,"[6] he applied his study of the Printing Revolution especially the work of Elizabeth Eisenstein to an analysis of the trajectory in which the Internet and netizens are taking society. He wrote, "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." Quoting Hauben's work, one author wrote, "On the extraordinary explosion of knowledge with the Gutenberg printing press, see Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. On the intellectual foundation of the Internet actually being based on the Gutenberg printing press, see Hauben, 'The Expanding Commonwealth of Learning: Printing and the Net.'"[7]

Using a similar method of analysis, Hauben found insights about the Internet in the understandings of the 19th Century Scottish philosopher James Mill about the importance of "liberty of the press." He argued that the net was making it possible for citizens as netizens to be the watchdogs over governments which Mill argued was the function of liberty of the press. In a footnote to his article "The Computer as a Democratizer,"[8] referring to Usenet, Hauben wrote that "the discussions are very active and provide a source of information that makes it possible to meet 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."

Hauben was invited to Japan in 1995 by Shumpei Kumon, sociology professor and director of GLOCOM (the Japanese Center for Global Communication).[9] In Japan, Hauben was welcomed in Tokyo at GLOCOM and then in Oita by members of COARA,[10] the computer network

community in Beppu. At the Hypernet work '95 Beppu Bay Conference,[11] Hauben spoke about "The Netizens and Community Networks."[12] He was interviewed by the local *Nisshi-Nippon Press*. Then in Kyoto, he attended two network conferences and was an honored guest at a reception with the Mayor. Hauben was a speaker also at the GLOCOM Intelprise-Enterprise Collaboration Program (IECP). Throughout his stay in Japan, Hauben met Japanese computer and network enthusiasts to discuss the growing importance of this new medium and his vision of netizenship. Hauben also appeared in documentaries about the Internet on TV Tokyo and in write-ups in newspapers in Tokyo and Oita. Prof. Kumon included a chapter by Hauben in his 1996 book *The Age of the Netizen*. In 1997, the Japanese translation of *Netizens: On the History and impact of Usenet and the Internet* was published in a run of 5,000 copies.

When he returned home from Japan, Hauben broadened his vision of the impact the Internet and the netizens would have on society. He saw in the work of the American anthropologist Margaret Mead that even in the 1960s a global culture was emerging. Using the writings of Mead, he countered the critics who claimed that the Internet's mass culture was snuffing out cultural differences. He saw instead that "more and more people of various cultures are understanding the power of the new communication technologies. More and more people are reacting against the mass media and corporate dominance and calling for a chance to express their views and contribute their culture into the global culture." Hauben presented his analysis of Internet culture at the 1997 IFIP WG 9.2/9.5 conference in Corfu, Greece.[13]

Hauben also explored the question whether participatory democracy and netizenship are related. He studied the *Port Huron Statement* created in 1962 by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and other sources to see what lessons he could learn about the 1960s that would help to understand the importance of the Internet and the emergence of the netizens. He opened his analysis with the observation that "the 1960s was a time of people around the world struggling for more of a say in the decisions of their society … . People rose up to protest the ways of society which were out of their control … ." Hauben's conclusion was that "the development of the Internet and emergence of the netizens is an invest-ment in a strong force toward making direct democracy a reality. The new

technologies present the chance to overcome the obstacles preventing the implementation of direct democracy. Online communication forums also make possible the discussion necessary to identify today's fundamental questions."[14]

Hauben was an avid music fan. He was a DJ of ambient techno music on WBAR,[15] the Barnard College student radio station. With Min-Yen Kan he developed one of the original web sites for band listings, the Ever Expanding Web Music Listing![16] In 1996, an article in *The Daily Herald* (Chicago, IL) described the Ever Expanding Web Music Listing as "probably the World Wide Web's most comprehensive one-stop resource for all things musical."[17] In the late 1990s, Hauben did online reviews of live music performances in New York City. He was concerned that the youth music scene in NYC does not slip into drugs and commercial dominance. He analyzed trends in youth music culture and sent out pointers to upcoming events.[18] He saw peer-to-peer music reviews as an alternative to commercial advertising.

Influence of Hauben's Work

In the second half of the 1990s, the Internet rapidly spread around the world. Online and off-line, the term netizen was becoming widely used. Scholars began to refer to Hauben's research. For example, the Polish scholar and diplomat Leszek Jesien,[19] quoting Hauben, urged the European political leaders to look at netizenship as a possible model for a new European citizenship. Boldur Barbat, a Romanian scientist, reviewed Netizens concluding it is a catalyst for the continuing of information technology and an optimistic future.[20] Citing Hauben's work, Cameroonian sociologist Charly G Mbock[21] saw netizenship as a necessary component of any fight against corruption and as a sign of hope for "a more equitable sharing of world resources through efficient interactions." Turkish Educator, Dr. E. Özlem Yiğit, and Palestinian scholar, Khaled Islaih, also referred to Hauben as a source of their understandings of the importance of netizenship for their respective communities. Hauben's work on netizens and the Internet is known in China and has influenced how some academics and government officials analyze the impact of the Internet on society.[22] In his study of new media and social media in the Philippines, Aj Garchitorena, as some of his

theoretical foundation, cited Hauben's work especially Hauben's "Theory of the Netizen and the Democratization of Media."[23] Garchitorena also built on Hauben's insight that the net "brings the power of the reporter to the Netizen."

With its spread, two general uses of the term netizen developed. Hauben explained, "The first is a broad usage to refer to anyone who uses the Net, for whatever purpose … . The second usage is closer to my understanding, … people who care about Usenet and the bigger Net and work toward building the cooperative and collective nature which benefits the larger world. These are people who work toward developing the Net … . Both uses have spread from the online community, appearing in newspapers, magazines, television, books and other off-line media. As more and more people join the online community and contribute toward the nurturing of the Net and toward the development of a great shared social wealth, the ideas and values of Netizenship spread. But with the increasing commercialization and privatization of the Net, Netizenship is being challenged." He called on scholars, "to look back at the pioneering vision and actions that have helped make the Net possible and examine what lessons they provide." He argued that is what he and the Netizens book tried to do.[24]

One contributor to the 2004 celebration of the 250th Anniversary of Columbia University in New York City, referring to Hauben's contribution wrote, "While the prevalence and universality of the Internet today may lead some to take it for granted, Michael Hauben did not. A pioneer in the study of the Internet's impact on society, Hauben helped identify the collaborative nature of the Internet and its effects on the global community."[25]

Legacy

After sustaining injuries resulting from an accident where he was hit by a taxi,[26] Hauben died in New York City on June 27, 2001,[27] a victim of suicide. At the time of his death, he had lost a job, accumulated a large credit card debt, and was about to lose his apartment.[26]

The significance of Hauben's contribution to the appreciation of the emergence of the netizen is a deeper sense that the Internet is accompanied by an expansion of the fullness of human empowerment. In 2012, cultural

anthropologist Shirley Fedorak summed up Hauben's contribution. She wrote:

> Studies have found that greater participation in the political landscape is influenced by access to information … . Indeed, Michael Hauben identified a new form of citizenship emerging from widespread use of the Internet. Hauben coined the term netizens, and he considered them crucial for building a more democratic human society. These individuals are empowered through the Internet and use it to solve socio-political problems and to explore ways of improving the world.[28]

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Table of Contents (online edition)
(http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120/)
Michael Hauben Collected Works
(http://www.ais.org/~hauben/cw.html)
The Netizens Cyberstop (Hauben's original home page)
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[Editor's Note: The following is a summary of the author's prepared keynote speech at the first International Internet History Workshop held in Hangzhou, China, Nov 7-8, 2022. This summary was presented on May 6, 2023 as part of a "Memories of Michael" zoom session honoring Michael Hauben's life and work. Michael was born on May 1, 1973. The year 2023 would have been his 50th birthday. The whole prepared keynote speech can be seen in *Amateur Computerist* Vol. 35 no. 6, accessible at http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn35-6.pdf.]

An Introduction to Michael Hauben's Development of the Concept of Netizens

by Ronda Hauben

Introduction

This past November, Jay Hauben and I were invited to give keynote presentations via zoom for a history of the Internet conference in China.[1] The organizers raised the question of what were the original intentions of those creating the Internet and how to get back on the track of those original intentions. My talk took up this question as the question was similar to the research and writing Michael and I did to create the *Netizens* book.[2] I will summarize some of what I presented about Michael's research at this history of the internet conference.

Background

I want to start with a little background.

By 1992, Michael Hauben, one of the coauthor of the *Netizens* book, was a student at Columbia University. He had recently written a paper for a class. He was also online as part of the Columbia University connection to the Internet. The Internet had been in the process of being built for 20 years by 1992, and by 1992-1993 it was spreading and connecting up people around the world.

