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Theological and Religious Perspectives on the Internet

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Almost every religious group has turned to the Internet, if not officially with denominationally sanctioned sites, then unofficially through online materials prepared by enthusiastic members of the different groups. Such an outpouring of religious content poses several challenges. First, to the religious groups themselves: They ask whether traditional teaching has anything to say about the new technology. Should they embrace it? Does it offer resources and benefits to their adherents? Does the Internet pose dangers, either from online content in general or from perhaps unorthodox religious interpretations or teachings? What about online practices: Can one worship or pray online?What kind of faith relationship exists or can exist in the virtual world?

The second challenge addresses communication researchers. What can communication study learn about virtual faith? From the time of Helland's (2000) distinction between online religion (individuals engaged in religious activities) and religion online (information about religion provided by churches), researchers have taken different approaches to the subject, with some looking at each kind of activity. Others, as reported in this issue of COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS, have examined the more official religious teachings about the Internet. Essays in this issue look at four religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity (represented by the Catholic Church), Islam, and Hinduism. Clearly, other traditions also appear online (see, for example, Kawabata & Tamuyra, 2007).

Professor Yoel Cohen examines the relationship between Jewish theology and the Internet. He looks at areas and issues where the Internet and Jewish law overlap, and contrasts the views of the main Jewish religious streams: Haredi, modern Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Professor Cohen serves on the faculty (school chairman 2009-2011) of the School of Communication, Ariel University Center, Israel, and is the author of *God, Jews, & the Media: Religion & Israel's Media* (Routledge, 2012).

Dr. Jim McDonnell provides an overview of the Catholic Church's approaches to the Internet. While the theological underpinnings share the basic Christian starting points with other Christian denominations, the Catholic perspective finds an official approval, as most of the work cited by McDonnell originates in the Vatican, particularly the Pontifical Council for Social Communication. He divides his essay into how the Church uses the Internet and how it guides people through ethical and practical challenges. Dr. McDonnell, currently the Director of Development for SIGNIS (the World Catholic Organization for Communication), is no stranger to the readers of TRENDS, having served for a number of years as research librarian and research director of its founding organization, the Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture.

Paul Soukup, S.J., the managing editor of TRENDS, contributes a brief overview of research on Islamic approaches, and Dr. Rohit Chopra, of Santa Clara University, provides a bibliography of online Hinduism.

Several online sources offer good materials for researchers. The Network for New Media, Religion, and Digital Culture Studies provides an online resource center for researchers, students and those interested in investigating the intersection of new media, religion and digital culture (http://digitalreligion.tamu.edu/). Probably the most specialized online research comes in the *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, an online journal devoted specifically to this area of study (http://online.uni-hd.de/). Finally, the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (JCMC), a web-based scholarly journal, focuses on social science research on computer-mediated communication via the Internet, the World Wide Web, and wireless technologies. Though not exclusively dedicated ro religious issues, it does publish materials relevant to the topic (http://jcmc.indiana.edu/).

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Jewish Cyber-Theology

Yoel Cohen Ph.D

yoelco@ariel.ac.il

The place of the Internet in the Jewish religious experience is undoubted. No less than in other religions, the Internet has created a revolution in accessibility to information about Judaism and Jewish-related matters. A search of Google in 2007 discovered that Judaism had 15,900,000 hits (Patrick, 2007, p. 71). By my estimate, there were 8,500 Jewish websites by 2005 (Cohen, 2006). These may be broken into grassroots groups and individuals, organizational, Jewish-related and Israel-related news, and commercial. Religious content in the the grassroots group and individual categories includes the Bible, commentaries, the Talmud, and Jewish law codes. Sites enable the surfer to partcipate in the daily study of a page of the Talmud (the *daf Yomei*) and hear inspirational talks about the weekly Torah reading (*divrei Torah*). This category includes a number of Jewish outreach programs; among early leaders in identifying the potential of the Net were Habad and Aish Torah. Organizations include the Conservative, Orthodox, and Reform religious movements; synagogues; and community organizations, with listings of synagogues, kosher restaurants, places of Jewish interest, and other services. The news category includes the website versions of Jewish and Israeli newspapers. The commercial category, which was relatively late in developing on the web, today sells most current Jewish books and Judaica.

But the entry of the Internet into everyday Jewish life has, in turn, brought with it theological dilemmas and challenges to rabbis. Judaism, in not preaching asceticism or social isolation, encourages social participation and, therefore, communication between people. While not rejecting the "good life," the Jewish *weltanschauung* is that humanity should raise its stature to emulate the characteristics of the Infinite God. As an ethical religion, Judaism regulates the human relationship with God and with each other. Given that the *Torah* and later Jewish law works like the Mishnah, Talmud, and such codifiers as Maimonides necessarily predated the mass media age, it is necessary, in determining the "Jewish view of the Internet," to locate points of overlap between Judaism and mass media behavior in general and the Internet in particular. The extent to which Judaism itself intrudes into social life is unclear. Some Jewish theologians argue that with the exception of specific subjects including family law and the Sabbath, Judaism has nothing to say about much of human activity. But others define Judaism as an entire way of life with something to say about all spheres of life. Whether narrowly or widely interpreted, much of the overlap between the Internet and Judaism appears conflictual. On the other hand, there can exist a confluence of interests between Judaism and the Internet—-such as the provision of information about events and societies, or networking, which contribute to understanding, but these are not generally identified as a peculiarly religious goal.

This article attempts to extrapolate from the Jewish Tradition a Jewish view on the Internet. To be contrasted are the Orthodox stream, itself broken into the ultra-Orthodox *Haredi* and Modern Orthodox (*dati leumi*), and the non-Orthodox streams, the Reform and Conservative. The Haredi outlook favors social isolation from modernity, whereas the Modern Orthodox seek to synthesize religion and modern life. Haredim reject modern Zionism, believing that only the Jewish Messiah is authorized to reestablish Jewish statehood, in contrast to modern orthodoxy which views the modern state of Israel as the fruition of Jewish messianism. The Reform defines Judaism strictly as a religious code not bound by Biblical laws and rejects nationalist sentiments. The Conservative movement evolved as a reaction to Reform excesses. The Orthodox streams are the dominant streams in Israel, and the non-Orthodox streams account for 70% of American Jewry, the remainder comprising the Orthodox.

Jewish theological objections to certain aspects of mass media behavior were raised by rabbis already in the pre-computer area. But the computer and the Internet raise special questions and problems not raised by earlier media forms. Religion and mass media have received little academic treatment in Israel, and reli-

gion and the Internet has received even less. The question of Jewish theological attitudes concerning the social role of traditional media forms prior to the Internet was discussed by Korngott (1993), Chwat (1995), and Cohen (2001). While the Haredi press has been described by Baumel (2002), Levi (1990), and Micolson (1990), their writing preceded the Internet. While the main political party-sponsored Haredi newspapers have had an important role over the years in constructing the Haredi reality and determining the Haredi agenda in Israel, this began to weaken with commercial weeklies from the 1980s, with Haredi radio stations, notably Radio Kol Chai in the mid-90s, and most recently with Haredi Internet websites. Cohen (2012) examines religious content in Israeli newspapers, radio, and television, both religious and secular, in a broader study of the interaction of media and religion in contemporary Israel. The coverage of religion in Israeli websites has received almost no attention. Horowitz (2000) describes early Haredi rabbinical attitudes to the Internet. Cohen (2011) and Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai (2005) examine how the Internet has been adapted to Haredi community needs. As one rabbi, Alfred Cohen, editor of the *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, noted:

> Since use of the Internet is such a new practice, there has scarcely been time for a body of broadly accepted halakhic literature or rabbinic comment to develop. Consequently, much of our study will involve trying to find cognate situations discussed in earlier generations, to identify the appropriate categories of activities discussed in rabbinic literature which could guide us in the current situation. (2005, p. 39)

This essay will examine, first, areas of religious legal conflict between Jewish religious practice and the Internet. Secondly, it investigates the question of whether communal prayer may, according to *Halakha* (Jewish religious law), be conducted on the Internet. Thirdly, the article will discuss the phenomenon of on-line rabbinic counseling.

2. The Internet and Jewish Religious Practice

Each media form brings its unique characteristics. The subjects where Judiasm and the Internet overlap or conflict while in some cases are identical, raising the same issues, reactions, and solutions, in others are different. In some cases the level of conflict with Jewish theology is greater with the Internet than with earlier media forms; in other cases, the opposite is true. Among the areas to be discussed where the Internet and Judaism conflict are sexual modesty, the Sabbath and Internet functioning, e-commerce, copyright, and social and political gossip on the Internet.

A. Sexual modesty

Although the Jewish Tradition is critical of sexual exposure on the Internet, this is less obvious than it appears. Physical pleasure from sexual relations within marriage is regarded in a positive light in Judaism. Rabbinical discussion of modesty as an ethical value concerns mostly the manner a person behaves in his social relations. Yet, the Israelite camp in the Wilderness in which "God walked shall be holy . . . that God should not see anything unseemly and turn Himself away from you" (Numbers 23:15), an allusion to nudity being looked on negatively. A concern of Jewish sources is that as a result of his exposure to images alluding to sex, a man could be sexually aroused to masturbation or "improper emission of seed" (onanism) (Genesis 38). The same prohibition on men does not apply on women. Different branches of Judaism interpret sexual modesty differently. Orthodox Judaism forbids a man to look on a female immodestly attired; in the ultra-orthodox community it includes the uncovered hair of a married woman. Similarly, Haredi rabbis forbid a man to listen to a woman singer lest he be sexually aroused; the modern Orthodox community permit this if the song is pre-recorded. These restrictions raise profound artistic questions of how love can be portrayed and expressed in a manner which is religiously acceptable. Conservative and Reform rabbis are critical of sexual freedom as expressed on Internet websites, the latter taking a stand on media sexploitation of women.

The question of sexual content on the Internet websites generated widespread concern in Haredi circles. The "Eda Haredit" (or Committee of Torah

Sages), the umbrella group of Haredi rabbis, established a special *bet din* (or religious law court) to deal with questions concerning communication related matters. The Internet was regarded by them as a far worse moral threat than television: whereas television was supervised, the Internet enabled free access to pornographic sites. The *bet din* banned the Internet.

The specific question of extra-marital romantic relationships on the Internet has been addressed by rabbis, with the question of whether it is tantamount to adultery. According to one rabbi, Yair Lerner (2005), while a couple in which one partner carried out an on-line romantic extra-material relationship is not obligated to divorce (which is the case, for example, where one partner has had sexual relations with another married person), the rabbis regard such a deed as a profound breach of Jewish values, and would recommend that the pair divorce. Lerner would not however see a marital cancellation because of an Internet relationship as grounds for not giving the woman her dowry, detailed in in the original marital contract between the two

B. The Internet and the Sabbath

One focus of rabbis' legal discussions around the Internet has concerned the Sabbath. The prohibition of work on the Sabbath Day, as enjoined by the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8), has implications for the functioning of the Internet on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals. Whereas the Sabbath functioning was an issue which occasionally came up in earlier media forms, it became center stage in *halakha* discussions of computers and the Internet. Given the prohibition on activating electricity on the Sabbath, the computer and the Internet may not be switched on (Auerbach, 1996), according to Orthodox as well as Conservative Judaism. But Reform Judaism, which does not oppose the use of electricity, will have no problem with the use of computers and the Internet. The subject of Sabbath observance in the modern technological age is one that occupies rabbis today. Several research institutions have been established over the years to research technological developments from a Jewish law perspective with special reference to their functioning on the Sabbath. The Jerusalem-based Institute of Science and Halakha comprises rabbis, engineers, and scientists. Another organization is Zomet, which has invented practical solutions to the application of technology in the modern state.

The prohibition of work on the Sabbath day as enjoined by the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8) has implications given both that the Internet operates simultaneously across time zones and that the Sabbath—the period commencing at sunset on Friday and continuing for 24 hours to Saturday eve—falls at different times in different parts of the globe. Questions raised by the rabbis include whether it is permitted to receive e-mail in your mail box when it is the Sabbath, or when the email is sent from a country where it is the Sabbath. May one send mail to an address in a country where it is currently the Sabbath? Is it permitted for a Jew to enter a website in a foreign country where it is currently the Sabbath? According to Yuval Churlow (2002), who heads a talmudical college (*yeshiva)* in the Israeli city of Petach Tiqva, identified with the modern Orthodox stream, the obligation to observe the Sabbath is for the surfer himself, and therefore one can send mail to a site where it may be the Sabbath. Illustrating the lack of consensus among rabbis about Internet-related matters, other religious Jewish authorities recommend that one should not check a website in a time zone where it is currently the Sabbath even if it is not specifically resulting from an e-mail sent to you.

