

Chapter 3: Networking



**Ethics for the Information Age
Fifth Edition**

**by
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Chapter Overview

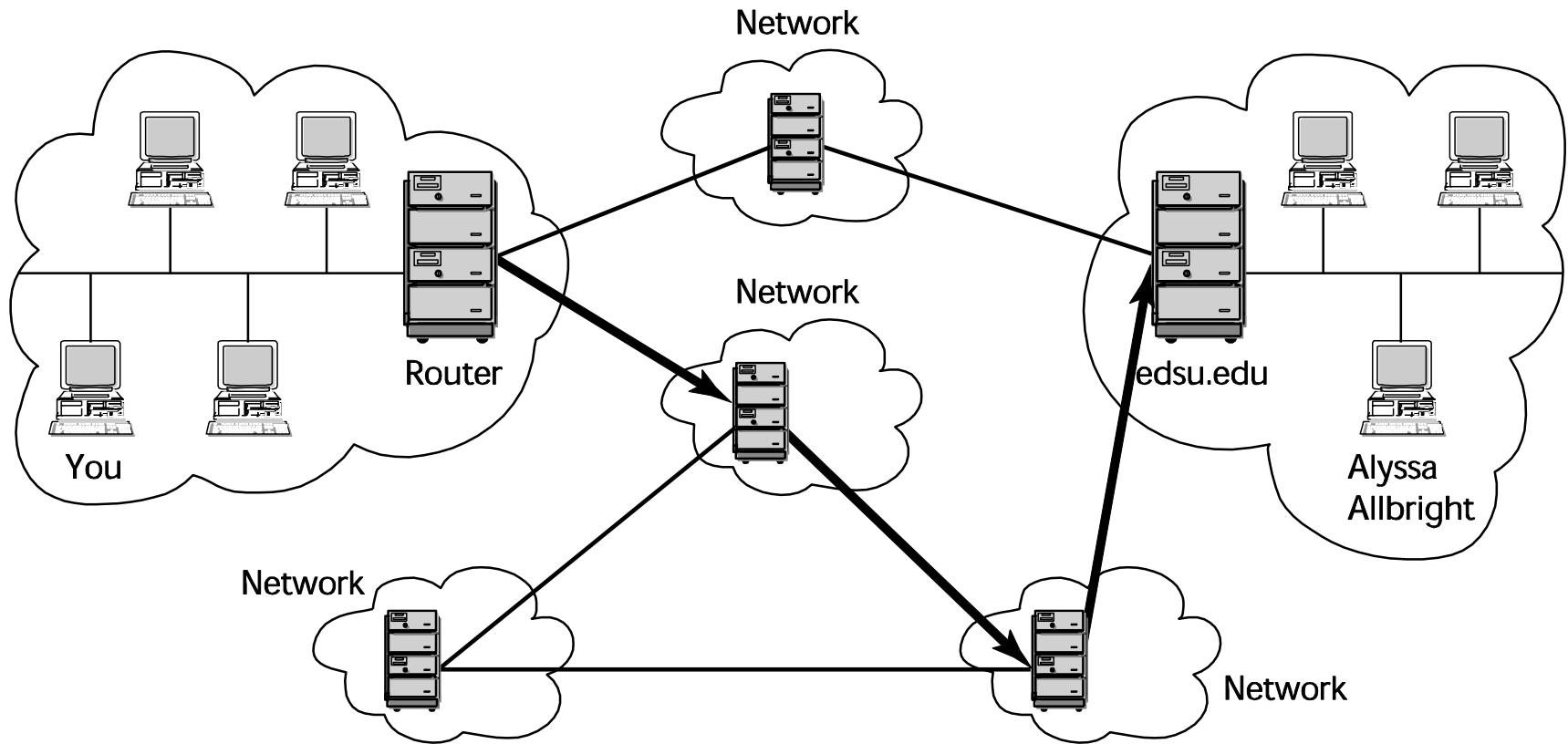
- Email and spam
- World Wide Web
- Censorship
- Freedom of expression
- Breaking trust on the Internet

3.2 Email and Spam

How Email Works

- Email: Messages embedded in files transferred between computers
- Email address: Uniquely identifies cyberspace mailbox
- Messages broken into packets
- Routers transfer packets from sender's mail server to receiver's mail server