Michael posted his paper on a community network for those using what

was known as Usenet which was, at the time, available at some universities and corporations in the U.S., Canada, some European sites, and some Asian sites (first in South Korea and later in Japan).

Michael's paper, "Usenet and Democracy," was about James Mill. The paper described an article written for the Supplement to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1825) by James Mill (who lived from 1773-1836). James Mill was a Scottish historian, economist, political theorist, and philosopher. He was the father of John Stuart Mill. The article was about the importance of what Mill called "Liberty of the Press."

Michael describes Mill's argument about the need for people to be able to keep watch over their government officials. Quoting Mill, Michael writes that "government will be corrupt if the chance exists and that 'those in position to rule would abuse their power.'" In the article Michael proposes that computer networks will give people a means of publicly evaluating and spreading information about the government officials in office.

Michael referred to how the experience he was having on the Usenet community network, was an important example of how to provide for the open discussion about the workings of government and government officials that Mill proposed as critical for good government.

A Canadian from Ottawa had downloaded and read Michael's paper. The Canadian, Philip Fleisser, wrote Michael that he "agreed with Michael's views in the paper and that 'he would like to see more papers like it.'" Phil proposed that such articles which he tentatively titled "Readings on the Emergence of a Better World, Due to the Participatory Nature of Public Computer Networks" were not at the time commonly written and available to read. Phil suggested that if such a collection of articles like this was put together, "It might even be a best seller."

He asked if Michael had gathered such a set of articles or had any further references, which he pass on to Phil.

Michael's article about James Mill and the need for computer networks for citizens to provide oversight over government officials became the final chapter titled "The Computer as a Democratizer" in the *Netizen* book.

I attribute Phil's encouragement about the need for a book about computer networks and the struggle for more democracy as some of the encouragement for the publication of the *Netizens* book.

A few months later Michael took a class at Columbia in computer ethics. The professor asked that students do a term project using research beyond research from books. Michael decided to use the Internet for his project. He would explore how those online felt about the experience they were having being

connected to this still young new means of communications, the computer communications networks. He put together a post, which he posted on several mailing lists and on Usenet. In the post he wrote:

> **The Largest Machine: Where it came from and its importance to society**
>
> I propose to write a paper concerning the development of "The Net." I am interested in exploring the forces behind its development and the fundamental change it represents over previous communications media … . I wish to come to some understanding of where the net has come from, so as to be helpful in figuring out where it is going. (*Netizens*, p. 36)

He was quite surprised when a number of email responses arrived in his email account, welcoming his post and responding to it. The 60 people who wrote him in general shared their experiences online, and their great appreciation of the value they felt was now possible because they were able to be online. Michael studied their responses and wrote several other posts and received a number of other responses. Gathering the responses, he put together a paper which he titled: "Common Sense: The Net and Netizens." He wrote: "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 … ." Continuing, he observed, "We are seeing a revitalization of society. The frameworks are being redesigned from the bottom up. A new, more democratic world is becoming possible." (*Netizens*, p. 2)

He went on to describe a number of the characteristics of this new world that he had come to understand from his experience online and the research he had done of others' experience. Among the observations people had written him about, he included:

> These technologies allow a person to help make the world a better place by making his or her unique contribution available to the rest of the world. (*Netizens*, p. 10)

> The Net reintroduces the basic idea of democracy as the grassroots people power of Netizens. (*Netizens*, p. 13)

The significance to me of this post, is that Michael recognized that many of those who had written him document their desire to contribute to the world as a result of the empowerment they experienced.

Recognizing the empowerment made possible by the Net and

endeavoring to use this empowerment to create a better world, a more democratic world, is one of the important characteristics that I propose characterize netizens.

As Michael clarified in a talk that he gave at a conference in Japan in 1995, his view was that not all those online are netizens. Michael identifies those public-spirited users who contribute to the Net and to the bigger world it is part of, as the online users that he calls netizens. He reserved the use of the word netizens to describe such users.

The book *Netizens* grew out of the experience of this research Michael was doing and the complementary research I began, influenced by the fascinating material Michael was gathering and continuing to write about.

In 1994 we put a draft of a book online. Then in 1997 a print edition of the *Netizens* book was published in an English edition in May and in a Japanese edition in October.

Pioneering Vision

Some of the emails or online posts in response to Michael's questions were from computer pioneers who were online. In response to his question as to where the Net had come from, they pointed him to the work of a computer pioneer named J C R Licklider who inspired and successfully set the research direction that made it possible to create the Internet.

In Chapter V of the *Netizens* book, "The Vision of Interactive Computing and the Future," Michael asks the question: "There is a vision that guided the origin and development of the Internet, Usenet and the other associated … networks. What is that vision?"

The chapter points to the community that grew up around the people who were linked together by computer systems. Trained as a psychologist, Licklider observed what was happening to the people who were using the newly created computer communications networking systems. He observed that communities formed as people interacted and helped each other. A general phrase Licklider used at the time was "intergalactic networks." Exactly what he meant by this has various interpretations. But it was a phrase that captured the grandeur of Licklider's vision for the future network.

Another key aspect of Licklider's vision was the need for all to be connected if the developing network would represent a benefit to society.

By 1994, the U.S. portion of the Internet was becoming increasingly commercialized. There was an effort on the part of the U.S. mass media to promote a "get rich quick" view of the Internet. Many who have come online since 1995 have not had the experience of the early culture of interactive participation and sharing that prevailed through the early 1990s. Instead these origins are hidden and the early development of the Internet is erroneously characterized as a period of "exclusivity." This is not an accurate description. By the early 1990s users were finding ways to spread the Internet through civic efforts like creating community networks and Freenets and through creating gateways between different networks like the Unix UUCP network and the Internet and Fidonet. But by 1994 the U.S. government no longer supported the efforts which would have continued the sharing and cooperative culture of the early Internet. Instead there was a vigorous campaign to commercialize and privatize the U.S. portion of the public Internet. (The way this was done was probably also in violation of U.S. constitutional provisions with respect to the necessary public processes to be undertaken before public property is privatized. However, the commercial pressure to carry out the privatization quickly left little time to challenge the process.)

In 1996, Michael wrote that the Net should be like a public utility – akin to postal/telephone/water. While he did not necessarily favor regulation, he explained that regulation by government would be necessary to have equal access available to all to the net. "The market," he predicted, "would not make the Internet available to all who wanted access."

While the plan to privatize and commercialize the Internet had been created with various details being worked on for years, on September 15, 1994 the U.S. government officially announced a plan to privatize the NSF backbone of the Internet. And on May 1, 1995, the privatization decision was implemented.

Michael recognized the difference between the view toward Usenet and the Internet that he received in the responses to his research questions and the view toward the future development of the Net which was being proposed then by the U.S. government. Describing the two different views,

he writes:

> The picture of the Internet painted by the U.S. government has been one of an 'information superhighway' or 'information infrastructure' to which people could connect, download some data or purchase some goods, and then disconnect. This image is very different from the … cooperative communications forums on Usenet where everyone [was welcomed to] contribute.

Protection

Michael pointed out that both Usenet and the Internet flourished in their early development because they were protected from commercial use. He writes:

> Usenet has not been allowed to be abused as a profit-making venture by anyone individual or group. Rather people are fighting to keep it a resource that is helpful to society as a whole. (*Netizens*, p. 55)

Up till 1995, commercial usage was prohibited on the U.S. part of the emerging Internet known as the NSFnet. "There were Acceptable Use Policies (AUP) that existed because these networks were initially founded and financed by public money."

This protection then extended to the networks from other countries that connected to the NSFnet. Since on the NSFnet, Michael writes, "commercial usage was prohibited, which meant it was also discouraged on other networks that gatewayed into the NSF net backbone." (*Netizens*, p. 29)

Recognizing the need for protection for such a medium, Michael urges the importance of the net and of protecting the people's ability to develop its potential. He writes, "For the people of the world, the Net provides a powerful means for peaceful assembly. Peaceful assembly allows people to take control. This power deserves to be appreciated and protected. Any medium that helps people hold or gain power is something special that has to be protected." (*Netizens*, p. 26)

Not only had government regulation provided a protection from commercial abuse during the Net's development, but the developing network also provided a means for citizens to affect and influence their

governments.

What Then for the Future?