The Sabbath Day is not only characterized by restrictions on work but also as a spiritual experience of prayer, study, and rest on the holyday. Mundane activities such as media exposure, including newspapers, take away from the Sabbath atmosphere. A separate halakhic question concerning the Internet raised by rabbis is whether a computer or the Internet could theoretically either be left on from before the commencement of the Sabbath, or be turned on automatically by a time-clock (the device by which many Jews have heating and lighting on the Sabbath), if the computer program is of a religious nature.

C. e-commerce

e-commerce has important implications for *halakha*. In Jewish law an acquisition (*kinyan*) occurs when someone performs some sort of physical action that demonstrates his ownership, such as lifting up the object. In e-commerce, the item advertised on the screen exists only virtually. Does an acquisition take place if it does not exist, or has not yet come into the possession of the seller? Can something be acquired which does not yet exist and is still at the supplier and has not reached the retailer on the website? To be sure, acquisition is widely discussed in the Talmud. According to one rabbi, Shlomo Dickovsky (2002), "'Virtual' acquisition is not regarded as an obstacle to a sale, since they do exist even if not in time in the

physical possession of the seller, and it is still considered a sale." Nevertheless, a secondary type of acquisition in Jewish law is the signing of an agreement, or *kinyan situmqa* (Babylonian Talmud: Babba Metzia 74a). Acquisition with a computerized signature is regarded as a signature and the deal is a deal to all intents and purposes. The signature by the mouse on the computer is an indication of this.

The Sabbath has special implications for e-commerce. Similar to a store's closing on the Sabbath given the prohibition to benefit from trading on seventh day, the day of rest, may one leave one's own trading website open including in a time zone where it is the Sabbath and the chance that a Jew there may breach the Sabbath law? Or, should a site which engages in on-line trading be closed by the owner on the Sabbath? One website, Babbakamma, is a list of Sabbath observing websites for those strictly observant. Reflecting the ongoing discussion about the Internet within rabbinical circles, one U.S. rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Heinemann initially wrote that a site should be closed because the owner's property, his website, is making money for him on Sabbath. The rabbi had assumed that clicking a button automatically caused a charge to be registered against the buyer's credit card and instantaously transfers the funds to the seller. Subsequently, the rabbi learnt that a credit card processors and banks never actually transferred funds on Saturday or Sunday (Cohen, 2005). And, with regard to midweek holydays like the New Year he recommended that a website be built in such a way as to defer credit transfers until after the holyday falling mid-week. One solution to a Jewish trader is to go into partnership with a non-Jew and in a fictitious manner give over ownership of the business at the commencement of the Sabbath to receive it back after the end of the Sabbath.

Is the leaving open a trading website on the Sabbath tantamount to placing a "stumbling block before the blind" (Leviticus 19:14)? And, may one purchase from a Jewish-owned website functioning in a time zone where it is currently the sabbath? According to the Eretz Hemdah, a Jerusalem-based center for training rabbis, a payment for an on-going weekly or monthly service to a data-base is not regarded as trading on the Sabbath, yet a one-time transaction would be. Is a trader obligated to close one's website in a specific time zone where it is there the Sabbath? According to the Eretz Hemdah Institute, it is not necessary to close down the website in time zones where it is the Sabbath, since other websites are available. Nor is it is considered a violation of the biblical command "not to place a stumbling block before the blind." Morever, the Torah does not require you to go to the financial expense of closing down the website when "the cause of the stumbling block is a passive agent rather than an active one" (Eretz Hemdah, 2003).

D. The sanctity of Internet communication

Knowledge and information also possess Jewish ethical dimensions in terms of copyright ownership, accuracy, and usage of God's name. Jewish law recognises copyright ownership and the value of stealing knowledge. Knowledge about events which are publicly known is not subject to copyright ownership. Material, such as a book or song, which is the exclusive property of one person may not be copied without permission. Rabbis have begun to consider the question of whether copying texts is regarded as stealing. While not specific to computers, the question of copyright has received renewed attention in the computer age in light of the proliferation of these practices. Given that downloading and copying texts is regarded as by some as acceptable practice, why, it is asked, should religious Jews be deterred? While there is a basic principle in Jewish law that once an owner has given up possession of an object which has gone missing, somebody in whose possession it falls does not have to return to him, one rabbi, Ram Cohen of Otniel Yeshiva, ruled that since some people do pay for downloaded texts and other downloaded materials, the owner has not "given up hope of receiving it back." Jewish law cannot be different from national law, and the unauthorized copying texts is therefore forbidden.

One exception is texts like the Bible, which are public property. In the case of Bible-related material—such as sermons—some rabbis argue that since the Bible is not the exclusive property of one party, no copyright stipulation exists for Bible-related materials.

Information reported in the media has to be accurate to avoid the audience being deceived. A separate question concerning the requirement of accuracy is when a news website, under tight deadlines, faces news sources which do not wish to give their account of events. The problem of deception is acute in advertising in all media forms, and not just the Internet, such as persuading customers to buy a product which they would not otherwise do if they knew all the facts.

In an extension of the Jewish law prohibition to pronounce the Holy Name, the Tetragrammaton, Jewish law regards as sacrilegious the destruction of texts with other names of God. To overcome the

problem, texts such as prayer books have, by tradition, been buried in a cemetery. Some religious publications print God's name in an abbreviated form (for example, G-d). With the introduction of computers and the Internet, rabbis have addressed the question of the name of God appearing on the computer screen and have ruled that the prohibition on erasing God's name occurs in print, not in electronic form. In contrast to paper, electronic forms are not permanent: the result of electrons fired at the inside of the screen, forming light patterns that cannot be seen from the front of the screen. They are constantly being refreshed, but at a rate the human eye cannot see. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, a leading rabbinical authority in the Haredi community, ruled that since no complete letter actually exists, this does not constitute writing. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef says that erasing on a CD is an indirect act of erasing. Moreover, there is no specific intention to write God's name permanently. However, Moshe Feinstein, a leading halakhic authority in the U.S., ruled that one should nevertheless refain from removing God's name because it appears as if one is erasing (Brueckheimer, 2003).

E. Political and social gossip on the Internet

A major innovation of Judaism in the field of religion and mass media behavior concerns the divulging of previously unknown information. Leviticus (19:16), in warning against not being "a talebearer among your people, or standing idly by the blood of your neighbor," imposes substantial limits on the passage of information. The rabbis have divided types of information into a number of categories. Most severe has been divulging secret information to the wider public which is intended or has the effect of damaging someone's reputation (*loshon hara*). When Miriam spoke ill of Moses for "the Cushan woman he married," she was smitten with leprosy (Deuteronomy 12). Also forbidden, but with lesser severity, is the disclosure of even positive information about somebody (*rehilut*) (Israel Meir Ha-Kohen, 1873). While in modern society the right to privacy is subservient to the right to know, in Judaism the right to know is subservient to the right to privacy. These rules were no less relevant to earlier media forms such as newspapers, radio, and television than to the Internet, even if freer uncontrolled Internet forms like blogs make this of even greater importance. In Judaism the only right to know is the right to know Jewish knowledge, that is, the *Torah*, national laws, and information

which if kept secret would cause damage to someone. Modern society permits everything to be published apart from that which personally damages someone's reputation. This includes a large middle category of information which is not of vital importance to know. Judaism does not acknowledge an automatic right to this middle category of information.

These restrictions in Judaism profoundly affect the disclosurre of previously unpublished information. A journalist, for example, draws much of his information from sources which often selectively disclose in order to weaken a political opponent. However, once the information is known to three people it is no longer forbidden, but it becomes permitted to hear it. As the Babylonian Talmudic Tractate *Erachin* (16a) notes, once the information is known to three people, it is the same as announcing it to the world. Information, therefore, takes on a relative value. The source and his informant have carried out a most heinous act in making the information public, but that same information may be heard by other people.

Yet the *Torah* says that it is not only permitted to disclose information which if kept unpublished would damage society, but obligatory. The same verse which prohibits the disclosure of secret information continues ". . . do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor," suggesting that if someone hears of information, such as corruption committed by a government minister or an official, he has an obligation to take steps to rectify the situation. The Bible acknowledges the fourth estate role, or societal watchdog, fulfilled by the Internet (Korngott, 1993). If the matter can be dealt with by other means than press disclosure, this is preferred. If not, media disclosure is necessary. Thus, Judaism distinguishes between the large flow of otherwise interesting information disclosed by the media which does not come under this category, disclosure of which it prohibits, and the much smaller category of information of social value (Chwat, 1995).

A related question which has occupied some rabbis today concerns the disclosure of information of corruption or sexual improprieties committed by rabbis. Such disclosures defame the religion and even God. Over the years rabbis have generally favored covering up rather than disclosure even if it may be in the social interest for people to know. Yet, the Bible was not averse to publishing details of the sins of the righteous as means towards moral teaching.

3. The Virtual Synagogue

One of the first cyberspace synagogues, Temple Beit Israel, founded in 2006, in "Second Life" has members residing in, amongst other places, Brazil, The Netherlands, the U.S., and Israel. Lacking any physical structure, its 400 members, or "residents," and thousands of visitors every week, meet on-line. Of all the branches of Judaism, only the Reform have fully incorporated modern technology into the synagogual service. Off-line Reform synagogues have gone on-line. For example, Temple Emanu-el, a leading New York Reform synagogue, has since 2000 broadcast its High Holyday services. Temple Emanu-el holds a virtual seder on the first night of the Passover holiday, enabling people in different locations to participate in the seder. Temple Beth El, in Charlotte, North Carolina, has since 2006 offered evening holiday services on the Internet. An estimated 2,500 people in 15 countries watch the High Holiday services of Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur of Temple Emanuel in Birmingham. Temple Bnai Shalom, in Fairfax Station, Virginia has podcasted since 2006, enabling the ill and elderly, as well as armed personnel with U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and foreign service personnel, to follow Temple services. According to Temple Bnai Shalom's Rabbi Amy Perlin, "when a woman tells me that she had listened to a podcast while walking on a beach to sort out her life, when a 'new Jew' is able to learn the service by listening to Friday's podcast, when a Jew becomes comfortable reciting the Kaddish that way, or when a man hears the '*Mishebeirach*' (prayer) with the voices of fellow congregants before surgery or during chemotherapy, we are meeting needs beyond our walls and touching hearts and lives**.**" Rabbi Dan Cohen of Temple Shaarei Tefilo-Israel, South Orange, NJ remarked:

> I was officiating at a wedding. One grandparent was not able to be present due to health issues. The bride was heartbroken. At the beginning of the service I pulled out my cellphone, called the grandparents and placed the cellphone, on speaker, on the podium in front of me. While being present via telephone is a poor alternative from being physically together, having the grandparent present via this device was itself a cause of celebrating. (Reform Judaism, 2009)

An unaffiliated synagogue in Loveland, Ohio, created Our.Jewish.Community.Org to stream Sabbath and High Holiday services to surfers. A West Coast web-site, Oy-Bay provides details of young Jews who are interested in setting up independent prayer groups. To be true, prayer services in the reform movement had benefited from technology even before the Internet age. The microphone is used in the Temple service. For years Temple Emanu-el in New York has broadcast the reading of the Book of Esther on the *Purim* festival on the community's local radio station.