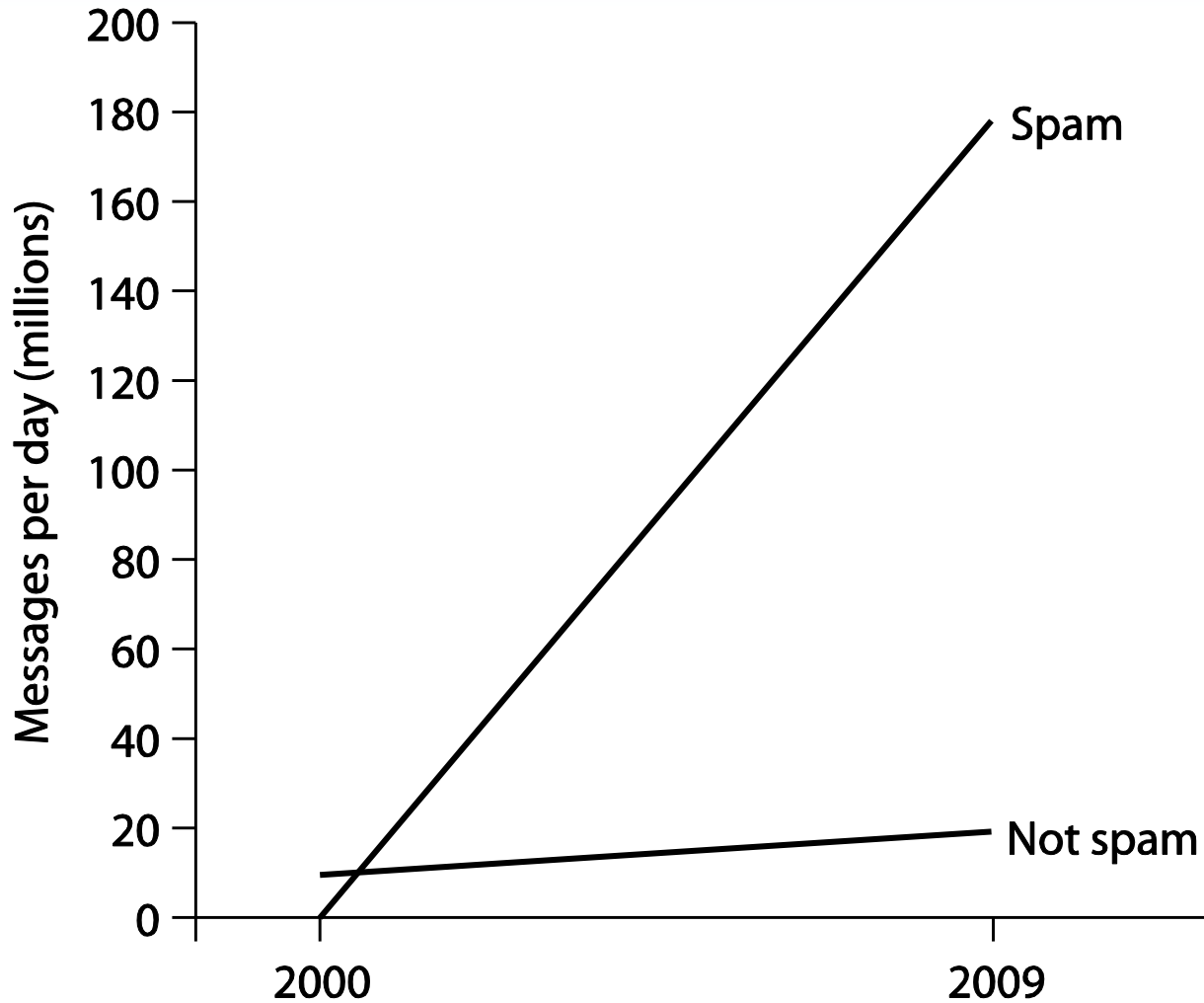
Routers Pass Email from LAN to LAN



The Spam Epidemic (1/3)

- Spam: Unsolicited, bulk email
- Spam is profitable
 - More than 100 times cheaper than “junk mail”
 - Profitable even if only 1 in 100,000 buys product
- Amount of email that is spam has ballooned
 - 8% in 2001
 - 90% in 2009

The Spam Epidemic (2/3)



The Spam Epidemic (3/3)

- How firms get email addresses
 - Web sites, chat-room conversations, newsgroups
 - Computer viruses harvest addresses from PC address books
 - Dictionary attacks
 - Contests
- Most spam sent out by bot herders who control huge networks of computers
- Spam filters block most spam before it reaches users' inboxes