Michael and a friend he met when he was invited to Japan proposed a Netizens Association as a way to take up the challenges of evolving a network that would support interactive communication and user participation. Such an association could take on the goals of the Netizen and netizenship. It could be a help in the struggle to forge a net that will carry on the vision of an interactive participatory network of networks that Licklider introduced. In January 1994, Michael put together a Draft Declaration of the Rights of Netizens which could be a starting point for a collaboration of Netizens who are committed to the original vision for the Internet. This vision had made it possible for the Internet to develop an infrastructure capable of promoting vibrant interactive participation and resource sharing before the commercialization and privatization of the Net. Michael writes in the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Netizens:

> 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 commonwealth that is being created.
> DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE NET and NETIZENS.

Notes

1. For information about the conference and the full prepared keynote speech see *Amateur Computerist* Vol. 35 No. 6, accessible at: http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn35-6.pdf
2. *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet.*

[Editor's Note: The following declaration was written as a New Year's message. It was posted on Usenet on Jan 2, 1994* by Michael Hauben. It may have appeared earlier, sometime in 1993. It appears just after p. 344 in the 1997 publication of *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* and online at: https://firstmonday.org /ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/614/535.]

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 co-operative 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 of 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 commonwealth 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 world wide.

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* The original post can be seen at: https://groups.google.com/g/talk.politics.misc /c/yo8e80c0_NE/m/Gr3jhbiUz5IJ where it is followed by this: "I have posted this message to several newsgroups because it needs broad input and discussion by many users. Please feel free to circulate this message and post follow-ups accordingly – but please leave alt.amateur-comp and alt.culture.usenet as part of the discussion."

[Editor's Note: The following was written in 1995 for the Columbia University course "Radical Tradition in America."]

Participatory Democracy: From the 1960s and SDS into the Future Online*

by Michael Hauben

The 1960s was a time of people around the world struggling for more of a say in the decisions of their society. The emergence of the personal computer in the late 70s and early 80s and the longer gestation of the new forms of people-controlled communication facilitated by the internet and Usenet in the late 80s and today are the direct descendants of 1960s.

The era of the 1960s was a special time in America. Masses of people realized their own potential to affect how the world around them

worked. People rose up to protest the ways of society which were out of their control, whether to fight against racial segregation, or to gain more power for students in the university setting. The *Port Huron Statement* created by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was a document which helped set the mood for the decade.

By the 1970s, some of the people who were directly involved in student protests continued their efforts to bring power to the people by developing and spreading computer power in a form accessible and affordable to individuals. The personal computer movement of the 1970s created the personal computer. By the mid 1980s they forced the corporations to produce computers which everyone could afford. The new communications media of the internet grew out of the ARPAnet research that started in 1969 and Usenet which was born in 1979. These communication advances coupled with the availability of computers transform the spirit of the 1960s into an achievable goal for our times.

SDS and The Need for Participatory Democracy

The early members of SDS found a real problem in American society. They felt that the United States was a democracy that never existed, or rather which was transformed into a representative system after the constitutional convention. The United States society is called a democracy, but had ceased being democratic after the early beginnings of American society. SDS felt it is crucial for people to have a part in how their society is governed. SDS leaders had an understanding of democratic forms which did not function democratically in the 1960s nor do they today. This is a real problem which the leaders and members of SDS intuitively understood and worked to change.

An important part of the SDS program included the understanding of the need for a medium to make it possible for a community of active citizens to discuss and debate the issues affecting their lives. While not available in the 1960s, such a medium exists today in the 1990s. The seeds for the revival of the 1960s SDS vision of how to bring about a more democratic society now exists in the personal computer and the Net. These seeds will be an important element in the battle for winning control for people as we approach the new millennium.

The *Port Huron Statement* and Deep Problems with American Democracy

The *Port Huron Statement* was the foundation on which to build a movement for participatory democracy in the 1960s. In June 1962, an SDS national convention was held in a UAW camp located in the backwoods of Port Huron, Michigan. The original text of the *Port Huron Statement* was drafted by Tom Hayden, who was then SDS Field Secretary. The Statement sets out the theory of SDS's criticism of American society. The Port Huron convention was itself a concrete living example of the practice of participatory democracy.

The *Port Huron Statement* was originally thought of as a manifesto, but SDS members moved instead to call it a "statement." It was prefixed by an introductory note describing how it was to be a document that should develop and change with experience: "This document represents the results of several months of writing and discussion among the membership, a draft paper, and revision by the Students for a Democratic Society national convention meeting in Port Huron, Michigan, June 11-15, 1962. It is presented as a document with which SDS officially identifies, but also as a living document open to change with our times and experiences. It is a beginning: in our own debate and education, in our dialogue with society." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 329)

This note is important in that it signifies that the SDS document was not defining the definite solution to the problems of society, but was making suggestions that would be open to experiences toward a better understanding. This openness is an important precursor to practicing participatory democracy by asking for the opinions of everyone and treating these various opinions equally.

The first serious problem inherent in American society identified by the *Port Huron Statement* is the myth of a functioning democracy: "For Americans concerned with the development of democratic societies, the anti-colonial movements and revolutions in the emerging nations pose serious problems. We need to face the problems with humility; after 180 years of constitutional government we are still striving for democracy in our own society." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 361)

This lack of democracy in American society contributes to the

political disillusionment of the population. Tom Hayden and SDS were deeply influenced by the writings of C. Wright Mills, a philosopher who was a professor at Columbia University until his death early in 1962. Mills' thesis was that the "the idea of the community of publics" which make up a democracy had disappeared as people increasingly got further away from politics. Mills felt that the disengagement of people from the State had resulted in control being given to a few who in the 1960s were no longer valid representatives of the American people. In his book about SDS, *Democracy is in the Streets*, James Miller wrote: "Politics became a spectator sport. The support of voters was marshaled through advertising campaigns, not direct participation in reasoned debate. A citizen's chief sources of political information, the mass media, typically assaulted him with a barrage of distracting commercial come-ons, feeble entertainments and hand-me-down glosses on complicated issues." (Miller, p. 85)

Such fundamental problems with democracy continue today in the middle of the 1990s. In the *Port Huron Statement*, SDS was successful in identifying and understanding the problems which still plague us today. This is a necessary first step to working toward a solution. The students involved with SDS understood people were tired of the problems and wanted to make changes in society. The *Port Huron Statement* was written to address these concerns: "… do they not as well produce a yearning to believe there is an alternative to the present that something can be done to change circumstances in the school, the work places, the bureaucracies, the government? It is to this latter yearning, at once the spark and engine of change, that we direct our present appeal. The search for a truly democratic alternatives to the present, and a commitment to social experimentation with them, is a worthy and fulfilling human enterprise, one which moves us, and we hope, others today." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 331)

Describing how the separation of people from power is the means used to keep people uninterested and apathetic, the *Port Huron Statement* explains: "The apathy is, first, subjective – the felt powerlessness of ordinary people, the resignation before the enormity of events. But subjective apathy is encouraged by the objective American situation – the actual structural separation of people from power, from relevant knowledge, from pinnacles of decisionmaking. Just as the university influences

the student way of life, so do major social institutions create the circumstances which the isolated citizen will try hopelessly to understand the world and himself." ("The Society Beyond" in the *Port Huron Statement*, in Miller, p. 336)

The Statement analyzes the personal disconnection to society and its effect: "The very isolation of the individual – from power and community and ability to aspire – means the rise of democracy without publics. With the great mass of people structurally remote and psychologically hesitant with respect to democratic institutions, those institutions themselves attenuate and become, in the fashion of the vicious cycle, progressively less accessible to those few who aspire to serious participation in social affairs. The vital democratic connection between community and leadership, between the mass and the several elites, has been so wrenched and perverted that disastrous policies go unchallenged time and again." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 336)

The Statement describes how it is typical for people to get frustrated and quit going along with the electoral system as something which works. The problem has continued, as we now have all time lows in voter turnouts for national and local elections. In a section titled "Politics Without Publics," the Statement explains: "The American voter is buffeted from all directions by pseudo problems, by the structurally initiated sense that nothing political is subject to human mastery. Worried by his mundane problems which never get solved, but constrained by the common belief that politics is an agonizingly slow accommodation of views, he quits all pretense of bothering." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 337)

Students in SDS did not let these real problems discourage their efforts to work for a better future. They wanted to be part of the forces to defeat the problems. The *Port Huron Statement* contains an understanding that people are inherently good and can deal with the problems that were described. This understanding is conveyed in the "Values" section of the Statement: "Men have unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity. It is this potential that we regard as crucial and to which we appeal, not to the human potential for violence, unreason, and submission to authority. The goal of man and society should be human independence: a concern not with the image of popularity but with finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic;

a quality of mind not compulsively driven by a sense of powerlessness, nor one which unthinkingly adopts status values, nor one which represses all threats to its habits, but one which easily unites the fragmented parts of personal history, one which openly faces problems which are troubling and unresolved; one with an intuitive awareness of possibilities, an active sense of curiosity, an ability and willingness to learn." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 332)

Participatory Democracy

Those participating in the Port Huron convention came away with a sense of the importance of participatory democracy. This sense was in the air in several ways. The convention itself embodied participatory democracy through the discussion and debate over the text of the Statement as several people later explained. The *Port Huron State ment* called for the implementation of participatory democracy as a way to bring people back into decisions about the country in general, and their individual lives, in particular. One of Tom Hayden's professors at University of Michigan, Arnold Kaufman, came to speak about his thoughts and use of the phrase 'participatory democracy.'