Even orthodox Jews have benefited from the technological era. For example, Jews have been leaving messages in the Western Wall, the last remaining outer wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, well before the age of the Internet and faxes. But since the Internet they have been sending their prayers virtually. Prayer services at the Wall may be seen on the Net. There are other cases of the usage of Internet. In 2006 Israeli Ashkenazi chief rabbi Yona Metzger established a day of prayer on a special Internet website, "Embracing the world," to pray for missing Israeli soldiers. Thousands of Jews worldwide signed on. KEY, a Hebrew acronym for *Kulani Yehudim Kulani Yachad* ("we're all Jews and united together") coordinates a "*tehillim* campaign" (prayers from the Book of Psalms) for individual cases, especially of sick people. Owing to the Internet, *tehillim* campaigns have become cross-border, embracing Jewish communities wordwide (Marks, 2000). Charity giving is done on the Internet, making e-charity—or e-*tzedaka*—into a growing area of Jewish philanthropy. The custom prior to the New Year and *Yom Kippur* holydays of Jews seeking forgivenness—or "*mekhilla*"—from fellow Jews whom they had hurt in the outgoing year has taken on an Internet dimension and some now request *mekhilla* by e-mail rather than meeting, encountering, and apologizing in person. Yet this failure to encounter the person has weakened the value of e-*mekhilla*; as one New York orthodox rabbi put it "you have to have the experience right in front of the person, for them to see your face, and you have to see theirs, the face of foregiveness" (Nussbaum Cohen, 2000). The religious obligation

of returning lost objects has also taken on Internet dimensions and has become an informal website or noticeboard for announcing lost and found.

Mourning rituals have also benefited from the Internet era. Burial societies in some Israeli towns, including Tel Aviv and Kiryat Shemona, have erected devices so that funeral services at cemeteries may be seen on the Internet. This enables those who cannot participate in a funeral, particularly given the Jewish custom of burial close to time of death, to be present virtually, including from abroad, at the funeral. The custom of comforting mourners during the seven day shivah or mouring period after the funeral has taken on an Internet dimension, with some people sending condolences by e-mail. But Shmuel Eliahu, rabbi of the northern Israeli city of of Safed, has spoken out against this practice, arguing that comforting the mourner is a religious obligation that should be done in person. Moreover, honoring the dead ought to be done, Eliahu argued, by going to the house of the deceased soul. The custom among observant and traditional Jews of visiting the graves of the righteous to pray (such as, for example, for livelihood, a spouse, health, or legal success) has gone on-line; for example, a website created by followers of the Kabbalist, Itzhak Kadduri, includes a "Book of Requests."

Yet, fully-fledged prayer services comprising a communal *minyan* have not taken effect among the Orthodox and Conservative streams. These reject on-line virtual prayer services. A fundamental criterion for communal prayer for the Orthodox is the physical presence of 10 men. This is similarly true with Conservative Judaism, with the exception that some communities recognize that women may also form the minyan. According to the Jewish law code, *Shulkhan Arukh* , Orah Hayyim 55, "the 10 men (who constitute the *minyan*) must be in one place and the prayer leader (*chazan or shaliah zibbur*) with them."

While much of the Jew's thrice daily prayer service may be said by an individual praying alone, some aspects of the prayers may be said only in a *minyan*. The most relevant prayer concerns the *kaddish* mourning prayer said by relatives of the deceased in the 11-month period after death. So central is the place of the *kaddish* prayer in the Jewish religious psyche as a familial obligation that even some Jews who are not generally observant make a point of attending services to recite the *kaddish*—raising the question of whether a mourner, unable to reach a synagogue, may fulfil his commitment in a virtual type of *minyan*, in which the

individual situated at a separate location is connected on-line to a physical minyan of 10. Other prayers which require to be recited communally include the weekly Bible reading from the Torah scrolls on the Sabbath, as well as certain key passages of the Jewish prayer service.

Orthodox rabbis reject the possibility that Jews at another location—whether for reasons of bad weather, or ill health, or physical danger such as wartime—may fulfill one's prayer obligations by going on-line to an existing *minyan* prayer service. Given the *Shulchan Arukh* dictum that the 10 man *minyan* must be in one place and the *chazan* or *shaliah zibbur* with them, someone who is outside the room is not regarded as part of the *minyan*. According to Rabbi Avraham Yosef, son of the former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, a *minyan* based merely upon hearing or sight is not a *minyan*. According to Rabbi Yuval Churlow, Jewish law is focused upon the physical reality, not the media reality that humans have created. To be true, rabbis over the years have been concerned with the need to strengthen the community-orientated nature of Jewish life. Nevertheless, the requirement that the *minyan* has to be physical in nature, and not virtual, is perhaps not so clear-cut. For example, one early rabbi, Yehoshua Ben Levi, is quoted in a minority opinion in the Babylonian Talmud Tractate Pesachim (85b), that the relationship between God and His people is indivisible and can traverse any physical barrier—which might suggest a virtual *minyan*. Yet it seems unlikely that even if a solution to the Internet *minyan* were found within the limits of Jewish law that most people would prefer to pray at home, rather than come together for a group religious experience in a physical setting, as they have done for centuries.

The Conservative Movement also rejected the "virtual minyan." In a detailed response prepared in 2001 by the movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, Avram Israel Reisner, similarly argued against such a *minyan*, drawing also upon the *Shulkhan Arukh* principle that a *minyan* requires a physical proximity. Drawing an analogy with physical space as a motif in Judaism, Reisner referred to 10 levels of territorial spiritualty. These 10 levels start from outside the Holy Land to inside the Holy Land, outside Jerusalem to inside Jerusalem, and so on, culminating in the Holy of Holies chamber, which, according to Jewish tradition, is entered by the High Priest alone on *Yom Kippur*. Reisner draws from the laws of the Temple against the possiblity of a virtual *minyan* (Reisner, 2001).

Yet, according to some orthodox rabbis, as well as conservative rabbis, there are circumstances where one may link up virtually to an off-line *minyan* service. Notwithstanding the *Shulchan Arukh* dictum that 10 men must be physically in one location, there is a clause in the Jewish tradition for a person unable to reach the synagogue to pray at home at the same time as the *minyan* is in prayer. For Dr. Itzhak Arusi, chief rabbi of Kiryat Ono, the prayer of a person not present at a *minyan* would be strengthened were he to pray with his heart directed towards a *minyan* at prayer. Both Arusi and Yosef agree that certain parts of the prayers only said in communal service like the *kedusha* and the *baruchu* blessing could be recited by somebody praying in a virtual manner and not physical manner. However, a mourner may not say the *kaddish* prayer, given the rule that the prayer leader has to be physically present with the *minyan*.

A related Jewish legal question in considering the Internet concerns the transmission of prayer through electronic circuits. Many orthodox rabbis have said that if prayers which should be heard in a *minyan* like the Bible reading or Book of Esther on the Purim festival are recited in an electronic form, one has not fulfilled his obligation. For many years Israel Television has broadcast the Book of Esther. Yet, not all rabbis agree. Eliezer Waldenberg (Waldenberg, 1998) a former rabbi of the Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, allowed the practice. Rabbi Feinstein notes that the obligation of visiting the sick may be performed by telephone if there is no other way for a person to reach the sick (Feinstein, 1959). May these be precedents for linking up virtually to a physical *minyan*? For Conservative Judaism, it is a point of departure from the Orthodox stream. Reisner argues that where there is a two-way on-line audio voice connection between a mourner and the physical *minyan*, *kaddish* could be said since the *kaddish* is generic praise, neither constituting a benediction, nor including God's name. However, even Reisner admits that an individual not party to the *minyan* should not be the sole reciter to which the *minyan* responds, but indeed someone in addition who prays with the physical *minyan* is in practice the prayer leader.

Another question concerns praying from an electronic device like an iPod or mobile phone, which can include among their many features also the daily Jewish prayers. One scholar, Abraham Lifshitz (2010), has argued that it is inappropriate to pray from an electronic *siddur,* or prayer book, drawing upon an edict that a Jew in the midst of prayer should not hold anything lest his concentration be interrupted by that object, with such thoughts like excessive concern that the object he is holding may become lost. Lifshitz questions whether both the value of the phone, as well as its other features, receiving SMSs for example, might interfere with the individual's concentration in prayer.

A separate question concerns the question of on-line prayer services on the Sabbath. The prohibition of turning on electricity—regarded as an act of work and, therefore, prohibited on the Sabbath—suggests that even if a solution by Orthodox and Conservative rabbis to an on-line connection to a physical minyan on weekdays were found, it would be even more difficult regarding one on the Sabbath. Yet, it is argued, that if the electrical connection is preprogrammed prior to the Sabbath, like observant Jews use for heating and lighting during the 24-hour Sabbath period, it could be extended to on-line prayer services. Hearing prayer services or religious lessons would, it is argued, be a creative way of enhancing the spiritual quality of the Sabbath. With the prior exception of the broadcasting on the Sabbath of the Sabbath eve service, conducted by an Orthodox rabbi, Avigdor Cohen, the Israel Broadcasting Authority (TV and radio) broadcast religious programs on Friday before the commencement of the Sabbath or on Saturday nights after the termination of the Sabbath in the awareness that their mostly religious audience will not listen or view on the Sabbath itself. In prohibiting on-line transmissions on the Sabbath, Yosef has argued that the voice and echoes of a person's voice has an effect upon the functioning of an electrical circuit, raising and lowering the volume, in effect an "act of labour on the Sabbath day." However, Waldenberg allowed the shophar on the Rosh Hashanah to be broadcast by loudspeaker or radio or TV, begging the question why the Orthodox rabbis are vehemently against, for example, listening to a video cassette on the Sabbath set up before the commencement of the Sabbath. Moreover, most rabbis have not ruled against reading secular literature like newspapers on the Sabbath. Reflecting the conservative nature of Orthodox rabbis, David Lau, rabbi of the Israeli city of Modiin, remarked, "the Sabbath clock is not a solution for all matters," and Yosef ruled that no electricity network may function on the Sabbath except that which is necessary for regular living like heating and eating. But just like after the early invention of electricity, rabbis were reticent to allow the preprogramming prior to the

commencement of the Sabbath lest its functioning result in others suspecting that the electricity was manually turned on but today is accepted practice, so it is argued that it is only a matter of time until Orthodox rabbis allow the computer or video cassette comprising religious content to function on the Sabbath itself if preprogrammed prior to the Sabbath—thus enhancing the Sabbath or festival atmosphere.

4. On-line Rabbinic Counseling

Given that the performance of religious commandments (*mitzvot*) are means of giving expression to Jewish symbols, observant Jews have for hundreds of years sought instruction from rabbis. Instruction includes the interpretation and application of Jewish legal principles of *halakha* to modern life, and comprises questions of Jewish law (*sheiltot*). The religious counseling occurred mostly with the local synagogue rabbi or rabbis in educational institutions, but at times individual Jews also consulted rabbis beyond their geographical vicinity who were renowned for their knowledge in particular spheres and enjoyed wide standing among Jewish leaders. One of the developments caused by the Internet is the phenomenon of on-line rabbinical counseling. The "virtual rabbi" replies to questions of Jewish law and offers counseling.

On-line rabbinic counseling is a growing trend, in particular among the modern Orthodox community. Panels of rabbis, comprising some 10-20 rabbis, exist on websites identified with the modern Orthodox including *Kipa, Moreshet, Moriah, Jewish Answers,* and *Project Genesis.* To a much lesser extent on-line counselling exists within Haredi communities, with most Haredim preferring to consult with their community rabbi, reflecting a strict adherence to rabbinic authority. Haredi websites include Habad, with its AskMoses website, and the *Hitadbrut* (or "dialogue"). Yet even many modern Orthodox Jews do not do consult on-line either. An estimated 42% of observant Jews had never used the Internet to ask a rabbi a question, and a further 47% asked less than five questions, according to a Kipa survey. Churlow, who provides on-line rabbinic counseling, and receives between 20 to 40 questions a day, answering an estimated 5,000 questions a year, estimated that 30-40% of questions comprise male-female related questions such as marriage, relationships, and sexuality. Whereas 5% of men in the *Kipa* survey said that when they have a religious question they go to an on-site rabbi, 20% of women do so. According to the Kipa survey, asked whom they turn to if they have a religious question, 33% and 8% of women replied an Internet rabbi and an Internet forum, respectively in contrast to 16% and 4% of men, respectively. And, while 45% and 35% of men look up the question in religious books or ask the community rabbi, respectively only 29% and 30% of women replied that they did so.