Need for Socio-Technical Solutions

- New technologies sometimes cause new social situations to emerge
 - Email messages practically free
 - Profits increase with number of messages sent
 - Strong motivation to send more messages
- Internet design allows unfair, one-way communications

Case Study: Ann the Acme Accountant

- Ann: Accountant at Acme Corporation
- She distributes paychecks to all 50 employees
- Ann sends email advertising Girl Scout cookie sale
- 9 recipients order cookies; average 4 boxes each
- Other 40 recipients unhappy to get email; half complain to a co-worker
- Did Ann do anything wrong?

Kantian Analysis

- We should always respect autonomy of others, treating them as ends in themselves and never only as the means to an end (2nd formulation of Categorical Imperative)
 - Ann didn't misrepresent what she was doing
 - She didn't force anyone to read the entire email
 - Some who read her email chose to order cookies
 - Therefore, she didn't "use" others, and her action was not strictly wrong

Act Utilitarian Analysis

- Benefit to Girls Scouts = \$108
 - \$3 profit per box of cookies
 - 36 boxes sold
- Harm to company: time wasted
 - Orders taken during breaks
 - Lost productivity from complaining: \$70
 - 20 employees × 2 × 5 minutes/employee = 200 minutes
 - 3.5 hours × \$20/hour = \$70
- Benefits exceed harms, so action good
- Company may create policy against future fundraisers

Rule Utilitarian Analysis

- Q: What would be consequences of everyone in company used email to solicit donations?
- A: Plenty of employee grumbling and lower morale
- Harms greater than benefits, so Ann's action was wrong

Social Contract Theory Analysis

- Acme Corporation has no prohibition against using its email system this way
- Ann was exercising her right to express herself
- Some people didn't appreciate message, but she didn't act like a spammer
 - She didn't conceal her identity
 - She wasn't selling a fraudulent product
- Ann did nothing wrong

Summary

- Analyses reached different conclusions, but Ann could have taken a less controversial course
- She could have posted a sign-up sheet to identify those interested in cookie sale
- That way, she would have sent email only to those interested, avoiding the problems of grumbling and lost productivity

3.3 The World Wide Web

Attributes of the Web

- It is decentralized
- Every Web object has a unique address
- It is based on the Internet
- How to use it?
 - Shopping
 - Learning
 - ???

Twitter

- More than 200 million users
- Blogging tool
- Business promotion
- Role in Arab Spring uprisings debated
 - (+) Social networks lead to politicization
 - (-) Ties in social networks too weak for high-risk activism

Twitter's role in revolutionary Egypt - isolation or connection?

Ahram Online speaks to 10 of 2011's most famous Egyptian revolutionary 'tweeps' about whether Twitter is detached from the common people, and what the role of the social network will be in the coming months

Zeinab El Gundy, Monday 30 Jan 2012



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Why Social Media is (Really) Revolutionary: Looking Back At Egypt

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Social Media Sparked, Accelerated Egypt's Revolutionary Fire

BY SAM GUSTIN 02.11.11 2:56 PM

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Anti-government protesters celebrate in Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo Friday. Fireworks burst, and Egypt exploded with joy and tears of relief after pro-democracy protesters brought down President Hosni Mubarak with a momentous march on his palaces and state TV. *Emilio Morenatti/AP*

Governmental Control: Too Much or Too Little?

- Burma (Myanmar), Cuba, North Korea: Internet virtually inaccessible
- Saudi Arabia: centralized control center
- People's Republic of China: “one of most sophisticated filtering systems in the world” as well as censorship
- Germany: Forbids access to neo-Nazi sites
- United States: Repeated efforts to limit access of minors to pornography

3.4 Censorship

Challenges Posed by the Internet

- Many-to-many communications
- Dynamic connections
- Huge numbers of Web sites
- Extends beyond national borders, laws
- Hard to distinguish between minors and adults

Forms of Direct Censorship

- Government monopolization
- Prepublication review
- Licensing and registration

Ethical Perspectives on Censorship

- Kant opposed censorship
 - Enlightenment thinker
 - “Have courage to use your own reason”
- Mill opposed censorship
 - No one is infallible
 - Any opinion may contain a kernel of truth
 - Truth revealed in class of ideas
 - Ideas resulting from discourse are more influential

Mill's Principle of Harm

“The only ground on which intervention is justified is to prevent harm to others; the individual's own good is not a sufficient condition.”