Miller writes that in a 1960 essay, "Participatory Democracy and Human Nature," Kaufman had described a society in which every member had a "direct responsibility for decisions." The "main justifying function" of participatory democracy, quotes Miller, "is and always has been, not the extent to which it protects or stabilizes a community, but the contribution it can make to the development of human powers of thought, feeling and action. In this respect, it differs, and differs quite fundamentally, from a representative system incorporating all sorts of institutional features designed to safeguard human rights and ensure social order." (Miller, p. 94)

"Participation" explained Kaufman, "means both personal initiative – that men feel obliged to help resolve social problems – and social opportunity – that society feels obliged to maximize the possibility for personal initiative to find creative outlets." (Miller, p. 95)

A participant at the Port Huron convention, Richard Flacks remembers Arnold Kaufman speaking at the convention, "At one point, he declared that our job as citizens was not to role-play the President. Our job

was to put forth our own perspective. That was the real meaning of democracy – press for your own perspective as you see it, not trying to be a statesman understanding the big picture." (Miller, p. 111)

After identifying participatory democracy as the means of how to wrest control back from corporate and government bureaucracies, the next step was to identify the means to having participatory democracy. In the "Values" section of *The Port Huron Statement*, the means proposed is a new media that would make this possible: "As a social system we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life and the society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 333)

Others in SDS further detailed their understandings of participatory democracy to mean people becoming active and committed to playing more of a public role. Miller documents Al Haber's idea of democracy as "'a model, another way of organizing society.' The emphasis was on a charge to action. It was how to be out there doing. Rather than an ideology or a theory." (Miller, pp. 143-144)

Tom Hayden, Miller writes, understood participatory democracy to mean: "number one, action; we believed in action. We had behind us the so-called decade of apathy; we were emerging from apathy. What's the opposite of apathy? Active participation. Citizenship. Making history. Secondly, we were very directly influenced by the civil rights movement in its student phase, which believed that by personally committing yourself and taking risks, you could enter history and try to change it after a hundred years of segregation. And so it was this element of participation in democracy that was important. Voting was not enough. Having a democracy in which you have an apathetic citizenship, spoon-fed information by a monolithic media, periodically voting, was very weak, a declining form of democracy. And we believed, as an end in itself, to make the human being whole by becoming an actor in history instead of just a passive object. Not only as an end in itself, but as a means to change, the idea of participatory democracy was our central focus." (Miller, p. 144) Another member of SDS, Sharon Jeffrey understood "Participatory" to mean "involved in decisions." She continued, "And I definitely wanted

to be involved in decisions that were going to affect me! How could I let anyone make a decision about me that I wasn't involved in?" (Miller, p. 144)

It is important to see the value of participatory democracy as a common understanding among both the leaders and members of SDS. While the *Port Huron Statement* contained other criticisms and thoughts, its major contribution was to highlight the need to more actively involve the citizens of the U.S. in the daily political process to correct some of the wrongs which passivity had allowed to build. Richard Flacks summarizes this in his article, "On the Uses of Participatory Democracy": "The most frequently heard phrase for defining participatory democracy is that 'men must share in the decisions which effect their lives.' In other words, participatory democrats take seriously a vision of man as citizen: and by taking seriously such a vision, they seek to extend the conception of citizenship beyond the conventional political sphere to all institutions. Other ways of stating the core values are to assert the following: each man has responsibility for the action of the institutions in which he is embedded … ." (Flacks, pp. 397-398)

The Need for Community for Participatory Democracy

The leaders of SDS strove to create forms of participatory democracy within its structure and organization as a prototype and as leadership for the student protest movement and society in general. Al Haber, the University of Michigan graduate student who was the first SDS national officer, describes the need for a communication system to provide the foundation for the movement: "The challenge ahead is to appraise and evolve radical alternatives to the inadequate society of today, and to develop an institutionalized communication system that will give perspective to our immediate actions. We will then have the groundwork for a radical student movement in America." (Sale, p. 25)

He understood the general society would be the last place to approach. There was a need to start smaller among the elements of society that was becoming more active in the 1960s or the students. Haber outlined his idea of where to start: "We do not now have such a public [interaction in a functioning community] in America. Perhaps, among the students, we are beginning to approach it on the left. It is now the major

task before liberals, radicals, socialists and democrats. It is a task in which the SDS should play a major role." (Miller, p. 69)

The *Port Huron Statement* defines 'community' to mean: "Human relations should involve fraternity and honesty. Human interdependence is a contemporary fact; … . 'Personal links between man and man are needed.'" (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 332)

Prior to his full time involvement with SDS, Hayden wrote an article for the *Michigan Daily* describing how democratic decision making is a necessary first step toward creating community. Hayden's focus was on the University when he wrote, "If decisions are the sole work of an isolated few rather than of a participating many, alienation from the University complex will emerge, because the University will be just that: a complex, not a community." However, this sentiment persisted in Hayden's and others thoughts about community and democracy for the whole country. (Miller, p. 54)

This feeling about community is represented in the *Port Huron Statement*'s conclusion. The Statement calls for the communal sharing of problems to see that they are public and not private problems. Only by communicating and sharing these problems through a community will it be a chance to solve them together. SDS called for the new left to "transform modern complexity into issues that can be understood and felt close-up by every human being." The statement continues, "It must give form to the feelings of helplessness and indifference, so people may see the political, social and economic sources of their private troubles and organize to change society … .'" (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 374)

The theory of participatory democracy was engaging. However, the actual practice of giving everyone a say within the SDS structures made the value of participatory democracy clear. The Port Huron Convention was a real life example of how the principles were refreshing and capable of bringing American citizens back into political process. The community created among SDS members brought this new spirit to light. C. Wright Mills writings spoke about "the scattered little circles of face-to-face citizens discussing their public business." Al Haber's hope for this to happen among students was demonstrated at Port Huron. SDS members saw this as proof of Mills' hope for democracy. This was to be the first example of many among SDS gatherings and meetings. Richard Flacks highlighted

what made Port Huron special. He found a "mutual discovery of like minds." Flacks continued, "You felt isolated before, because you had these political interests and values and suddenly you were discovering not only like minds, but the possibility of actually creating something together." It was also exciting because, "it was our thing: we were there at the beginning." (Miller, p. 118)

The Means For Change

SDS succeeded in doing several things. First, they clearly identified the crucial problem in American democracy. Next, they came up with an understanding of what theory would make a difference. All that remained was to find the means to make this change manifest. They discovered how to create changes in their own lives and these changes affected the world around them. However, something more was needed to bring change to all of American society.

Al Haber understood this something more would be an open communication system or media which people could use to communicate. He understood that, "the challenge ahead is to appraise and evolve radical alternatives to the inadequate society of today, and to develop an institutionalized communication system that will give perspective to our immediate actions." (Sale, p. 25) This system would lay the "the groundwork for a radical student movement in America." (Sale, p. 25) Haber and Hayden understood SDS to be this, "a national communications network" (Miller, p. 72)

While many people made their voices heard and produced a real effect on the world in the 1960s, lasting structural changes were not established. The real problems outlined earlier continued in the 1970s and afterwards. A national, or even an international, public communication network needed to be built to keep the public's voice out in the open.

Members of SDS partially understood this, and put forth the following two points in the *Port Huron Statement* section on "Toward American Democracy":

 – "Mechanisms of voluntary association must be created through which political information can be imparted and political participation encouraged."

 – "The allocation of resources must be based on social needs. A truly

'public sector' must be established, and its nature debated and planned."
(*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 362)

International Public Communications Network – or The Net

This network and the means to access it began developing toward the end of the 1960s. Two milestones in the genesis were 1969 when the first ARPAnet node was installed and in 1979 when Usenet started. Both are pioneering experiments in using computers to facilitate human communication in a fundamentally different way than already existing public communications networks like the telephone or television networks. The ARPAnet, which was a prototype for today's internet, and Usenet, which continues to grow and expand around the world, are parts of the Net, or the worldwide global computer communication networks. Another important step toward the development of an international communication network was the personal computer movement, which took place in the middle to late 1970s. This movement created the personal computer which makes it affordable for an individual to purchase the means to connect to this public network.