On-line rabbinical counseling has generated a debate among modern Orthodox rabbis about the pluses and minuses of the phenomenon. Supporters of the new trend argue that non-affiliated Jews now have access to rabbis which they would not otherwise have. Secondly, on-line counseling offers an anonymity which the local community rabbi does not and enables people to raise questions they would not otherwise feel comfortable asking. Critics say firstly, that on-line answers proffered by rabbis are too short and secondly, that personal circumstances cannot be taken into consideration by the rabbi who is unacquainted with the questioner, even though sometimes the personal circumstances can be crucial in a particular instance. Thirdly, quoting the dictum "Make yourself a Rabbi," of the mishnaic tome *Ethics of the Fathers*, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger characterized the rabbi not only as being a functionary but also being a role model to emulate and identify with. One would not "make oneself a rabbi" if one already has a virtual rabbi. Fourth, instead of accepting the decision of the rabbi, people would be inclined to shop around to different on-line rabbis to find the reply most acceptable and comfortable to them. Fifth, the ease of on-line counseling discourages the Jew from studying the original sources in the halakhic literature.

A more recent addition to the "virtual rabbi" are questions placed to rabbis via SMS or Twitter. One rabbi in the modern Orthodox sector, Shlomo Aviner, receives an estimated 3000 SMS messages a month,

and at times of national crsis in the country the figure reached 600 a day. (In one instance, a religious Israeli soldier in enemy territory in the middle of the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese war sent an SMS to Aviner asking for religious approval to use the electricity in a caputred house inside Lebanon in order to recharge his mobile phone. Aviner replied in the affirmative. The following day, the soldier sent another SMS to the rabbi from enemy territory saying that he had nevertheless left money for the recharging.)

5. Conclusion: Future Prospects

As the norms of the Internet develop and become codified, some of the problems raised will find solutions. Sexual explicitness on the Internet may be controlled. Ownership of computer texts will be incorporated within copyright law. Technical advancements may be expected to find creative solutions for the observant Jew who prefers that mail sent to him on the Sabbath will only be received after the termination of the Sabbath, and that e-commerce transactions be conducted without breaching *halakha*.

Like in other religions, rabbis as religious leaders are decidely conservative, but as time unfolds, religious content on computers and the Internet may be allowed to function on the Sabbath if pre-programmed beforehand. So will on-line rabbinic counseling become standard practice.

Even if certain parts of the communal *minyan* may be allowed by some rabbis to be permissable for the observant Jew, the fully virtual *minyan* will not come into effect given the fundamental Orthodox and Conservative objections. And, given the centrality of prayer and the synagogue in the Jewish spiritual experience, the impact of the Internet upon Judaism is, therefore, necessarily circumscribed. Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, bound by limits of *Halakha*, are, therefore, unable to benefit fully from the benefits of the modern information technology. All the other benefits, whether religious educational websites or other websites, fade into the background given that the synagogue service remains in the physical realm.

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Catholic Approaches to the Internet

Dr. Jim McDonnell
jimmcdonnell@blueyonder.co.uk

1. Introduction

In contrast to most Christian communities the Catholic Church has developed a relatively coherent official response to the Internet over the past two decades as well as developing a significant web presence. The thinking of the Church has been expressed primarily in a number of documents from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications as well as in the annual messages issued on World Communications Day by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Though representing the Roman Catholic Church thought, in some ways these approaches can also mirror a more general Christian approach to the Internet, particularly in terms of their theological underpinnings.

As Campbell (2010) observes, the Catholic response to the Internet can be seen in terms of "an officializing discourse." "This discourse seeks not only to promote designated uses of technology but also to set defined boundaries for use in terms of theological beliefs and social values" (p. 144). This process is part of a wider "communal framing of technology" which involves "using language and symbols that provide a clear framework for how the new technology should be viewed or integrated into the com-

munity" (p. 134). She notes that in official Catholic discourse " the Internet becomes framed as a mission field or a space for people to inhabit in order to transform it towards a Catholic view of the world" (p. 160). Within this broad framework official Church documents have used a variety of metaphors to characterize the Internet, particularly those like "aeropagus," "agora," "forum," or "market-place," which evoke the idea of the Internet as a "space" of dialogue and interchange. The strength of this position from an official Church point-of-view is that is it is easy to articulate and can act as a rallying call for Catholics to become involved in working with this new form of communication (Pascual, 2011; Vogt, 2011).

This discussion considers a number of dominant themes in Church thinking which can be said to have shaped both the discourse and practice of appropriating the technology of the Internet. These include the use of the Internet for evangelization or preaching the Christian Gospel, the ethical challenges presented by the Internet, ways of living with the Internet, and the pastoral use of the Internet. The essay concludes with a brief review of some of the critiques leveled agains the Catholic approaches.

2. Internet and Evangelization

By far the most dominant theme in official Catholic discourse about the Internet is that of its potential and value for evangelization. This is hardly surprising given the long theological tradition embodied in documents such as *Inter Mirifica* (Second Vatican Council, 1963) and *Communio et Progressio* (Pontifical Council, 1971) that see the media in largely positive terms (so long as they are used properly) as "gifts of God" and "instruments of social communication" to be used for the purposes of mission.

The essential position was set out in the World Communications Day message for 1990 (some five years before the Internet actually became a reality for any significant number of people) entitled *The Christian Message in a Computer Culture*. "The Church must also avail herself of the new resources provided by human exploration in computer and satellite technology for her ever pressing task of evangelization" (John Paul II, 1990a).

The Vatican website was first set up in 1995 as Pope John Paul II became fired with the possibilities for the new technology. Sister Judith Zoberlein, the Vatican webmaster remembered, "So when it was proposed to John Paul II, he immediately thought it was positive. You know, he was a man who wanted to go out, to evangelize, to meet people, to present to the people the message of the church. He was very much in favor of that" (de Vaujany, 2006, p. 366).

This basic approach is reiterated and expanded in a range of documents over the following two decades. Throughout the 1990s World Communication Day messages re-iterate the themes of proclamation and evangelization in relation to different media. In the 2001 message the Pope spoke of "the positive capacities of the Internet to carry religious information and teaching beyond all barriers and frontiers" (Pope John Paul II, 2001).

The following year the message entitled, *Internet a New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel,* asserted that "the new world of cyberspace is a summons to the great adventure of using its potential to proclaim the Gospel message," but stresses that "electronically mediated relationships can never take the place of the direct human contact required for genuine evangelization" (Pope John Paul II, 2002).

Under the Pontificate of Benedict XVI the Vatican has taken more initiatives in extending its Internet presence to include in 2008 a TV channel on YouTube and in 2009 the Pope2You Facebook site. These practical initiatives were accompanied by Communication Day messages in 2009 in which the Pope called on young people to evangelize the "digital continent" (Benedict XVI, 2009) and in 2010 in which he exhorted priests to become "enthusiastic heralds of the Gospel in the new agora which the current media re opening up" (Benedict XVI, 2010; Mújica, 2010).

The Pope argued that "priests can rightly be expected to be present in the world of digital communications as faithful witnesses to the Gospel, exercising their proper role as leaders of communities which increasingly express themselves with the different "voices" provided by the digital marketplace. Priests are thus challenged to proclaim the Gospel by employing the latest generation of audiovisual resources (images, videos, animated features, blogs, websites) which, alongside traditional means, can open up broad new vistas for dialogue, evangelization and catechesis (Benedict XVI, 2010).

In his Message of 2011 (Benedict XVI, 2011) the Pope draws attention to people's digital profiles on social network sites as a form of witness: "To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one's own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences, and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically."

Catholic critique of the use of the Internet for evangelization has tended to concentrate on the gap between aspiration and reality. A good example is the address given by Bishop Jean Michel di Falco, President of the European Episcopal Committee for the Media (CEEM) at a conference organized in Rome in 2009 in which he commented that Evangelical websites are often more welcoming to interested enquirers than Catholic ones. He called for Catholics to adopt a more open approach and to master the new language of the web (di Falco, 2009).

This theme of mastering the new languages of the digital world was first articulated in Pope John Paul's encyclical on evangelization, *Redemptoris Missio* in which he observed that the media were a new "areopagus" and that:

> since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology. (John Paul, 1990b, #37c)

The challenge posed to the Church in understanding and mastering the "new languages" has been taken up by a number of Catholic authors. Soukup, (2003) points out:

Like the printing press, digital technologies change the context of language—where we use language and how we use it. But where the printing press fostered the various vernacular languages, the Internet, for one, seems to encourage the use of just one: English-language sites predominate. This may change over time, but for now we see a kind of enforced "orthography" in language as well as in the form of presentation (icons, gif images, and so on). The digital technologies also further a change in language use: hypertext replaces the linear patterns of essays, documents, and narratives. Finally, digital languages, as people presently use them, have a strong interpersonal force: email and chat remain by far the most popular forms. The digital languages connect people. (p. 12)

In a similar fashion, the extent to which the Internet and digital culture generally is fostering a new mentality and way of behavior has become a common theme in reflections upon Church involvement with the Internet (Ouellet, 2009).

3. Ethical Issues

Apart from the preoccupation with the use of the Internet as a tool for evangelization, a second persistent theme in Catholic thinking about the Internet is a focus on ethical and moral questions. Ethical reflection on the Internet is seen as an application of well-established ethical principles in the area of communications and the media. In 2000 the Pontifical Council for Social Communications issued the document, *Ethics in Communications* (Pontifical Council, 2000). *Ethics in Communication* refers to the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (Second Vatican Council, 1965) and to Pope Paul VI's Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (Pontifical Council, 1971) in asserting that "the media are called to serve human dignity by helping people live well and function as persons in community" (#6).

It sums the core principles of the Church's approach to communications as follows:

> The human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media of social communication; communication

> should be by persons to persons for the integral development of persons. . . . A second principle is complementary to the first: The good of persons cannot be realized apart from the common good of the communities to which they belong. (#21-22)

Two years later *Ethics in Internet* (Pontifical Council, 2002a) applied the principles enunciated in *Ethics in Communication* to the Internet. *Ethics in Internet* characterizes the Internet as

> the latest and in many respects most powerful in a line of media—telegraph, telephone, radio, television—that for many people have progressively eliminated time and space as obstacles to communication during the last century and a half. It has enormous consequences for individuals, nations, and the world. . . . The Internet is being put to many good uses now, with the promise of many more, but much harm also can be done by its improper use. Which it will be, good or harm, is largely a matter of choice—a choice to whose making the Church brings two elements of great importance: her commitment

to the dignity of the human person and her long tradition of moral wisdom. (# 2)

However, *Ethics in Internet* does qualify the instrumental view in one important respect. In this document, for the first time in Church communication documents, there is an explicit recognition of the fact that the design of technologies already embodies cultural value judgements and decisions (Staudenmaier, 1989). *Ethics in Internet* notes that:

> The technological configuration underlying the Internet has a considerable bearing on its ethical aspects: People have tended to use it according to the way it was designed, and to design it to suit that kind of use. (#8)

It then goes on to give a historical summary of Internet development that reinforces one of the myths about its origins in the 1960s, that it was created as "a decentralized network of computers holding vital data" primarily to "foil nuclear attack" (#8).

However, according to the historian of the Internet, Manuel Castells, though the Internet originated in the U.S. Defense Department, "its military applications were secondary to the project." What drove the initial development was rather "a scientific dream to change the world through computer communication" (Castells, 2001, pp. 17-19) .

There are a number of problems identified as areas of concern, the "digital divide," the danger of "cultural domination," the issue of "freedom of expression," the ideological and commercial pressures on journalism, the dangers of isolation and the challenge to community, and radical libertarianism. The final chapter makes a number of recommendations for using the Internet in an ethically responsible way. The document encourages comprehensive media education, legal and self-regulation of the Internet, international action to tackle the digital divide, and a whole range of other issues from crime to intellectual property, multilingualism, and the rights of women (#15-17).

In a companion document entitled, *The Church and Internet,* "some virtues that need to be cultivated" by those who want to make good use of the Internet are suggested. These are prudence, to see "clearly the implications—the potential for good and evil—in this new medium"; justice, especially "justice in working to close the digital divide"; fortitude, "standing for truth in the face of "religious and moral relativism"; and temperance, to use the Internet "wisely and for good" (Pontifical Council, 2002b, #12).

Of the problematic issues the digital divide and the dangers of social isolation and effect on community are probably the most often cited topics in the wider Catholic discourse about the Internet. In respect of the recommendations, most attention (and practical action) has been devoted to the promotion of media education in one form or another.

