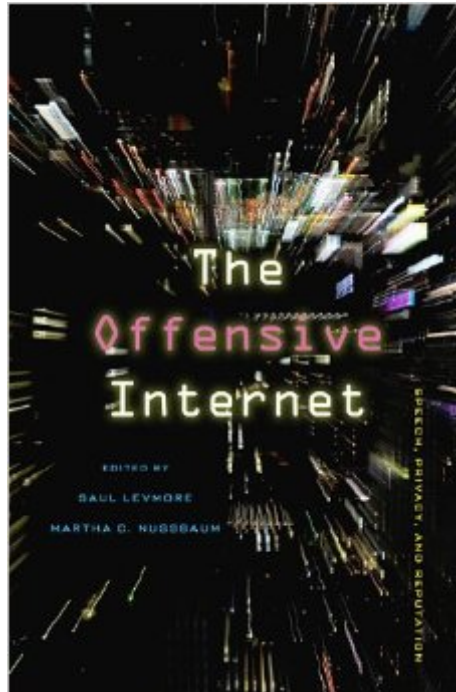


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The Offensive Internet: Speech, Privacy, And Reputation



Synopsis

The Internet has been romanticized as a zone of freedom. The alluring combination of sophisticated technology with low barriers to entry and instantaneous outreach to millions of users has mesmerized libertarians and communitarians alike. Lawmakers have joined the celebration, passing the Communications Decency Act, which enables Internet Service Providers to allow unregulated discourse without danger of liability, all in the name of enhancing freedom of speech. But an unregulated Internet is a breeding ground for offensive conduct. At last we have a book that begins to focus on abuses made possible by anonymity, freedom from liability, and lack of oversight. The distinguished scholars assembled in this volume, drawn from law and philosophy, connect the absence of legal oversight with harassment and discrimination. Questioning the simplistic notion that abusive speech and mobocracy are the inevitable outcomes of new technology, they argue that current misuse is the outgrowth of social, technological, and legal choices. Seeing this clearly will help us to be better informed about our options. In a field still dominated by a frontier perspective, this book has the potential to be a real game changer. Armed with example after example of harassment in Internet chat rooms and forums, the authors detail some of the vile and hateful speech that the current combination of law and technology has bred. The facts are then treated to analysis and policy prescriptions. Read this book and you will never again see the Internet through rose-colored glasses.

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Customer Reviews

This collection of essays discusses abuses of the Internet and offers a variety of possible responses to those abuses. The collection of essays appears to be based on presentations made at a conference entitled "Speech, Privacy, and the Internet: The University and Beyond," which was held at the University of Chicago Law School in November 2008. Collectively, the essays: (1) discuss the nature and extent of Internet abuses; (2) consider how they pose threats to privacy and reputation; (3) propose different solutions to those abuses; and (4) weigh the pros and cons of the freedom of speech and other implications of proposed solutions to Internet abuses. Eleven of the essays provide a legal analysis of Internet abuses, and propose legal solutions to the identified abuses. Two of the essays take a more philosophical approach to discussing Internet abuses. Because the book discusses Internet abuses primarily from a legal perspective, anyone interested in a social, ethical, technological, or business perspective of Internet abuses should look for other books. The book is aimed at readers with training, experience, or background knowledge in law, and is not suitable for casual reading. The emphasis on legal perspectives may be discouraging to some readers, but the nature and significance of the Internet abuses discussed in the book shows that the subject is of importance to more than just the legal community. Readers interested in this book may wish to look at other, non-legalistic books that discuss positive and negative aspects of the Internet and social networking, such as the following: Sherry Turkle,

The Internet resembles the Wild West when it comes to technology. Like many emerging industries the Internet does not need to follow traditional laws. Today anything really goes on the internet and the Communications Decency Act (CDA) allows web providers to use unregulated discussion without any liability. One of the several authors of this book compares this to the defamatory writing on the bathroom walls. This allows people to post things on the internet that would most likely get them into legal trouble in any other communication outlets. These hurtful comments can cause great emotional harm to its intended target. In the book these posters are referred to as juvenile posters, who offer no intellectual or valuable contribution to any internet forum. In layman's terms they are what we refer to as trolls. As pointed out in the book the bathroom stalls comments are only seen by a few, but on the internet a certain defamatory comments can be seen by thousands. Sometimes legal action can be taken, but the Communication Decency Act lets the web providers off the hook many times. Hurtful or defamatory posts are not only nasty, but can also affect future employment prospects. It is no secret employers use the internet for referencing future employees. Pornography and the objectifying of women is also a growing concern. Never in history has pornography been so assessable. The books state that this gives emotionally unstable individuals the ability to control and

look at women as merely objects. This further degrades their already disturbed psychological nature. There are controls available that can stop this content from reaching children, but sometimes it is not effective. These site and blogs are referred to as Cyber-Cesspools by one of the authors.

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