However, the network cannot simply be created. SDS understood that "democracy and freedom do not magically occur, but have roots in historical experience; they cannot always be demanded for any society at any time, but must be nurtured and facilitated." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 361)

Participants on the ARPAnet, internet and Usenet inherently understood this, and built a social and knowledge network from the ground up. As Usenet was created to help students who did not have access to the ARPAnet, or a chance to communicate in a similar way, they came to it in full force. In "Culture and Communication: The Interplay in the New Public Commons," Michael Hauben writes that the online user is part of a global culture and considers him or she to be a global citizen. This global citizen is a net citizen, or a Netizen. The world which has developed is based on communal effort to make a cooperative community. Those who have become Netizens have gained more control of their lives and the world around them. However, access to this world needs to spread in order to have the largest possible effect for the most number of people.

In addition, as some efforts to spread the net become more commercial, some of the values important to the net are being challenged.

A recent speech I was invited to present at a conference on "the Netizen Revolution and the Regional Information Infrastructure" in Beppu, Japan helps to bring the world of the Netizen into perspective with the ideas of participatory democracy: "Netizens are not just anyone who comes online, and they are especially not people who come online for isolated gain or profit. They are not people who come to the net thinking it is a service. Rather, they are people who understand it takes effort and action on each and every ones part to make the net a regenerative and vibrant community and resource. Netizens are people who decide to devote time and effort into making the Net, this new part of our world, a better place." (Hauben, Hypernetwork '95 speech)

The net is a technological and social development which is in the spirit of the theory clearly defined by the Students for a Democratic Society. This understanding could help in the fight to keep the net a uncommercialized public common (Felsenstein). This many to many medium provides the tools necessary to bring the open commons needed to make participatory democracy a reality. It is important now to spread access to this medium to all who understand they could benefit.

The net brings power to people's lives because it is a public forum. The airing of real problems and concerns in the open brings help toward the solution and makes those responsible accountable to the general public. The net is the public distribution of people's muckraking and whistle blowing. It is also just a damn good way for people to come together to communicate about common interests and to come into contact with people with similar and differing ideas.

The lack of control over the events surrounding an individual's life was a common concern of protesters in the 1960s. The *Port Huron Statement* gave this as a reason for the reforms SDS was calling for. The section titled "The Society Beyond" included that "Americans are in withdrawal from public life, from any collective efforts at directing their own affairs." (*Port Huron Statement* in Miller, p. 335)

Hayden echoed C. Wright Mills when he wrote, "What experience we have is our own, not vicarious or inherited." Hayden continued, "We keep believing that people need to control, or try to control, their work and

their life. Otherwise, they are without intensity, without the subjective creative consciousness of themselves which is the root of free and secure feeling. It may be too much to believe, we don't know." (Miller, p. 262)

The desire to bring more control into people's daily life was a common goal of student protest in the 1960s. Mario Savio, active in the Berkeley Free Speech movement, "believed that the students, who paid the university to educate them, should have the power to influence decisions concerning their university lives." (Haskins and Benson, p. 55) This desire was also a common motivator of the personal computer movement.

The Personal Computer Movement

The personal computer movement immediately picked up after the protest movements of the 1960s died down. Hobbyist computer enthusiasts wanted to provide access to computing power to the people. People across the United States picked up circuit boards and worked on making a personal minicomputer or mainframe which previously only large corporations and educational institutions could afford. Magazines, such as *Creative Computing*, *Byte* and *Dr. Dobbs' Journal*, and clubs, such as the Homebrew Club, formed cooperative communities of people working toward solving the technical problems of building a personal and inexpensive computer.

Several pioneers of the personal computer movement contributed to the tenth anniversary issue of *Creative Computing* Magazine. Some of their impressions follow: "The people involved were people with vision, people who stubbornly clung to the idea that the computers could offer individuals advantages previously available only to large corporations … ." (Leyland, p. 111) "Computer power was meant for the people. In the early 70s computer cults were being formed across the country. Sol Libes on the East Coast and Gordon French in the West were organizing computer enthusiasts into clubs … ." (Terrell, p. 100) "We didn't have many things you take for granted today, but we did have a feeling of excitement and adventure. A feeling that we were the pioneers in a new era in which small computers would free everyone from much of the drudgery of everyday life. A feeling that we were secretly taking control of information and power jealously guarded by the Fortune 500 owners of multimillion dollar IBM mainframes. A feeling that the world would never be the

same once 'hobby computers' really caught on." (Marsh, p. 110) "There was a strong feeling [at the Homebrew Club] that we were subversives. We were subverting the way the giant corporations had run things. We were upsetting the establishment, forcing our mores into the industry. I was amazed that we could continue to meet without people arriving with bayonets to arrest the lot of us."

The Net and Conclusion

The development of the internet and of Usenet is an investment in a strong force toward making direct democracy a reality. These new technologies present the chance to overcome the obstacles preventing the implementation of direct democracy. Online communication forums also make possible the discussion necessary to identify today's fundamental questions. One criticism is that it would be impossible to assemble the body politic in person at a single time. The net allows for a meeting which takes place on each person's own time, rather than all at one time. Usenet newsgroups are discussion forums where questions are raised, and people can leave comments when convenient, rather than at a particular time and at a particular place. As a computer discussion forum, individuals can connect from their own computers, or from publicly accessible computers across the nation to participate in a particular debate. The discussion takes place in one concrete time and place, while the discussants can be dispersed. Current Usenet newsgroups and mailing lists prove that citizens can both do their daily jobs and participate in discussions that interest them within their daily schedules.

Another criticism was that people would not be able to communicate peacefully after assembling. Online discussions do not have the same characteristics as in-person meetings. As people connect to the discussion forum when they wish, and when they have time, they can be thoughtful in their responses to the discussion. Whereas in a traditional meeting, participants have to think quickly to respond. In addition, online discussions allow everyone to have a say, whereas finite-length meetings only allow a certain number of people to have their say. Online meetings allow everyone to contribute their thoughts in a message, which is then accessible to whomever else is reading and participating in the discussion.

These new communication technologies hold the potential for the

implementation of direct democracy in a country as long as the necessary computer and communications infrastructure are in stalled. Future advancement toward a more responsible government is possible with these new technologies. While the future is discussed and planned for, it will also be possible to use these technologies to assist in the citizen participation in government. Netizens are watching various government institutions on various newsgroups and mailing lists through out the global computer communications network. People's thoughts about and criticisms of their respective governments are being aired on the currently uncensored networks.

These networks can revitalize the concept of a democratic "Town Meeting" via online communication and discussion. Discussions involve people interacting with others. Voting involves the isolated thoughts of an individual on an issue, and then his or her acts on those thoughts in a private vote. In society where people live together, it is important for people to communicate with each other about their situations to best understand the world from the broadest possible view point.

The individuals involved with SDS, the personal computer movement and the pioneers involved with the development of the net understood they were a part of history. This spirit helped them to push forward in the hard struggle needed to bring the movements to fruition. The invention of the personal computer was one step that made it possible for people to afford the means to connect to the Net. The internet has just begun to emerge as a tool available to the public. It is important that the combination of the personal computer and the net be spread and made widely available at low or no costs to people around the world. It is important to understand the tradition which these developments have come from, in order to truly understand their value to society and to make them widely available. With the hope connected to this new public communications medium, I encourage people to take up the struggle which continues in the great American radical tradition.

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* This article is online at:
http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/CS/netdemocracy-60s.txt

Considerations on the Significance of the Net and the Netizens

by Ronda Hauben

Introduction

With the introduction of the Internet, the question has been raised as to what its impact will be on society. One significant result of the impact already is the emergence of the netizen. Michael Hauben's work in the 1990s recognized the significant impact not only of the development of the Internet but also of the role of the netizen in forging new social and political forms and processes.

While the role of netizens in working for social change has been documented around the world, the role of netizens in working for social and political change has been an especially important aspect of South Korean experience for nearly the past two decades. Recently, however, widespread political and economic corruption at the highest levels of the South Korean society has led citizens and netizens to take part in peaceful but massive candlelight demonstrations advocating the need for fundamental change in the political and economic structures of South Korean society. The question has been raised whether there are models for such change. In such an environment there is a need to consider the importance of the Internet and of the Netizen in helping to forge the new forms for grassroots participation in the governing structures of society. At such a time it seems appropriate to consider the conceptual framework for the role of the netizen in contributing to a new governing model for society

These developments in South Korea come at a time [2017] when the book *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* celebrates the 20th anniversary since its publication in 1997, making a review of the significant contribution of the book particularly relevant to the events of our time.