A. The digital divide

It is striking that the first "area of concern" raised in *Ethics in Internet* is that of the "digital divide," probably because it is seen as a fundamental challenge to the principle of "solidarity" which is "the virtue disposing people to protect and promote the common good" (Pontifical Council, 2000, #3). The issue was raised briefly in the Pastoral instruction, *Aetatis Novae* in 1992 in terms of the "unjust exclusion of some groups and classes from access to the means of communication" (Pontifical Council, 1992, #14). Pope John Paul II also expressed the hope that the "gap between the beneficiaries of the new means of information and expression and those who as yet do not have access to them will not become another intractable source of inequity and discrimination" (John Paul II, 1997, ¶3). It was also touched on in *Ethics in Communication* in terms of the "information rich" and "information poor" (Pontifical Council, 2000, #14).

Ethics in Internet discusses the "digital divide" both within the context of globalization (to which it devotes considerable space) and in relation to discrimination within societies. It observes that "the causes and consequences of the divide are not only economic but also technical, social, and cultural. So, for example, another Internet 'divide' operates to the disadvantage of women, and it too needs to be closed" (Pontifical Council, 2002a, #10). In its recommendations the document refers the urgent need for the "globalization of solidarity" in order to respond to the divide and inequities of access. Unusually for such a document, it also refers to a specific forthcoming global political event and expresses the hope that the forthcoming UN World Summit on the Information Society will "make a positive contribution to the discussion" (#17).

The digital divide has continued to remain an important element in the Church's reflections on the Internet both at the Vatican level and in national and regional discourse. For example, in a contribution to discussions about the information society in the Irish context, Archbishop Martin of Dublin maintained that

The fundamental ethical challenge of the digital age is equitable access. This I think is one of the contributions which religion can make to our debates on the digital age. The Church, in Christian theology, sees itself as called to be a witness to the unity of humankind in Jesus Christ. The more we can forge a world where unity emerges, where all share in an equitable way the good things that God has given us, the more we contribute to the building of a broad ethical culture for the information technology at the service of humankind. That is the ethical vision. The challenge is how to generate that new culture. (Martin, 2004, ¶ 33-34)

More recently, Pope Benedict drew attention once again to the risks of new technologies "increasing the gap separating the poor from the new networks" and calling it a "tragedy for the future of humanity" if "the economically and socially marginalized" were excluded from access (Benedict XVI, 2009, ¶8).

B. Community and the Internet: Social networking

Worries about the psychological and behavioral impact of the Internet on individuals and communities are widely shared among educationalists, politicians, church leaders, and the general public. Official Catholic responses have largely mirrored these concerns with a particular stress on the dangers of individual isolation and the fragmentation of community ties. Interestingly, in recent years the pronouncements of Pope Benedict on social networking have seemed to signal a shift towards a somewhat more positive and optimistic evaluation of the Internet's influence.

The Pontifical Council for Culture expressed the anxiety about the Internet in the following terms: "It is not simply a question of moral use of the Internet, but also of the radically new consequences it brings: a loss of the intrinsic value of items of information, an undifferentiated uniformity in messages which are reduced to pure information, a lack of responsible feedback, and a certain discouragement of interpersonal relationships" (Pontifical Council, 1999, #9). *Ethics in Communications* took up the theme, highlighting the fear of fragmentation and isolation:

The means of communication also can be used to separate and isolate. More and more, technology allows people to assemble packages of information and services uniquely designed for them. There are real advantages in that, but it raises an inescapable question: Will the audience

of the future be a multitude of audiences of one? While the new technology can enhance individual autonomy, it has other, less desirable implications. Instead being a global community*,* might the "web" of the future turn out to be a vast, fragmented network of isolated individuals—human bees in their cells—interacting with data instead of with one another? What would become of solidarity—what would become of love—in a world like that? (Pontifical Council, 2000, #29)

Ethics in Internet, reflecting on this vision, observes that "The medium's implications for psychological development and health likewise need continued study, including the possibility that prolonged immersion in the virtual world of cyberspace may be damaging to some" (Pontifical Council, 2002a, #13). And in *The Church and Internet*, it is asserted:

the virtual reality of cyberspace has some worrisome implications for religion as well as for other areas of life. Virtual reality is no substitute for the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the sacramental reality of the other sacraments, and shared worship in a flesh-and-blood human community. There are no sacraments on the Internet; and even the religious experiences possible there by the grace of God are insufficient apart from real-world interaction with other persons of faith. Here is another aspect of the Internet that calls for study and reflection. At the same time, pastoral planning should consider how to lead people from cyberspace to true community and how, through teaching and catechesis, the Internet might subsequently be used to sustain and enrich them in their Christian commitment. (Pontifical Council, 2002b, #9)

In his World Communications Day message for 2009 Pope Benedict (Benedict XVI, 2009) picked up on contemporary debates about the role and expansion of Internet social-networking sites. Through he warns that the "desire for virtual connectedness" might become "obsessive" and "isolate individuals from real social interaction" and disrupt "patterns of rest, silence and reflection," the overall tone of the document remains positive and there is no hint of the dire vision of fragmentation raised in *Ethics in Communication*. The document, in fact, is quite positive about the potential of the technology, recognizing that

Young people, in particular, have grasped the enormous capacity of the new media to foster connectedness, communication, and understand-

ing between individuals and communities, and they are turning to them as means of communicating with existing friends, of meeting new friends, of forming communities and networks, of seeking information and news, and of sharing their ideas and opinions. Many benefits flow from this new culture of communication. (¶2)

He goes on to discuss the "desire for connectedness" which he sees these technologies answering and comments that, "it is important to focus not just on their undoubted capacity to foster contact between people, but on the quality of the content that is put into circulation using these means" (¶4). This language of this document in emphasizing the networking aspects of the new technologies, as well as in using terms like "digital arena," "cyberspace," "digital generation," and "digital continent" seems to indicate a movement away from the more instrumental terminology of some earlier documents.

The Communications Day message for 2011 once again returned to the question of relationships:

> In the digital world, transmitting information increasingly means making it known within a social network where knowledge is shared in the context of personal exchanges. The clear distinction between the producer and consumer of

information is relativized and communication appears not only as an exchange of data, but also as a form of sharing. This dynamic has contributed to a new appreciation of communication itself, which is seen first of all as dialogue, exchange, solidarity, and the creation of positive relations. (¶3)

The discussion shows that, at least in some quarters in the Vatican, there is a growing understanding of and a sensitivity to the complexities of what is taking place in the world of social networking even though positive aspects are constantly balanced by the negative: "the limits typical of digital communication: the one-sidedness of the interaction, the tendency to communicate only some parts of one's interior world, the risk of constructing a false image of oneself, which can become a form of self-indulgence" (¶3). However, generally speaking the Pope sounds a confident note, "I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible. This is not simply to satisfy the desire to be present, but because this network is an integral part of human life" (¶8).

4. Living with the Internet: Internet Literacy

The term media education was first used in Pope Paul VI's Communications Day message in 1978, (Pope Paul VI, 1978). However, as Borg and Lauri document, the official Catholic attitude to the media had changed most decisively with the Second Vatican Council and then *Communio et Progressio* in 1971 in which the emphasis on educating its members about the media had shifted more towards a "discrimination model" and away from the dominant "inoculation" paradigm (Borg & Lauri, 2012, p. 7). Media education is an important theme in *Aetatis Novae* and also in *Ethics in Communications*. *Ethics in Internet* applies this thinking specifically to the new media asking that "Schools and other educational institutions should provide training in discerning use of the Internet as part of a comprehensive media education including not just training in technical skills—'computer literacy' and the like—but a capacity for informed, discerning evaluation of content" (Pontifical Council, 2002a, #15).

The *Church and Internet,* makes a number of important recommendations regarding media education. "Education and training regarding the Internet ought to be part of comprehensive programs of media education available to members of the Church." It also stresses that this is more than teaching techniques but about helping "young people make discerning judgments according to sound moral criteria" (Pontifical Council, 2002b, #7). It calls for Church leaders " to receive media education themselves" and wants "priests, deacons, religious and lay pastoral workers" to have education that includes Internet training. Regarding parents and children, it recognizes that children and young people are often more familiar with the Internet than their parents, but "parents are still seriously obliged to guide and supervise their children in its use." It goes on to recommend the use of filtering software and says that "unsupervised exposure to the Internet should not be allowed" (#11). "Parents and children should dialogue together about what is seen

and experienced in cyberspace; sharing with other families who have the same values and concerns will also be helpful. The fundamental parental duty here is to help children become discriminating, responsible Internet users and not addicts of the Internet, neglecting contact with their peers and with nature itself " (#11).

As for children, they are exhorted to use the Internet well, told that it can enrich their lives, and warned against "consumerism, pornographic and violent fantasy, and pathological isolation." In words that illustrate how much the experience of the Internet has changed in the past decade, the document comments that "The Internet is not merely a medium of entertainment and consumer gratification. It is a tool for accomplishing useful work, and the young must learn to see it and use it as such" (#11).

Two years before the appearance of *The Church and Internet* the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference had issued a statement *Your Family and Cyberspace* which ended with a list of practical tips for parents to supervise their children's Internet use (USCCB, 2000). This practical guide approach was subsequently followed by other Bishops' Conferences.

The following year, 2001, the Catholic Bishops of the European Union issued a statement on media literacy in which they said:

> Special attention must be given to Internet literacy. . . . Nevertheless, we wish to underline that measures designed to train people in the use of information technology . . . are not enough. Provisions must be made at all levels and in all sectors of education and learning to equip people with the skills to use and evaluate the content of the Internet as well as its technical apparatus. (COMECE, 2001, #3)

5. Pastoral Use of the Internet

The uses of the Internet go beyond evangelization. In 2002 the World Communications Day message spoke of the value of the Internet providing "instruction and catechesis" and as a means of providing a "supplement and support" to individual believers and the Church community as a whole (John Paul II, 2002). These themes are then further elaborated in the document *The Church and Internet* (Pontifical Council, 2002b) which came out later that year and which explicitly called upon Church leaders to "employ this remarkable technology in many different aspects of the Church's mission." It identified these as "catechesis and other kinds of education, news and information, apologetics, governance and administration, and some forms of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction" (#5). One of the emphases in *The Church and Internet* is on the potential use of the Internet for two-way communication in the Church. It argues that the "Internet provides an effective technological means" of realizing the vision of "dialogue and information within the Church" (#6).

The positive exhortations are also accompanied by a number of warnings. In particular, it points to the presence of "hate sites" defaming and attacking religious and ethnic groups and calls for self-regulation and, if required, public intervention to "establish and enforce reasonable limits to what can be said." It also worries about the potential loss of ecclesial authority that the freedom provided by the Internet offers. The document frets about those web sites which call themselves Catholic and which are not aligned with official teaching. It asks how "to distinguish eccentric doctrinal interpretations, idiosyncratic devotional practices, and ideological advocacy bearing a 'Catholic' label from the authentic positions of the Church" (#8). The solution proposed is that "A system of voluntary certification at the local and national levels under the supervision of representatives of the Magisterium might be helpful in regard to material of a specifically doctrinal or catechetical nature. The idea is not to impose censorship but to offer Internet users a reliable guide to what expresses the authentic position of the Church" (#11). These anxieties, provoked by the emergence of such phenomena as rebel Bishop Gaillot's "virtual diocese" are shared by other religious communities too (McDonnell, 2000, pp. 58-61).

A number of studies are now appearing that are attempting to describe and assess some of the numerous Internet initiatives taken by the Catholic Church on the practical level. Cantoni and Zyga (2007) have studied the use of the Internet by Catholic religious congregations. Arasa (2008) has looked at the use of web-

sites in nine of the biggest dioceses in the world, and a more comprehensive study of 15 case studies of Church applications from the Vatican's online communication to websites of Opus Dei and other groups has been undertaken by Arasa, Cantoni, and Ruiz (2009).

In Latin America the key ideas behind the Church's continental intranet, RIIAL (Red Informática de la Iglesia en América Latina), are discussed and explained by Soberón (2009). In Africa, Ihejirika (2008) conducted more local research, studying an Internet café owned by the Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Diocese, in eastern Nigeria. Designed not to "project the image of the diocese (the diocese has a website), it is not meant to attract new converts, it is not meant to educate people about the diocese, but it is aimed at providing a needed service to the people" (p. 91).

