

**The Governance of Cyberspace: Politics, Technology
and Global Restructuring, edited by B. D. Loader.
London and New York: Routledge, 1997.
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This interesting volume is the end result of a small conference held at the University of Teesside in April 1995. It contains a combination of essays using social scientific and literary analysis to "advance the debate about the governance of cyberspace" (p. xii).

The introductory essay by the editor of the volume, Brian Loader, defines cyberspace as "a computer-generated public domain which has no territorial boundaries or physical attributes and is in perpetual use." While the current form that cyberspace takes is roughly coterminous with the Internet, it need not be so in the future. The key question is how this thing is to be governed.

Loader identifies a number of perspectives on what cyberspace is and how it should be governed. He identifies the cyber-libertarians as an important group who oppose any government intervention in cyberspace. An influential member of this group is John Perry Barlow, former lyricist for the Grateful Dead and now a rancher in Wyoming. Barlow was one of the founders of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF).

The editor contrasts cyber-libertarians and other cyber-enthusiasts with authors like William Gibson, of the science fiction genre called "cyberpunk," and political philosophers like Jean Baudrillard who stress the dangers of the illusion of reality created by computer technology. The addition of yet another layer of intermediation augments the already extensive alienation of humans from nature and from each other. The nightmare scenario is a future in which no one interacts face to face anymore but pretends to do so while actually sitting in a room hooked up to fancy equipment.

While there is no specific political program associated with this line of thought, nevertheless its warnings about the dangers of new forms of criminal and antisocial behavior are echoed in essays in this volume on policing crime and regulating hate speech on the Internet by Klaus

Lenk, Charles Raab, Dorothy Denning, Puay Tang, and Michael Whine. The flip side of the coin is the rise of virtual communities and the ability of widely geographically dispersed people to organize social movements at very low cost. The Internet is democratic in one very important respect: It reduces transaction and communications costs for everyone who has access to it. In this respect, it is an important facilitating factor in the current tendency toward economic globalization.

The editor discusses the parallels between the ideas of postmodernist theorists and those of observers and commentators on the growth of networks—parallels that are also explored in essays by David Lyon, Simon Baddeley, and Paul Frisson. Postmodernist theorists like Jean-Francois Lyotard have argued that postmodernism can be characterized as the replacement of "grand narratives" with "little narratives" and with a new stress on subjectivity and the need for multiple voices in public discourse.

According to postmodernists, these replacements are desirable given the 20th century's genocidal experiences resulting from the clash of the grand narratives of fascism, communism, and liberalism. The authors in this volume agree with this point of view generally and argue that the Internet reinforces preexisting tendencies in this direction. I am not a fan of this sort of work, but the chapters that deal with this subject in this volume are short, readable, and generally well done.

Another topic explored in this volume is that of democracy and the "digital divide"—growing inequalities associated with unequal access to the Internet. Dave Carter deals with this in his essay and illustrates his arguments with a case study of experiments in teledemocracy in the city of Manchester in England.

The final essay in the volume by Michael Whine focuses on the use of the Internet by right wing and neo-fascist groups. It is a very informative essay containing a number

of useful insights about how hate speech is or might be regulated on the Internet. It is important for students of the Internet to acknowledge its "dark side" and to recognize that it empowers both tolerant and intolerant individuals and groups.

Overall, I thought this was a good book with a mixture of contributions from established figures like David Lyon and Dorothy Denning but also from less well-known

authors on a variety of interesting topics. I particularly liked the discussions of the ideas of science fiction authors in the essays by Roger Burrows and Gwyneth Jones. Brian Loader's introductory essay provided a good overview and summary of the rest of the volume. The book could be used to good advantage in advanced undergraduate and graduate course on the social and political implications of new technologies.