Looking Back

Twenty years ago in May 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. In 2017, we are celebrating the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of these publications.

In honor of this occasion I want to both look back and 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 begin to consider what has happened in these 20 years toward trying to understand

the nature of this advance and the developments the advance makes possible.

By the early 1990s, Hauben 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 be a beneficial impact. He had raised a series of questions about the online experience. He received responses to these questions from a number of people. Reading and analyzing the responses he explained,

> There are people online who actively contribute to the development of the Net. These people understand the value of collective work and the communal aspects of public communications. These are the people who discuss and debate topics in a constructive manner, who e-mail answers to people and provide help to newcomers, who maintain FAQ files and other public information repositories, who maintain mailing lists, and so on. These are the people who discuss the nature and role of this new communications medium. These are the people who as citizens of the Net I realized were Netizens.

The book was compiled from a series of articles written by Hauben and his co-author Ronda Hauben 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 Hauben's article, "The Net and Netizens: The Impact the Net Has on People's Lives." Hauben 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.[1]

Hauben 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 twenty 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, Hauben looked at the pioneering vision that gave birth to the Internet. He looked at the role of computer science in the building of the earlier network called the ARPAnet. He looked 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 Hauben 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 funding 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, many of whom supported the public and collaborative nature of the Internet and who wanted this aspect to grow and flourish.

The article "The Net and Netizens" grew out of a research project that Hauben had done for a class at Columbia University in Computer Ethics. Hauben 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 already in 1993 the Net was having a profound impact on the lives of a number of people.

Hauben 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 conceptualization of 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.

Hauben described this experience in a speech he gave at a conference in Japan. Subsequently in 1997, his description became the Preface to the *Netizens* book, Hauben 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.[2]

Hauben'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 Hauben 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, Hauben 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," he wrote, "the collective population will contribute back to the human community this new form of news."[3]

In order to consider the impact of Hauben'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.

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 does not make any explicit reference to the book *Netizens,* he finds the concept

of the netizen that 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 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 though the concept of the rights of the citizen, he recognizes, was an important democratic milestone.

"Human rights and citizenship," he writes, "are tied together and reinforce each other in the battle against the ruling classes."[4] 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."[5]

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 register in which the human is recast and along with it the citizen."[6] "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."[7]

In this situation, "the figure of the citizen is placed in a defensive position."[8] To succeed in the struggle against globalization he recognizes that there is a need 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."[9]

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?"[10]

"In contrast to the citizen of the nation," Poster 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 Hauben'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. Hauben's work was a process of doing research online, summarizing the research, analyzing it while welcoming online comments at various stages of the process 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 interactively established.

Considering this background, the observations that Poster makes of how the concept of "netizen" is used online represents a 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."[11]

This new phenomena, 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."[12]

The Era of the Netizen

Poster characterizes the current times as the age of globalization. I want to offer a different view, the view that we are in an era demarcated by the creation of the Internet and the emergence of the netizen. Therefore, 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 will refer to a few examples to give a flavor of the kind of developments I am referring to.

An article by Vinay Kamat in the Reader's Opinion section of the *Times of India* referred to something I had written. Quoting the article "The Rise of Netizen Democracy," 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."[13]

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?" Kamat 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, Kamat 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.

Looking for a Model

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

I realized that one cannot just 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 not only of citizens but

also 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 government decision making process.[14] But China is also a place where there are significant developments because of the Internet and netizens.[15]

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.[16]

In particular, I want to point to a paper by the research scientist who many computer and networking pioneers credit with providing the vision to inspire the scientific work to create the Internet. This scientist is JCR Licklider, an experimental psychologist who was particularly interested in the processes of the brain and in communication research.

In a paper Licklider wrote with another psychologist, Robert Taylor, in 1968 a vision was set out to guide the development of the Internet. The title of the paper was "The Computer as a Communication Device."[17] The paper proposed that essential to the processes of communication is the creation and sharing of models. That the human mind is adept at creating models, but that the models created in a single mind are not helpful in themselves. Instead it is critical that models be shared and a process of cooperative modeling be developed in order to be able to create something that many people will respect.[18]

Nerves of Government

In his article comparing the impact of the Net with the important impact the printing press had on society, Hauben wrote, "The Net has opened a channel for talking to the whole world to an even wider set of people than did printed books."[19] I want to focus a bit on the significance of this characteristic, on the notion that the Net has opened a communica-

tion channel available to a wide set of people.

In order to have a conceptual framework to understand the importance of this characteristic, I recommend the book by Karl Deutsch titled, The *Nerves of Government*. In the preface to this 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.[20]

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

What is the difference?

Political power has to do with the ability to exert force on something so as to affect its direction and action. 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 via certain channels.

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 happened in Libya in 2011 or what has been happening in Syria since 2011.[21] 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 informa-

tion 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?"[22]

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." Also, he proposes that "information has to be processed and discussed for it to acquire full meaning and significance."[23] "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.[24]

In his article "The Computer as a Democratizer," Hauben 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."[25]

Hauben 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 [Thomas Paine] and [James] Mill require that the public have the ability to replace the abusers."[26]

Channels of accurate communication are critical in order to share the information needed to determine the nature of one's government.[27]

Conclusion

The candlelight revolution is still in process in South Korea. It is demonstrating in practice that we are in a period when the old forms of government are outmoded. The paper by Licklider and Taylor proposes that the computer is a splendid facilitator for cooperative modeling. It is such a process of cooperative modeling that offers the potential for creating not only new technical and institutional forms, but also new political forms. Such new political forms are more likely to provide for the democratic processes that are needed for the 21st century. Hence it is the efforts of citizens and netizens who are involved in collaborative modeling

to create the more participatory forms and structures as is happening during the candlelight processes being explored in South Korea that provide for the development of a more equitable and democratic society.[28]

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1. Hauben, M., R. Hauben. (1997). *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*. Los Alamitos: IEEE Computer Society Press, p. 3. Also online in an earlier draft version, http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120/. Retrieved on Jan. 18, 2017.

2. *IBID*., p. ix.

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4. Poster, M., (2006). *Information Please*. Durham: Duke University Press, p.68.

5. *IBID*.

6. *IBID*., p. 70.

7. *IBID*., p. 71.

8. *IBID*.

9. *IBID*., p. 77.

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11. *IBID*.

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13. Kamat, V. (2011, December 16). "We are looking at the Fifth Estate." Reader's Opinion, *Times of India*, p. 2. http://timesofindia .indiatimes.com/edit-page/ampnbspWe-are-looking-at-the-fifth-estate/articleshow/11133662.cms, Retrieved 0n Jan. 10, 2017. The quote is taken from, Hauben, R. The Rise of Netizen Democracy: A Case Study of Netizens' Impact on Democracy in South Korea http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120 /other/misc/korean-democracy.txt, Retrieved on Jan. 10, 2017.

14. 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. Science mailing lists and discussion networks contributed to by netizens helped to expose the fraudulent scientific work of a leading South Korean scientist. And 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 U.S. beef into South Korea. The debate on June 10-11, 2008 over the form the demonstration should take involved both online and offline discussion and demonstrated the generative nature of serious communication. See for example, Hauben, R. "On Grassroots Journalism and Participatory Democracy." http://wwwcolumbia.edu/~rh120/other/net izens_draft.pdf, Retrieved on Jan. 10, 2017.

15. 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 Hauben, R. (2010, February 14). "China in the Era of the Netizen." https://blogs.taz.de/china_in_the_era_of_the_netizen/, Retrieved on Jan. 10, 2017.

16. *IBID*., *Netizens*.

17. "The Computer as a Communication Device." (1968, April) *Science and Technology*. http://memex.org/licklider.pdf, 21-41. Retrieved Jan. 21, 2017.

18. The Licklider and Taylor paper also points out that the sharing of models is essential to facilitate communication. If two people have different models and do not find a way to share them, there will be no communication between them.

19. *IBID*., *Netizens*, p. 299

20. Deutsch, K. (1966). *Nerves of Government*. New York: The Free Press, p. xxvii.

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22. Lee, Z. (2011). "Truthfulness and the Information Revolution." *JPL* 31, p. 105.