PICTURE (2012) studies the usages of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and of the Internet in particular, by the priests of the Catholic Church all over the world. PICTURE does not intend to answer the question, "How many priests use ICTs?" The research aims instead to offer a picture of which are the religious activities done by priests online, and which are their attitudes toward digital technologies. PICTURE studies only priests who access the internet, who are named in the following reports "ePriests." The project has its home at the Università della Svizzera italiana in Lugano, Switzerland.

6. Critiques of the Church's Approach to the Internet

Shields (2008) critiques the Church's approach to Internet ethics on a number of points. He finds missing in these statements "an appreciation for the complexities of the Internet and its technology, of the protean-like reality and metaphoric meaning of cyberspace, and of the difficulty of locating ethical responsibility where users and producers are not easily distinguished." He also claims that "the generality of appeals to human dignity and the common good, as necessary conditions for grounding one's vision, taking a stand, and action remain rather vacuous" (p. 22). More fundamentally, Shields argues that "the Church's response to ICT is problematic in several aspects: (a) the appeal to a religious meta-narrative, (b) an instrumental appraisal of ICT, and (c) an authoritarian and deductive approach to ethical valuing" (p. 23). In its place Shields wants a religious ethics of ICT that will be "inclusive," "open," and "inductive." Shields is particularly critical of the instrumental assumptions underpinning the Church's thinking. He asks can "'social communications' as an ethical category adequately cover what is happening in ICT as it expands, for example, into robotics and biometrics?" (p. 23). He argues that

> the new ICT puts into question the assumption that a firm, reliable boundary exists between humans as organisms and tools regarded as material aids to activity. In a world where many computers will share each of us, totalizing digitalized and global networks broker the relationship of humans to the world. If ethics for the

Information Age has realistic hopes of shaping the development and applications of those technologies, we must not only rethink our assumptions about ICT, but move beyond the instrumental view. (p. 24)

In fact, though the dominant paradigm governing the approach to evanglization through the media is an instrumental one, as far back as 1990, *The Christian Message in a Computer Culture* had pointed out that "one no longer thinks or speaks of social communications as mere instruments or technologies. Rather they are now seen as part of a still unfolding culture" (John Paul II, 199a, ¶6). On the whole, this insight has not been taken up or explored in other official documents dealing with the Internet. However, the phrase is later cited with approval by Babin and Zukowski (2002) who argue that evangelization is not simply about "amplifying a doctrinal speech with the media" but rather of transforming the communication system.

Spadaro (2010, p. 258) also argues that the Internet is not just a tool but a cultural environment ("Internet infatti non è un semplice 'strumento' di comunicazione che si può usare o meno, ma un «ambiente» culturale") as does McDonnell (2009) who sees some recent movement towards understanding the Internet in this way and who argues for the adoption of a more media-ecological approach (p. 163).

Benedict XV in his third message for World Communications Day, has now introduced the idea of "info-ethics." He observes that "it is essential that

social communications should assiduously defend the person and fully respect human dignity. Many people now think there is a need, in this sphere, for 'info-ethics,' just as we have bioethics in the field of medicine and in scientific research linked to life " (Benedict XVI, 2008, #4). It remains to be seen if this idea is taken up further in official Catholic thinking and if has the potential to broaden the Church's approach to consideration of ethical issues and the Internet (McDonnell, 2009).

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Islam and Islamic Teaching Online

Paul A. Soukup, S.J.

psoukup@scu.edu

Islam has no less quickly adopted the Internet than other religious groups; however, specific theological approaches prove more difficult to locate. This stems, in part, from the structure of Islam: Sunni Islam, unlike Shi'a Islam, lacks an organized hierarchy of religious teaching authorities (Sisler, 2011, p. 1138). In the case of Sunni Islam, this, on the one hand, results in fewer official opinions of the kind that bind all adherents; on the other, it leads to a greater number of online sites offering religious advice of varying force and insight. Followers of Shi'a Islam do have access to a hierarchy of religious teaching, but fewer of these appear in English. That language barrier appears across the board and presents another difficulty for the non-specialist in locating Islamic theological approaches. This brief review, then, will describe some of the available resources and will point the interested reader to the work of scholars in this area.

According to Sisler, "There are thousands of sites providing specific 'Islamic' content for Muslim minorities, ranging from traditional outlets, i.e., fatwas and sermons, through audio lectures and podcasts, to social networking sites and the vibrant blogosphere" (2011, p. 1137). At the center of concern for this review lie the fatwas, "legal and religious recommendations issued in response to individual enquiries, and other forms of counsel" (p. 1137). Here, we more likely find several sources of Islamic theological opinion.

A. Islamic uses of the Internet: Authority and identity

Blank (2001) reports that as long ago as 1995 the Bohras (a denomination of Gujarati Ismailis in Western India) created linked e-mail networks to promote spiritual discussions. He quotes Shaikh Mustafa Abdulhussein, "Email has now become a primary method of seeking advice of Syedna [a religious teacher]" (p. 178). Noting that "the Bohras were among the very first Muslim groups to take advantage of the Internet," he provides this description offered by the organizers of the early email lists, quoting them:

> "Ijtermaa [the group's name, Arabic for 'gathering'] is a religious mailing list with discussions that focus primarily on *deeni* [religious] topics. The list includes the presence of bhaisahebs and other knowledgeable people who have a lot of *ilm* [religious wisdom] and who can help guide discussions and answer any questions that may arise about our religion." (p. 179).

Since the 1990s many other Islamic groups have embraced the Internet as a way to provide information and offer teachings; "even reactionary groups like the Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taliba have their own web sites" (p. 179).

Bunt (2003) provides one of the most detailed looks at online Islam, introducing the non-Islamic reader to what he terms "e-jihad, online fatwas, and cyber Islamic environments." In a chapter devoted to Islamic decision making and advice online, Bunt first clarifies how online teachers fit into the larger tradition of Islamic thought.

> Extensive literature exists on what could be described as the "mechanics" of decision-making processes within Islam. Discussion on the nature of authority and decision-making processes dates back to the time of the Prophet

Muhammad (570-632), and this informed the development of subsequent Muslim communities. Islamic written sources range from the Qur'an to vast collections of hadith and sunna (sayings and actions of Muhammad), sources based on oral transmission which were subsequently assembled, analyzed, and systematized within various written collections. The lines can blur between definitions of these concepts, with different stresses being placed on the normative practices of the Prophet, his Companions, and their successors. Biographies of the Prophet Muhammad and histories of Islam also informed the development of decision-making. Substantial works attributed to different Schools of Islamic law, philosophy, and other individual and collective Muslim scholarship from a variety of Muslim perspectives, also adds to the corpus of knowledge. These works (or selections from them) have in turn informed the training of various Muslim authorities throughout the generations, and in contemporary contexts their influence is felt in sermons, academic discourse, dialogue, and diverse media—ranging from print sources through to the Internet. (pp. 126-127).

In Bunt's analysis, the different "Cyber Islamic Environments" will approach interpreting Islamic sources in different ways, but each does draw on the tradition and attempt to apply it to contemporary concerns, particularly on how to live faithful lives in the contemporary world. For Bunt the online experience raises myriad questions about authority for Islam: "What kind of Islamic opinions are sought, and by whom? What are the qualities of an online *fatwa?* How does it differ from 'conventional' authority and sources?" (p. 132).

In his more detailed analysis of specific Islamic sites originating in Muslim-majority contexts, Bunt reports answers to a variety of questions, some to them referring to the Internet. For example, some ask about the benefits of the Internet in spreading knowledge of Islam (p. 139); others, though, have concerns about the Internet itself: the propriety of men and women "talking" to one another online; contact with one's fiancée or posting photos of her online; or dealing with sites that distort the Qur'an. Others sought religious opinions about Internet content: should a Muslim allow the Internet in his home, given the amount of pornography available on different websites? Another asks whether the owner of an Islamic website should take payments for advertising.

Sometimes the questions move from the Internet to face-to-face interaction as in the case where a woman writes to ask what to do about a man who wishes to meet her after an exchange of email (p. 140).

The sites also offer religious opinion on a wide range of topics, particularly about relationships, family, lying to one's parents, addictions, and illness. Because the sites reach people throughout the world, many give religious opinions about how to live in a non-Islamic country, levels of assimilation, and even whether an Islamic center should display the flag of the host country (pp. 144-154).

In addition to surveying the kinds of questions arising on sites from Muslim-majority countries, Bunt also provides a look at sites from Muslim-minority contexts. Many deal with the same religious issues, but some receive questions perhaps more typical of the context. Can a parent use spying software to monitor what a 22-year old daughter does online? Is online marriage possible? Can a halal butcher use an electronic device (common in the country) to kill insects? (pp. 168-169). In addition these sites field many questions dealing with attitudes toward Muslims or of Muslims toward their neighbors.

Bunt returned to the theme of online Islam in 2009, updating his earlier work and expanding it to include other cyber-Islamic environments. Key among his discussions for Islamic religious opinion online are his review of Islamic sacred texts and Islamic bloggers. The first addresses many issues of religious practice. Bunt notes, "computers can become a sacred space for Muslims. The presence of the Qur'an online can have an evocative effect on the listener and provide immersion in Islamic religious sources" (p. 81). Some of the sacred activities and opportunities online include practices of witnessing and the *Shahada*, "the essential proclamation within Islam . . . 'There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God'" (p. 88). He reports "the opinion of Sheikh Ahmad Kutty that 'it is very good to use the Internet in fields like calling people to Islam and even offering them the *Shahadah* online'" (p. 89). The Sheikh continues by offering some rules to follow in these situations. Other sacred activities include prayer, particularly the teaching of prayer, including illustrated presentations of prayer (p. 91) as well as discussions of the lunar calendar that specifies prayer times and festivals. The sites also offer religious instruction in the key obligations of Islam. Islamic websites also provide instruction and guid-

ance for rites of passage: birth (circumcision, naming, blessing, etc.); relationships (dating, marriage, matchmaking and the use of technology); and death (burial rituals, mourning periods, wills, etc.) (pp. 103-112).

Because Islam touches on all aspects of life, the religious sites move people into the world, answering questions about financial transactions—from online sales to electronic Islamic banking (pp. 124-125). They also address issues of Islamic identity and the defense of Islam.

The second theme that opens a view onto Islamic religious opinion on the Internet deals with the Islamic blogosphere. Bunt notes, "Blogs have become critical adjuncts to the Islamic knowledge economy. . . . [T]hey draw upon many facets associated with Web 2.0 to open up a dynamic space for iMuslims to participate in online collaboration and forms of information gathering and exchange" (p. 131). As one would expect, the blogs represent "the diversity of religious and political thought" (p. 149) within the various countries and regions of the world that follow Islam. And, as such, they manifest a great variety of themes and opinions. However, the blogs do not claim any teaching authority nor do many "official" blogs exist. In some ways, this part of the Islamic Internet resembles a kind of café or gathering spot for religious conversation.

More recently, Sisler (2011) explored the question of Islamic authority and identity online. Examining primarily Sunni online sources, Sisler reports on some of the common topics his fieldwork revealed. These include questions of Islamic law, the interpretation of religious texts, issues of marriage (as for example, marrying a non-Muslim, or the case of a woman who converts to Islam when the spouse does not), issues of divorce, the Hajj, and working in mixed-sex environments (pp. 1154ff). Working primarily among British Muslims, he drew on sources such as FatwaOnline, IslamOnline, the Islamic Shari'a Council (in Birmingham UK, but available online), and the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (again in Britain, but with online representation).

