

Chapter 41

Internet Policy Issues and Digital Libraries' Management of Intellectual Property

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ABSTRACT

The policy issues posed by the Internet in different countries around the world do not seem to be very different. The Internet itself helps us realize this by allowing governments and citizens everywhere to share their problems and solutions. How different governments react to the Internet depends on the extent to which they are prepared to accept external influences. The continued growth of the Internet for personal, government, and business purposes is now being affected by a number of policy issues. The discussions in this chapter center on these various Internet policy issues. These are the issues of content on the Internet, equal access, copyright, and protection of intellectual property. The chapter also considers the emerging Internet policy issues such as privacy and security, and explores the basic principles for managing intellectual property in the digital environment and then suggests the tools for managing intellectual property by digital libraries.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Internet has revolutionized the way information is exchanged between people. There are other available tools which have changed peoples' perceptions about quick access to information such as the Internet. The continued growth of the Internet for personal, government, and business purposes is now being affected by a

number of policy issues. Among these are access to broadband, Internet services, Internet security, Internet privacy, the impact of "spam," concerns about what children encounter (e.g. pornography) when using the Internet, management of the Internet Domain Name System, and government information technology management. The policy issues posed by the Internet in different countries around the world do not seem to be very differ-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-7230-7.ch041

ent. The Internet itself helps us realize this by allowing governments and citizens everywhere to share their problems and solutions. How different governments react to the Internet depends on the extent to which they are prepared to accept external influences.

In the light of the above, the objectives of this chapter are to identify the various issues relating to the Internet policies; describe the Internet equal access issue and copyright and protection of intellectual property, and to analyse the issue about the basic principles for managing intellectual property in the digital environment. Based on the above objectives, the discussions in this chapter center on the various Internet policy issues. These range from the issue of content on the Internet, equal access, and copyright and protection of intellectual property. The chapter also examines the emerging Internet policy issues such as privacy, and security and explores the basic principles for managing intellectual property in the digital environment and suggests tools, which could be useful for the digital libraries in managing intellectual property.

VARIOUS INTERNET POLICY ISSUES

Equal Access

As the Internet becomes more pervasive there is potential for some citizens to become unable to participate fully due to their inability to pay for Net services. This is not a problem with the current level of Internet penetration, but it may be one in future. It has almost become a cliché by now to say that the Internet has made the world smaller by making communication between people on opposite parts of the world easier and instantaneous. In the Age of Information, the planet has become a global village for communication. Unfortunately, the cliché is not quite accurate. While millions of people all over the world are indeed hooked up to the Internet, a closer look at who those people are

reveals not quite faithful picture of the people who live on this planet. As the Internet continues to be the domain of a privileged, it is still Western-dominated and primarily-male minority. Equal access policy is therefore required. This may take any of these formats:

- A publication might have the policy of open access. Anybody may read the material, but only the editorial staff may change it.
- A publisher with journals online may have the policy that only subscribers have access to all materials. Other people can read the contents pages and abstracts, but have access to the full content only if they pay a fee per use.
- A government organization might classify materials, e.g., “top secret,” and have strict policies about who has access to the materials, under what conditions, and what they can do with them.

By addressing the more “traditional” problems facing the Internet in terms of censorship, discussion should therefore centre on how they impact on the minority only. However, issues of free expression and the Internet must address the fundamental fact that the remaining majority not having access to the new technology is being effectively silenced. A concerted effort to address this imbalance is occurring around the world. In Africa, for instance, less than ten countries on the continent were directly connected to the Internet in 1995. However, recently, over three-quarters of the capital cities in Africa—43 out of 54—have developed some form of Internet access, and it is expected that many of the remaining capitals will also have Internet facilities soon. Equal access is now being envisaged for all and sundry irrespective of gender, colour, and race, status (normal or physically challenged and even region).

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