3.5 Freedom of Expression

1st Amendment to U.S. Constitution

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of **religion**, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of **speech**, or of the **press**; or the right of the people **peaceably to assemble**, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Freedom of Expression Not an Absolute Right

- 1st Amendment covers political and nonpolitical speech
- Right to freedom of expression must be balanced against the public good
- Various restrictions on freedom of expression exist



CHARTS: Here's What The Wall Street Protesters Are So Angry About...

■ HENRY BLODGET | OCT. 11, 2011, 1:03 PM | 🔥 5,755,276 | 💬 625

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The "Occupy Wall Street" protests are gaining momentum, having spread from a small park in New York to marches to other cities across the country.

So far, the protests seem fueled by a collective sense that things in our economy are not fair or right. But the protesters have not done a good job of focusing their complaints—and thus have been skewered as malcontents who don't know what they stand for or



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Occupy Movement (Occupy Wall Street)



Robert Stolarik for The New York Times

News about Occupy Movement (Occupy Wall Street), including commentary and archival articles published in The New York Times.

City Room

Read more news about Occupy Wall Street on City Room.

Occupy Wall Street Navigator

A list of resources from around the Web about Occupy Wall Street as selected by researchers and editors of The New York Times.

- [Occupy Wall Street -- main site](#)
- [OWS New York City General Assembly](#)
- [Occupy Together -- national site](#)
- [Occupy Wall Street on Facebook](#)
- [Visual Economics -- giant poster summary of OWS](#)

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Case Study: Kate's Blog

- Kate: Maintains a popular “life on campus” blog
- Jerry: Another student; active in Whig Party
- At private birthday party, someone gives Jerry a Tory Party T-shirt as a gag, and Jerry puts it on
- Kate uses cell phone to take picture of Jerry when he isn't looking, posts it on her blog
- Story read by many people on and off campus
- Jerry confronts Kate and demands she remove photo; she complies, and they remain friends
- Kate's blog and Jerry both become more popular

Kantian Analysis

- Kate uploaded Jerry's photo to her blog without asking his permission
- She treated him as a means to her end of increasing the readership of her Web site
- Her action was wrong

Social Contract Theory Analysis

- Birthday party held in apartment of one of Jerry's friends
- Jerry had a reasonable expectation of privacy
- Kate violated Jerry's right to privacy
- Kate's action was wrong

Act Utilitarian Analysis

- Benefits
 - Popularity of Kate's blog increased (definitely)
 - Jerry become more popular on campus (definitely)
- Harms
 - Jerry's anger at Kate (only temporary)
 - Photo could discredit Jerry at some point in future (unlikely)
- Kate did nothing wrong by posting Jerry's photo

Rule Utilitarian Analysis

- What if everyone were constantly taking photos of people they encountered and posting them?
- Positive consequences
 - People would have more opportunities to keep up with what their friends are doing
 - People might be more reluctant to engage in illegal activities
- Negative consequences
 - People would become more self-conscious
 - Some relationships would be harmed
- Negative consequences more weighty than positive consequences, so Kate's action was bad

Summary

- Three out of four analyses: Wrong for Kate to post the photo without asking Jerry's permission
- Kate figured it would be better to beg for forgiveness than ask for permission, but she cut Jerry out of a decision that affected both of them, and that's no way to treat a friend
- Kate should have tried to get Jerry's consent

3.7 Breaking Trust on the Internet

Identity Theft

- Identity theft: When a person uses another person's electronic identity
 - About 10 million cases of identity theft in U.S. in 2010
 - About 1 million cases of identity theft annually in United States from online activities
 - Consumer's liability for credit card losses limited to \$50
 - Nearly half of cases from lost credit card, checkbook, etc.
 - In 20% of cases, credit card number stolen at time of making purchase (skimmers)
 - Phishing: Use of email to attempt to deceive people into revealing personal information
 - Identity theft a federal crime, but only 1 in 700 cases results in an arrest

False Information

- Quality of Web-based information varies widely
- Other media also have information of varying quality
 - *The New York Times v. The National Enquirer*
 - *60 Minutes v. Conspiracy Theory*
- Google attempts to reward quality
 - Ranking uses “voting” algorithm
 - If many links point to a page, Google search engine ranks that page higher