Like Bunt, Sisler focuses on questions of authority. And also like Bunt's work, his reveals something of the Islamic religious content in the online sources. In addition to replying to specific questions, the sources also provide Quranic recitations and sermons by respected scholars, thus offering devotional materials in addition to theological opinion. While Fatwa Online offers collections of theological opinion,

IslamOnline provides a searchable database of questions and answers as well as electronic resources for submitting new questions and "live 'fatwa sessions' with various muftis who immediately answer users' questions. The body of muftis and counselors associated with IslamOnline is large and until recently consisted of many different authorities, ranging from al-Azhar graduates to European and North American imams" (p. 1146). The IslamOnline group also created a Second Life site devoted to the Hajj, with "a virtual re-creation of the city of Mecca and a simulation of the Hajj pilgrimage. . . . The purpose of the simulation was to educate Muslims about how to participate in the Hajj and non-Muslims about this important ritual and the various steps that pilgrims take" (p. 1147). The more specific British sites that Sisler reviewed tend to focus on questions addressing the interaction of Islamic practice and British law; they also take on the role of religious counseling for those who live too far from face-to-face sources.

His examination of the various online Islamic sites leads Sisler to a larger thesis about Islamic life:

> [T]he underlying logic behind Islamic cyber counseling, which is driven by individual petitions and enquiries, emphasizes the role of self, the privatization of faith, and the increasing insistence on religion as a system of values and ethics. It also demonstrates that the popularity of Internet preachers and muftis converges with the broader transformation of contemporary religiosity, which similarly emphasizes the role of the individual. . . . Easily accessible and searchable databases of fatwas provide . . . pre-set knowledge and codes of behavior the individual can choose from. (p. 1138)

In other words the wide availability of online religious sources has gradually changed the practice of Islam from a face-to-face community-based religious practice to a personal devotion, with individuals choosing which preachers to follow rather than simply going to the neighborhood mosque.

Both Bunt and Sisler acknowledge conflict among Islamic scholars and teachers online. Given the lack of any hierarchical decision-making or teaching authority in Sunni Islam and given the doctrinal disagreements between Sunni and Shi'a Islam, this really comes as no surprise. A number of others have explored and reported on these online differences in religious teaching and authority. The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI, 2010) reports a

"schism" on the IslamOnline site, a dispute examined in more details by Abdel-Fadil (2011). Mariani (2006) argues that such rivalries find state and perhaps business sponsorship, since most of the large Islamic online sites have external funding and represent particular strands of Islamic teaching.

B. Diasporic Muslim communities

As Sisler argues, online religion, whether in the form of religious counseling, religious information, or religious activities, plays a role in community formation, particularly for migrants and people living outside of Islamic countries. Summeren (2007) examines how young Muslims (for the most part from Morocco) living in the Netherlands try to construct a religious identity through the use of online resources. Loosely following the uses and gratifications model of communication media employment, she studied a discussion forum popular with a group of young Moroccans in order to understand how it functioned to provide an experience of Islam. Her analysis followed Kemper's (1996) definitions of experiencing Islam, namely through the recurrence of six dimensions of religious experience—the ritual, ideological, consequential, experiential, intellectual, and social.

Mishra and Semaan (2010) found that South Asian Muslims in the United States also turned to online sources to satisfy religious needs. Using in-depth interviews, they found that members of this group "used the Internet to listen to religious lectures, look up information about prayer times, holidays, halal food, rules regarding the recitation of the Qur'an, and correct pronunciation of Arabic words" (p. 87). The relative anonymity of the Internet also allowed them to seek out religious advice on more personal questions. In this instance online religious counseling substituted for face-to-face interaction with a local teacher.

Sharify-Funk (2009) approaches the religious issues of diasporic Islamic communities indirectly, through an examination of a 2003-2005 conflict between two Muslim organizations in Canada. In this instance the websites interacted with mainstream media, which offered news coverage of the dispute. "Sparked by profoundly divergent convictions about gender norms and fueled by contradictory blueprints for 'being Muslim in Canada,' this incendiary conflict . . . [focused] especially, but not exclusively, on the 2003- 2005 debate over *Shari'ah*-based alterna-

tive dispute resolution in Ontario" (p. 73). In this instance, Sharify-Funk argues, the religious identity created by online counseling interacted with external social forces.

A number of scholars have studied specific religious ethical issues arising for Muslims living outside of countries governed by Islamic laws and customs. Caeiro (2004) reports on the intersection of *shari'a*, bank interest, and home purchase in the West. Kort (2005) investigates how online Islam deals with domestic violence.

C. New media opportunities

The rapid acceleration of ways to access the Internet poses challenges to Islam online. Bunt (2010) examines smart phone applications, particularly those developed in countries with high mobile phone penetration. He notes, "As with the early growth of Islamic websites, there is now a vying for influence to promote Islamic apps and other programs to the mobile computing and mobile phone markets, which may have the result of expanding influence on matters of religion" (2010, ¶4). Such mobile phone use poses questions for Islamic ethics. For example, "In Egypt, al-Azhar Sheikh Ali Gomaa presented a fatwa or religious opinion against the use of Qur'anic recitation recordings as 'phone tones,' suggesting that they were disrespectful to the Divine Revelation" (¶10). Bunt reports other issues:

> In Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh had sought to ban camera-enabled phones on the grounds of their potential for immoral use. In India, representatives of the Deoband Darul Uloom Darul Ifta noted the issue of the intrusion of phones into the mosque: "One can have worldly or religious talks only as much as necessary by mobile phone in a state of Etikaf (secluding oneself in mosque with the intention of worship)." (¶13)

Still others offered opinions about having texts of the Qur'an on a mobile device, expressing concerns that the sacred texts might be taken into impure places such as bathrooms. These concerns grow in importance as more and more vendors offer apps for the Qur'an on mobile devices, including both text and audio recitations.

A different kind of Islamic religious practice exists only in cyberspace. Affify (2010) discusses in greater detail the "virtual hajj" that Sisler mentions. "On Hajj Island [a part of Second Life], residents vir-

tually perform all the rituals of hajj in a 3D recreation of the actual hajj sites, guided by Islamic scholars who explain the rituals and answer the residents' questions. . . . 'We started by building a Ramadan tent to introduce Islam to the residents, then we realized that Second Life is a great tool for practical training because of its interactivity. The trainee doesn't only listen, he does everything by himself,'" said [Mohamed] Yehia. (¶5-7). The designers of the site wanted to give people instruction and practical tips about this key Islamic pilgrimage. Fairly soon after its unveiling, some sought a religious ruling as to whether such virtual pilgrimages could substitute for the actual one; at least one online teacher responded in the negative (Kutty, 2009).

Derrickson (2008) presents a more detailed look at Islam in Second Life. In addition to the virtual hajj island, the virtual worlds of Second Life present Islam in a number of ways, both religious and cultural, such as areas featuring Islamic architecture. She reports that, as of her writing, programmers had created eight mosques in Second Life (¶20). These offer religious spaces for reflection and prayer. As such, they take on an identity through their use. "Barbara Metcalf notes that shared practice creates authenticated space and that practice is fundamentally linked to sacred words in the sense that everyday practice as well as ritual in Islam is word sanctioned. This is a reflection of the uniqueness and importance of Islamic texts, including the hadith and sunnah, those collected sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, and most notably the Qur'an" (¶17). An added benefit of the Second Life environment comes from the ability to engage in Islamic rituals, at least virtually through one's avatar. The other, more typical Islamic sites noted by other authors, restrict themselves to text and perhaps audio.

Chat rooms open another possibility for religious activity. In addition to places for discussion, people from various religious traditions have attempted to turn the chat room into a ritual place. Becker (2011) studied Dutch and German Islamic chat rooms, paying particular attention to whether people could transfer religious rituals there. She concludes that religious rituals succeed "when they (a) reproduce the core values and norms of a community; (b) involve a significant number of believers; and (c) protect the sacred from the profane. . . . [S]ome rituals like the Muslim conversion ritual migrate successfully while other transfer processes yield ambiguous results, as the discussion of the ritual acts of gender segregation shows. Furthermore, in the case of some rituals like the Muslim prayer, a migration is not even attempted" (p. 1181).

Scholz, Selge, Stille, and Zimmermann (2008) turn to podcasts as yet another new media approach to online Islam. Their initial study examines how speakers and listeners construct religious authority.

Several studies examine an often overlooked part of Internet religious resources and indirect practices: gaming. Sisler (2006, 2008) introduces the representation of Islamic life in games. Campbell (2010) suggests that gaming provides an alternative storytelling within Islamic discussion.

D. Resources

Because of the study of online religious teaching in general remains fairly new (as is the phenomenon itself), few scholars have completely embraced it. The same applies to those investigating online Islamic religious teaching and practice. However, those scholars who have set to out explore it have provide some online resources. The Middle East Section of the American Anthropological Association and the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague have joined forces to publish CyberOrient, the Online Journal of the Virtual Middle East (ISSN 1804-3194), a peer-reviewed journal edited by Daniel Martin Varisco and Vit Sisler (http://www.cyberorient.net/).

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), an independent, non-partisan organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., "explores the Middle East through the region's media (both print and television), websites, religious sermons and school books. MEMRI bridges the language gap which exists between the West and the Middle East, providing timely translations of Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu, Dari, Hindi, and Turkish media, as well as original analysis of political, ideological, intellectual, social, cultural, and religious trends in the Middle East" (MEMRI, 2012).

Professor Heidi Campbell and her colleagues have inaugurated the Network for New Media, Religion, and Digital Culture Studies. Among its many offerings they provide an online bibliography, including works on online Islam. They also present an index of scholars working in the area and a toolbox of research tools. The site is located at http://digitalreligion.tamu.edu.

Finally, Göran Larsson, "a professor of religious studies at the Department of Literature, History of Ideas and Religion at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden . . . specializing in Islam and Muslims in Europe, . . . Islamic theology, Quranic studies, and issues related to religion and the media" (Larsson, 2012) has prepared an extensive bibliography on Islam and the Internet for the Oxford Bibliographies series on online resources (Larsson, 2011).

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Hinduism and the Internet: A Selected Annotated Bibliography

Rohit Chopra
rchopra@scu.edu

Nesbitt, Eleanor. (2006). Locating British Hindus' sacred space. *Contemporary South Asia*, *15* (2), 195-208.

Nesbitt's study, though not centered on the Internet, examines British Hindu notions of sacred space. She looks at the significance of religious shrines in domestic spaces, arguing that, in addition to public places of worship, these are also important sites of religious practice. Pilgrimage to sites and the imperative of building temples have increasingly become prominent among Hindus in the UK, though Nesbitt notes ambivalence on the part of some British Hindus about going to temples. In the context of this larger discussion, Nesbitt points out that British Hindus incorporate cyberspace within the broad ambit of sacred space. Through websites, British Hindus can either participate in online *pujas* or rituals of worship or can place orders for worship on their behalf in specified Indian temples. These developments also entail shifts of authority from traditional religious authorities like priests to the programmers and engineers who maintain these sites.

Kurien, Prema A. (2006). Multiculturalism and "American" religion: The case of Hindu Indian Americans. *Social Forces, 85*(2), 723-741.

Kurien examines the institutional formation and public presence of Hindu Indian American organizations in terms of American policies related to multiculturalism and religion. Her examination is based on a detailed analysis of online forums and spaces dedicated to Hindu, and more generally, Indian, matters. She identifies the importance of the Internet in this domain for Hindu Americans since the year 2000. The article centers on the dynamics of self-definition among Hindu Americans, exploring their activist strategies. It shows the contestations between Hindu Americans and, broadly, mainstream American society as represented by media or business over definitions of Hindu identity, as well as contestations between different Hindu American groups over such definitions. The events and cases chronicled and assessed by Kurien in the course of her analysis show the centrality of the Internet as a site for mobilizing Hindu Americans, for discussing key matters of importance for Hindu American identity, for voicing and articulating protests and generating visibility about Hindu American causes.

Scheifinger, Heinz. (2009). Conceptualising Hinduism. Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series 110, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore. Retrieved February 17, 2012 from http://ssrn.com/abstrac t=1468282

Scheifinger analyzes online images of Hinduism within a broader discussion of the conceptual problems involved in defining the practice and phenomenon of Hinduism. Working through issues of definition and terminology through an engagement with scholars of Hinduism, and noting the heterogeneity of Hinduism which complicate the use of any term, he posits, however, that the term "Hinduism" is viable as a category. Scheifinger then proceeds to analyze online representations of Hinduism through the optic of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra. The theory, as indeed similar arguments posed by Manuel Castells, identify the centrality of the virtual or symbolic in what we consider "reality." For Baudrillard, the simulacra becomes reality while for Castells reality is contiguous with the representational realm of the symbolic. Both thinkers see this as a feature of human existence that predates the current hypermediated age. Scheifinger argues, however, that this does not apply to the Hindu practice of viewing deities or darshan. While theoretically the act of viewing deities or *darshan* online would seem to conform to this argument, the reality is more complex. It is "the particular deity which gives meaning to the online image." Thus, given the centrality of the original, the fact of images being available online does not indicate a shift in meanings of the real for Hindus, and is unlikely to effect any major shift in Hinduism.