23. IBID., p. 106.

24. IBID., p. 108.

25. *IBID*., *Netizens*, p. 316.
26. *IBID*., *Netizens*, p. 317.
27. Hauben explains: "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)
28. Hauben, Ronda. (2016, December 21). "Ban Ki-moon's Idea of Leadership or the Candlelight Model for More Democracy?" https://rhetoric.bg/ronda-hauben-ban-ki-moons-idea-of-leadership-or-the-candlelight-model-for-more-democracy.

Culture and Communication: The Impact of the Internet on the Emerging Global Culture

by Michael Hauben

> Any document that attempts to cover an emerging culture is doomed to be incomplete. Even more so if the culture has no overt identity (at least none outside virtual space). But the other side of that coin presents us with the opportunity to document the ebb and flow, the moments of growth and defeat, the development of this young culture. (John Frost, *Cyber-poet's Guide to Virtual Culture*, 1993)

ABSTRACT

As we approached the new millennium, social relationships were changing radically. Even in 1969, the anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote of an "approaching worldwide culture." While she wrote of a global culture made possible by the electronic and transportation advances of her day, her words actually foresaw fundamental changes that have been substantially enhanced by the computer communication networks that were just

beginning. A new culture is being formed out of a universal desire for communication. This culture is partly formed and formulated by new technology and by social desires. People are dissatisfied with their conditions, whether traditional or modern. Much of the new communication technology facilitates new global connections. This article will explore the emerging culture and the influence of the net on this new participatory global culture.

I. – The Emerging Globalization of Everyday Life

The concept of a global culture arises from the extensive development of transportation and communication technologies in the twentieth century. These developments have linked the world together in ways which make it relatively simple to travel or communicate with peoples and cultures around the world. The daily exposure of the world's peoples to various cultures makes it impossible for almost any individual to envision the world consisting of only his or her culture (Mead, 1978, p. 69). We really are moving into a new global age which affects most aspects of human life. For example, world trade has become extensive, more and more words are shared across languages, people are aware of political situations around the world and how these situations affect their own, and sports and entertainment are viewed simultaneously by global audiences. The exposure to media and forms of communication helps spread many of these cultural elements. While television and radio connect people with the rest of the world in a rather removed and often passive fashion, computer networks are increasingly bringing people of various cultures together in a much more intimate and grassroots manner. A global culture is developing, and the Internet is strongly contributing to its development.

Culture is a difficult concept to define. Tim North has gathered six different definitions in his unpublished Masters thesis:

1. Culture: The shared behavior learned by members of a society, the way of life of a group of people (Barnouw, 1987, p. 423).

2. A culture is the way of life of a group of people, the complex of shared concepts and patterns of learned behavior that are handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation (Barnouw, 1987, p. 4).

3. Culture: The set of learned behaviors, beliefs, attitudes and ideals that

are characteristic of a particular society or population (Ember and Ember, 1990, p. 357).

4. Culture … taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society (Tyler, 1871; cited in Harris 1988, p. 122).

5. Culture: The customary manner in which human groups learn to organize their behavior in relation to their environment (Howard, 1989, p. 452).

6. Culture (general): The learned and shared kinds of behavior that make up the major instrument of human adaption. Culture (particular): The way of life characteristic of a particular human society (Nanda, 1991, p. G-3). (North, 1994, chapter 4.2.1)

One common category in some of these definitions is the passing of previously learned behavior from one generation to the next. Another common category in North's definitions of culture is the importance of experience and patterns of behavior being shared among a group of people.

Historically, during most periods, culture has changed slowly and has been passed on from generation to generation. In the last half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, for most peoples the normal rate of cultural evolution has been accelerating. Mead (1978, p. 64) writes that while in the past, culture was transmitted from the older generation to the younger with slow change from generation to generation, today the younger generation learn from both their elders and their peers. The learning from peers is then shared with their elders. Human culture gets set by how people live their lives (Graham, 1995). Culture is created and re-enforced through how that person lives in context of society and social movements. One is taught the culture of his or her society while growing up, but those perceptions change as he or she matures, develops and lives an adult life. Culture is not statically defined. Rather a person grows up into a culture and then can contribute to its change as time progresses. (Mead, 1956)

People are increasingly living a more global lifestyle, whether mediated through television, radio and newspapers, travel or actual experience. This global experience is facilitated by the ability of the

individual to interact with people from other cultures and countries on a personal level. Images and thoughts available via mass media show that other cultures exist. But when people actually get a chance to talk and interact, then the differences become less of an oddity and more of an opportunity (Uncapher, 1992). Professor Dennis Sumara observes the formation of self-identity is influenced by relations with others. He writes:

> The sense of self-identity … emerges … from our symbiotic relations with others. In coming to know others we learn about ourselves. It is important to note, however, that it is not a static or unified self that we come to know, for in the coming-to-know – we are changed. We evolve through our relations with others … . (Sumara, 1996, p. 56) That implies that people and cultures change from the interaction with other people's cultures. This new interaction and subsequent change is part of the formation of a global culture.

There are critics (Appadurai, 1990: etc.) who claim this global culture, or mass culture is snuffing out individual differences for a pre-packaged commercial culture. These critics call for the isolation of communities from each other so that uniqueness can be preserved. This criticism misses that human culture is a dynamic element of society, and freezing it would produce a museum of human society. Uncapher (1992) correctly points out that what these critics do not recognize is that more and more people of various cultures are understanding the power of the new communication technologies. More and more people are reacting against the mass media and corporate dominance and calling for a chance to express their views and contribute their culture into the global culture. As an example, Margaret Mead tells a story (1978, pp 5-6) of returning to a village in New Guinea which she had visited three decades earlier. She wrote:

> In the 1930s, when one arrived in a New Guinea village, the first requests were for medicine … and for trade goods. The European was expected to bring material objects from the outside world … but in 1967 the first conversation went:
> "Have you got a tape recorder?"
> "Yes, why?"
> "We have heard other people's singing on the radio and we

want other people to hear ours." (Mead, 1978, p. 5)

The presence of radios made the villagers aware of the music of others, and they wanted a part of their culture broadcast around the world.

Mead understood the importance of diversity to the survival and strength of a species, whether human or animal. However, she also understood that part of the global commonality was through the spread of scientific understandings and technological developments. The desire for technology is strong among those who have only heard about their advantages. She wrote, "People who have only seen airplanes in the sky and heard the wonderful ways of radio, satellites, telescopes, microscopes, engines, and script are eager to experience these things for themselves." (Mead, 1978, p. 121)

The Internet is one of the new technological advances of today, and can be seen to fit with the above examples but for more advanced societies. It is important to understand that coupled with the desire for the technological advances is the understanding of the need to control the introduction of such technology and participate to have its use benefit the particular peoples in their particular needs. The peoples of the world understand that with the implementation of technology comes a responsibility for the management and careful handling of that technology. Mead writes about this:

> … the very burgeoning of science that has resulted in world-wide diffusion of a monotonous modern culture has also stimulated people throughout the world to demand participation. And through this demand for participation in the benefits of a monotonous, homogeneous technology, we have actually generated new ways to preserve diversity. (Mead, 1978, pp. 153-154)

Even in the primitive communities that Mead studied in the Pacific Islands, she recorded that these people adopted democracy and the use of technology with their own variations and new aspects that served their own needs. The new advances in communication technologies facilitate new democratic processes. People are discovering new ways to participate and add their cultural contributions to a larger world. Efforts to communicate require the acceptance of technological standards and the building of a common technical framework. The growth of communications networks

and standards at the same time allows diverse cultures to share and spread their varying cultures with others.

II. – Global Contact over Computer Networks

The new media of forums, newsgroups, email, chat rooms, blogs, webpages and social media on the internet facilitate the growth of global interactive communities. These electronic communication forms are made available through community networks, universities, the workplace, portals and internet access providers (Hauben & Hauben, 1997, p. 8). Human culture is ever evolving and developing, and the new public commons that these technologies make possible is of a global nature. A growing number of people are coming together online and living more time of their daily lives with people from around the world. Through the sharing of these moments by people, their cultures are coming to encompass more of the world not before immediately available. Mead (1978, p. 88) understood that a global community and awareness would require the development of a new kind of communication that depended on the participation of those who previously had no access to such power or such a voice.

Newsgroups and forums are a relatively young medium of human discourse and communication. The Usenet technology, one of the first broad newsgroup networks, was developed by graduate students in the late 1970s as a way to promote the sharing of information and to spread communication between university campuses. Their design highlighted the importance of the contribution by individuals to the community. The content of Usenet was produced by members of the community for the whole of the community. Active participation was required for Usenet to have anything available on it. It was the opposite of a for-pay service that provides content and information. On Usenet, the users produced the content, i.e., talk, debate, discussion, flames, reportage, nonsense, and scientific breakthroughs filled the space. Usenet was a public communications technology framework which was open. The users participated in determining what newsgroups were created, and then filled those newsgroups with messages that were the content of Usenet. In forming this public space, or commons, people were encouraged to share their views, thoughts, and questions with others (Hauben & Hauben, 1997, p.

