Assignment 11: Cheating
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April 17, 2009

Professor Brooks and Professor Weiss teach a class at UNC on technical communication. One of the course goals is to prepare students to teach a computer science class. One assignment dealt with cheating; we were supposed to plagiarize a paper (in 15 min) and then identify any smoking guns. This is my paper, “plagiarized” references are at the bottom of the page. I think it would be quite funny if someone plagiarized my plagiarized paper (it would be kind of meta).

Email me, if you are super sneaky and use this as part of your assignment for the class, and enjoy the course, it is one of the most useful that you will take.

1 Plagiarized paper

1.1 Introduction

Network neutrality is best defined as a network design principle. The idea is that a maximally useful public information network aspires to treat all content, sites, and platforms equally. This allows the network to carry every form of information and support every kind of application. The principle suggests that information networks are often more valuable when they are less specialized when they are a platform for multiple uses, present and future.

A useful way to understand this principle is to look at other networks, like the electric grid, which are implicitly built on a neutrality theory. The general purpose and neutral nature of the electric grid is one of the things that make it extremely useful. The electric grid does not care if you plug in a toaster, an iron, or a computer. Consequently it has survived and supported giant waves of innovation in the appliance market. The electric grid worked for the radios of the 1930s works for the flat screen TVs of the 2000s. For that reason the electric grid is a model of a neutral, innovation-driving network.

The theory behind the network neutrality principle, which the internet sometimes gets close to, is that a neutral network should be expected to deliver the most to a nation and the world economically, by serving as an innovation platform, and socially, by facilitating the widest variety of interactions between people. The internet isn’t perfect but it aspires for neutrality in its original design. Its decentralized and mostly neutral nature may account for its success as an economic engine and a source of folk culture.
1.2 Definition

There is no single definition of net neutrality: the phrase means different things to different communities, companies, and individuals. The simple definition used by Common Cause states: Network neutrality is the principle that Internet users should be able to access any web content they choose and use any applications they choose, without restrictions or limitations imposed by their Internet service provider.1 But such simplicity can itself beget confusion. What does the phrase Internet users really mean: does it refer only to individual end-users or also to corporate users like eBay, Google, Sony, and other service and content providers? How are restrictions or limitations to be interpreted? Do these refer to bandwidth shaping? To mass e-mail and spam? Is pricing considered a restriction on accessibility? And aren't Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) full of restrictions and limitations on users?

On further examination, net neutrality soon seems related to everything involving the Internet: privacy, security, freedom to communicate, innovation, and above all, who controls the Internet.2 Since the meaning of net neutrality shifts depending on who gives the definition, a quick introduction to the basic players and the vocabulary may help.

1.3 Origin

The history of the net neutrality concept is extensively covered in the first chapters of Lawrence Lessig's book The Future of Ideas (2001), though he refers to it as neutral platforms. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 2002 cable broadband services decision, which recognized the cable industry’s media monopoly over its own networks, ignited interest in net neutrality because the decision was a significant blow to prior open-access practices. The decision was upheld in the Supreme Courts Brand X decision of June 2005. To level the playing field for the telcos, the FCC next decided that DSL providers could deny network access to third-party Internet service providers.

In November 2002, the Coalition of Broadband Users and Innovators (CBUI) was formed to lobby the FCC against these actions. Original CBUI members included Amazon.com, Microsoft, and Yahoo!, in addition to the Consumer Electronics Association and the National Association of Manufacturers. An industry-subsidized think tank in Washington, D.C., the Progress and Freedom Foundation, highlighted net neutrality at a June 2003 net neutrality conference by inviting Assistant Secretary of Commerce Nancy Victory to speak. Later that year, Lessig and Tim Wu, two of the most active academics in the debate, addressed an important ex parte comment to the FCC.
Before 2004, most of the net neutrality debate occurred within FCC proceedings and related litigation. Several academic and think tank pieces were published in 2004, and the debate broadened in 2005 as newspaper and trade journal articles on net neutrality began to appear monthly. At the same time, congressional attempts to rewrite the 1996 Telecom Act proliferated, and the lack of any consensus on net neutrality soon came to be viewed as a major obstacle to comprehensive telecommunications legislation. House and Senate hearings on net neutrality were held to document but not resolve the issue.

1.4 Law

There is ongoing legal and political wrangling in the US regarding net neutrality. In the meantime the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has used their jurisdiction over the issue and has laid down guideline rules that it expects the telecommunications industry to follow. On February 11, 2008 Rep. Ed Markey and Rep. Chip Pickering introduced HR5353 “To establish broadband policy and direct the Federal Communications Commission to conduct a proceeding and public broadband summit to assess competition, consumer protection, and consumer choice issues relating to broadband Internet access services, and for other purposes.” On 1 August 2008 the FCC formally voted 3-to-2 to uphold a complaint against Comcast, the largest cable company in the US, ruling that it had illegally inhibited users of its high-speed Internet service from using file-sharing software. FCC chairman Kevin J. Martin said the order was meant to set a precedent that Internet providers, and indeed all communications companies, could not prevent customers from using their networks the way they see fit unless there is a good reason. In an interview Martin stated that “We are preserving the open character of the Internet. The legal complaint against Comcast related to BitTorrent, software that is commonly used to download movies, television shows, music and software on the Internet.”

2 Response

I believe there are two smoking guns. First, there are quotes but no citations, and second, FCC is written in full with a parenthesized abbreviation twice.