4). The chance to contribute and interact with other people spread Usenet to become a truly global community of people hooking their computers together to communicate. People both desire to talk and to communicate with other people (Graham, 1995; Woodbury, 1994). Usenet was created to make that communication happen. In time it also gave a public voice to those who would not have had the opportunity otherwise to have their voice heard. By promoting a democratic medium, these graduate students who created Usenet were helping to create the kind of medium Mead believed was an important condition toward the development of a global culture.

In a study about the global online culture, Tim North (1994, chapter 5.2) asked the question "is there an online culture and society on Usenet?" His conclusion was that there was a definite Usenet culture. He listed four of the important defining aspects of this unique online culture:

1. The conventions of the culture are freely discussed.
2. The culture is not closed to outsiders and welcomes new members.
3. There is a strong sense of community within the Net culture.
4. It's what you say, not who you are.

North described the Usenet culture as open and welcoming of newcomers even if there was an occasional unfriendliness to "newbies." He focused on how the online culture was documented and available so newcomers could figure out how the community functioned and more easily join it. But also not only was the documentation available online to learn from, it was open for discussion.

Another researcher in the 1990s, Bruce Jones described the fullness of net culture:

… the Usenet network of computers and users constitutes a community and a culture, bounded by its own set of norms and conventions, marked by its own linguistic jargon and sense of humor and accumulating its own folklore. (p. 2)

Jones elaborates on what he saw to be an egalitarian tendency or tendency to contribute to the community's benefit. Jones wrote:

… the people of the net owe something to each other. While not bound by formal, written agreements, people nevertheless are required by convention to observe certain amenities

because they serve the greater common interest of the net. These aspects of voluntary association are the elements of culture and community that bind the people of Usenet together. (p. 4)

While North proposed that Usenet was a distinct culture, he argued that it could not be considered a separate society. Rather Usenet was "a superstructural society that spans many mainstream societies and is dependent upon them for its continued existence" (North, 1994, chap. 4.2.2).

North argued that the Net does not need to provide the physical needs made possible by a society. He wrote:

In this superstructural view, the Net is freed of the responsibilities of providing certain of the features provided by other societies (e.g., reproduction, food and shelter) by virtue of the fact that its members are also members of traditional mainstream societies that do supply them. (North, 1994, chap. 4.2.2)

Rather, those who use the Net live in their daily offline society, and come to the Net for reasons other than physical needs. Others (Avis, 1995; Graham, 1995; Jones, 1991) also studied this new online culture and its connection to the growing global culture. They saw there are a distinct online culture and a distinct offline global culture. While the online culture strongly contributes to the developing global culture offline, it is not the sole contributing factor. The contribution of the online culture to the global culture through such technologies as forums and electronic mailing lists is important as the online media requires participation of the users to exist. Since as media forums, newsgroups and social websites encourage participation, they support the contributions of many diverse people and cultures to the broader global culture.

Both the technological design of opening one's computer up to accept contributions of others and the desire to communicate led to the creation of an egalitarian culture (Jones, 1991; North, 1994; Woodbury, 1994). People have both a chance to introduce and share their own culture and a chance to broaden themselves through exposures to various other cultures. As such, the online culture is an example of a global culture which is not a reflection of purely one culture. Instead, it both incorporates cultural elements from many nations and builds a new culture (North,

1994). Self-identity evolves through relations with others. (Sumara, 1996, p.56) The new connections between people of different cultures allows each culture to broaden itself based on the new understandings available from other places; culture changes through the exchange with new ways of understanding and life. And this change and shared changes gets shared around the world.

III. – Community Networks Making Online Access Available

Being a relatively young medium, the Net is available to a subset of the world. However, this is rapidly changing. Projects are extending the connections to undeveloped countries and the basic technology needed to gain access is as simple as a computer and modem connected to the local telephone or amateur radio network or use of Internet connectivity available from an Internet service provider. More and more people around the world are getting online via mobile devices. Another hurdle to overcome is technical training. However, the democratic ethos of the Net spreads through the help that users offer each other online. A large number of people who are on the Net want more people to be able to use computer technology. Many are helpful and take the time and effort to spread their knowledge to others who desire to learn. Similarly everyone online at one point was new and learning. This experience of "newbie"ness provides a common heritage to unite people. The problems encountered in implementing and using new technology encourages people to connect to others using the technology. This is an incentive to hook into the Internet where such people can be contacted. The commonality of people participating in the same technology creates a basis to develop commonality toward other interests.

Community networks in the 1990s provided a way for citizens of a locality to hook into these global communities for little or no cost (Graham, 1995). Community networks also provided a way for communities to truly represent themselves to others connected online (Graham, 1995; Weston, 1994). Without access made available through community networks, through publicly available computer terminals or local dial-in phone numbers, only those who could have afforded the cost of a

computer and the monthly charges of commercial Internet service providers (ISPs) or online services or who had access through work or school would represent themselves (Avis, 1995). Particular portraits of various cultures would thus be only partially represented. Also, when access is available and open to all, a greater wealth of contributions can be made. For example, there was a strong push in Canada and Canadian communities to get online. A lot of grassroots community network building took place. A Canadian national organization, Telecommunities Canada, stressed the importance of contributing Canada's various cultures to the online community and in this way made a contribution to the whole community (Graham, 1995; Weston, 1994). In a similar way, Izumi Aizu (1995, p. 6) says that Japan had "an opportunity to bring its own cultural value to the open world." He continues, "It also opens the possibility of changing Japan into a less rigid, more decentralized society, following the network paradigm exercised by the distributed nature of the Internet itself" (Aizu, 1995, p. 6).

There is something to be said about the attraction of representing one's self to the greater community. The many-to-many form of communication where an individual can broadcast to the community and get responses back from other individuals is an empowering experience. No longer do you have to be rich and powerful to communicate broadly to others and to represent yourself and your own views. This power is making it possible for individuals to communicate with others of similar and differing interests around the world. Grass-roots organization is boosted and even the formation of local community groups is all accelerated. Development of the commons to the exclusion of the big media representations makes this an electronic grassroots medium, or a new enlarged public commons (Felsenstein, 1993).

The online culture is primarily a written one, but there are an increasing number of videos and podcasts, although much of the text is written generally in an informal, almost off-the-cuff fashion. While people will post papers and well thought-out ideas, much of the conversation is generated in an immediate response to others' messages. This text can feel like a conversation, or a written version of oral culture. Stories akin to the great stories of the pre-history come about. Legends and urban myths circulate and are disseminated (Jones, 1991). Pictures and other non-text

items can be posted or sent in messages. These nontext items are primarily transferred and not modified, thought upon or communally worked on as are the textual ideas, but the comments often resemble a conversation. Graphics and graphical communication and collaboration occur more on websites, although they are still a less effective communication medium. The common shared online language was in the beginning English (Aizu). That has changed. Other languages exist in country hierarchies and newsgroups and in mailing lists, along with chat rooms, search engines and web pages. Moreover, all these developments, textual or graphic or video, make possible a global conversation of diverse views. Mead recognizes that "True communication is a dialogue." (Mead, 1978, p.77) She points out that real communication occurs "… in a world in which conflicting points of view, rather than orthodoxies, are prevalent and accessible." (Mead, 1978, p. 80)

IV. – Conclusion

The new global culture is forming in several ways, none of which is a generic corporate rubber stamp. People are taking charge. They are bringing their own cultures into the global culture and spreading this new culture around the world. This is taking on a general form and an online form. The online form provides a strong means by which people can spread their ideas and culture which in turn affects the broader global culture. This broader global culture also has an effect on newsgroups or online media. The ability to express oneself to the rest of the world is addictive and the rapid increase of new people joining the online global community makes that manifest. "The voice-less and the oppressed in every part of the world have begun to demand more power … . The secure belief that those who knew had authority over those who did not has been shaken" (Mead, 1978, p.5). Mead states later, "There are new technological conditions within which a new initiative for the human race is possible. But it will not be found without a vision." To the former call for brotherhood and sisterhood or of loyalty to kin and one's ancestors, Mead proposes, "we can now add a vision of a planetary community." She explains that "Within such a vision, the contributions of each culture … can become complementary." However, Mead emphasizes, "but within the new vision there must be no outsiders." (pp. 147-148)

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