Helland, Christopher. (2010). (Virtually) been there, (virtually) done that: Examining the online religious practices of the Hindu tradition. *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet, 4*(1), 148-150. [Special issue "Religions on the Internet—Aesthetics and the Dimensions of the Senses"]

This brief essay introduces a section on Hinduism, consisting of three contributions, in the special issue of the journal dedicated to aesthetic and sensory dimensions of religious expression in cyberspace. Pointing to a long relationship between Hinduism and technology, Hellands notes that "online religious activity within Hinduism is flourishing" (p. 148). Noting the fundamentally contradictory character of virtual and embodied modes of religious worship and practice, Helland describes how each of the three essays approaches the phenomenon.

Phyllis K. Herman's contribution, "Seeing the divine through windows: Online puja and virtual religious experience" (pp. 151-178), addresses the practice of electronic or e-*darshan* locating the experience of religious connection against the backdrop of a web of relations between devotees and institutional actors at the ShreeSwaminarayan Temple in California. Nicole Karapanagiotis' essay, "Vaishnava cyber-puja: Problems of purity and novel ritual solutions" (pp. 179-195), examines how worshippers negotiate and work through the dual, apparently conflicting, status of the computer and the Internet as simultaneously sacred and secular / mundane in their practice of the online worship of Vishnu. As the title of his essay "Hindu embodiment and the Internet" (pp. 196-219) suggests, Heinz Scheifinger, engages with the issue of the importance of embodiment in Hindu religious practice. Understandings of the body in Hindu religious tradition do not square with the idea of online religious worship, though Hindu worship in cyberspace is a fact. Scheifinger's analysis points to the abiding importance of the fact of embodiment for Hindu devotees.

Book Reviews

Alonso, Andoni and **Pedro J. Oiarzabal.** *Diasporas in the New Media Age: Identity, Politics, and Community*. Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2010. Pp. 368. ISBN 978-0-87417-815-9 (paper) $44.95.

It is difficult to think of an academic work on cyberspace that does not acknowledge the existence of communities linked across physical spaces and geographical territories, even if it may not address this dimension of online existence in significant detail. Accordingly, scholarship on the articulation of cultural identities in new media spaces reflects the inescapable fact that such identities are forged in global and transnational spaces. Members of ethnic, regional, national, and linguistic groups express, negotiate, and perform their identities in these diasporic spaces even as they transform the sense and scope of what it means to be Korean, Igbo, or French-speaking. Given this fundamental characteristic of community life in new media spaces, it is somewhat surprising that till the publication of *Diasporas in the New Media Age*, no scholarly work had taken up the topic of the relationship between diasporas and new media as its central object of inquiry.

The publication of this important edited volume, bringing together contributions from scholars from across the world, represents an in-depth, comprehensive, and multifaceted examination of the complex ways in which diasporic communities interact with new media, the latter broadly defined as information and communication technologies (ICT) that enable the formation and functioning of networked groups. The scope of the book may be roughly schematized as an investigation of four related questions or imperatives: 1. What are the diverse ways in which particular diasporas, such as the Jamaican or Chinese, use and expand the meaning of new media spaces? 2. What are the ways in which new media spaces, in turn, reshape the meaning of these particular diasporas? 3. What are the theoretical implications of the use of new media spaces by diasporas for our conceptual understandings of both the notion of diaspora and the phenomenon of new media? 4. What are the dynamics of interaction between both *types* of networks—diasporas and new media networks—for our understanding of the role of networks generally in an age of new media?

As this sketch indicates, the book encompasses both theoretical and empirical contributions. Part I, consisting of four chapters, presents an assessment of key theoretical issues related to the use of new media by diasporas. Adela Ros (Chapter 1) looks at the possibilities of social connection and economic opportunity afforded to migrants by global network and informational technologies. If migration itself can be understood as a consequence, in part, of the vectors of technological globalization, the chapter asks how that condition is transformed by the tools of such globalization.

Focusing on key diasporic practices and features such as hybrid identities and remittance flows to home countries, Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff (Chapter 2) assesses state policies towards migrant communities and briefly outlines some policy recommendations. Michael Laguerre's chapter (3) elaborates and scrutinizes the very concept of the digital diaspora. Identifying crucial questions raised by the formulation, he covers five models of digital diaspora predicated, respectively, on marginality, empowerment, displacement and gentrification, the technopolis (or hi-tech enclave), and globalization. Rounding up the section, Andoni Alonso and Iñaki Arzoz's contribution centers on the activist potential of digital diasporic communities to function as an inclusive, politically engaged, digital commons, with reference to the Basque digital diaspora.

Part II of the book consists of a wide range of empirically-grounded case studies of the use of new media by specific diasporic communities. However, just as the chapters in Part I illuminate theoretical arguments about new media with reference to concrete practices of diaspora communities, the chapters in Part II also articulate theoretical insights through their empirical analysis of the cases in question. The 18 chapters in this section of the book cover communities that can be classified as belonging to one or more collective imaginaries: continental and civilizational, national, regional, generational, minority, secessionist, ethnic, and professional (for example, African, Arab, Jamaican, Cape Verdean, Galician, second-generational, people working in IT).

In a fascinating comparative analysis, Tolu Odomosu and Ron Eglash (Chapter 5), explore the construction of African identity at work in two controversies involving Oprah Winfrey. The first concerned the tracing of her ancestry via DNA testing and the second concerned an Oprah Winfrey show on Nigerian scams, which evoked a significant response from Nigerians on various websites. The authors show how in both cases, the disparate technologies provoked similar introspection and reactions about identity. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 examine the complex dynamics at work in expressions of Cape Verdean, Eritrean, and Jamaican identity online. The conversations reveal the range of understandings of identity at work among members of the groups, the challenge of attempting to forge inclusive identities and yet defining what is unique about each community, and the negotiation between models of cultural identity and models of citizenship.

The next three chapters address diasporic uses of new media through somewhat narrower optics. Dwaine Plaza in Chapter 9 looks at how second-generation Caribbeans' deeply felt experiences of marginalization and mourning at cultural loss are reflected on web pages created by them. Javier Bustamante (Chapter 10) proposes that the history of Brazil can be understood as a history of diaspora. He locates Brazilian social networks and digital diasporas—such as the Brazilian presence on Orkut—against earlier diasporic formations, specifically, the "forced" (p. 172) diaspora of slavery; a diaspora consisting of an influx of immigrants into the country in the late 19th and 20th century; and a third, 20th-century, diaspora of Brazilian immigration overseas. José Luis Benítez's assessment of the use of new media communication technologues by the Salvadoran diaspora in Chapter 11 focuses on the digital divide and outlines some steps for addressing and overcoming it.

Chapters that follow deal with Indian, Chinese, and Arab new media communities. Radhika Gajjala in Chapter 12 presents her experience of a critical ethnographic intervention in Indian spaces on Second Life, in particular, Bollywood and dance clubs. Gajjala points to provocative questions about authenticity of identity raised by such 3D communicative environments. Brenda Chan's study of Internet use by "new" Chinese migrants (Chapter 13) or "PRC citizens who migrated after 1979" (p. 226) contextualizes these communities in relation to the long history and extensive reach of the global Chinese diaspora. Analyzing online Chinese communities of recent migrants in Singapore, she considers whether such a transnational public sphere meets the conditions for rational Habermasian discourse. Yu Zhou's chapter (13) investigates how the complex dynamics of migration and reverse migration by Chinese professionals between developed Western nations and China have shaped the development of the Chinese ICT industry. Khalil Rinnawi's chapter (15) looks at the role of satellite television in fostering a global imagined Arab community. Analyzing the use of television by Arab refugees in Berlin, Rinnawi shows how rituals of television consumption promote an affective sense of Arab identification through a variety of strategies.

The last three chapters of the book concern communities that are engaged in initiatives of political and cultural self-determination and self-differentiation. Yitzhak Schichor's chapter (16) on the Uyghur digital diaspora is a sobering assessment of the possibilities

and limits of new media in sustaining a viable project of achieving national sovereignty and political independence. Analyzing offline and online Uyghur nationalism, Schichor describes how the Uyghur digital diaspora has garnered visibility for the cause but—given the scattered and marginal nature of the diasporic community—has not been able to achieve any real political gains from the Chinese state. Chapter 17 questions whether Galicians online can be even considered a community in any meaningful sense, plotting the minimal Galician presence in cyberspace against a longer history of emigration. Finally, concluding Part II and the book, Pedro J. Oiarzabal's chapter studies the "Basque diaspora Webscape" (p. 338), examining the relationship between Basque representation online and the political goals of the Basque diaspora.

Given the range and variety of diasporic new media communities covered, the scope of the edited volume stands out as one of its strengths. To this must be added, as another key strength, the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary character of the book. Cumulatively, the book represents contributions and interventions by scholars in communication and media, anthropology, public policy and administration, sociology, science and technology studies, ethnic studies, geography, and international relations, giving it nuance and richness. Many individual studies, further, also represent fine examples of interdisciplinary scholarship. While the absence of a section on methodology is by no means a serious shortcoming, a section or even a chapter or two categorically addressing questions of method would have been a valuable addition. *Diasporas in the New Media Age* opens out several avenues for further study, even as it significantly enriches the areas of new media studies, network studies, and diaspora studies.

The book has an index and each chapter has its own reference list.

—Rohit Chopra
Santa Clara University

Ebaugh, Helen Rose. (2010) *The Gűlen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam.* Heidelberg/London/New York: Springer Dordrecht, 2010. Pp. xiii, 134. ISBN 978-1-4020-9893-2 (paper); 978-1-4020-9894-9 (e-book). US$29.95

Professor Ebaugh is based at the Department of Sociology of the University of Texas, Houston. The idea for this book came to her when she was asked to be a keynote speaker at the International Harran Conference (Sweden) on interfaith dialogue, sponsored by the Swedish Ambassador to Turkey. At this conference she was introduced to the Gülen Movement, a movement based on the philosophy of Fethullah Gülen, an Imam who is now based in the United States. Particularly after 9/11 people started to wonder where the voice of the moderate Muslims was. The Gülen Movement promotes itself as representing that voice.

I met Professor Ebaugh earlier this year at an event, organized by The Dialogue Society in London, at which she spoke. The Dialogue Society is run under the auspices of the Gülen Society, organizing events around interfaith dialogue, media, etc. Those who belong to the Gülen Society need not necessarily be Muslim and it is my experience that those who attend their events come from a variety of faiths or are without a faith at all. Professor Ebaugh notes that the movement is almost unknown among Americans (p. 6), although there are branches in America. The Movement funds a variety of educational initiatives worldwide, at least one television station in Turkey (Samanyolo), the newspaper *Zaman,* publishing, Fatih University, hospitals, a relief organization, and the Bank Asya. Professor Ebaugh has used resource mobilization theory to analyze this Turko-Islamic social movement. She notes (p. 7) that a variety of theorists have agreed that in order to have a successful social movement it is necessary to have money, legitimacy, and labor. Staff have to be paid, so money is needed to pay them and to provide all those other things that are needed in order to run something, e.g. office space, computers, etc. Taking a variety of sources, including interviews with members of the movement and its critics, she has studied how the circles that form the Movement are formed, where money comes from and so on.

Ebaugh notes that there are very clear patterns across all of the organizations, which is why she can call them Gülen focused and that Mr. Gülen's notion was to educate people in order to help Turkey towards modernization and also as an antidote to terrorism. While the Bank Asya was started as a business organization, most of the other organizations were funded by local supporters and even though the organizations themselves have state of the art equipment, many (including hospitals) are now self-supporting. According to Ed Stourton on BBC Radio 4's program "What is Islam's Gülen Movement" (5/25/2011 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-13503361 accessed

6/14/2011), it is now the world's biggest Muslim movement. Professor Ebaugh sets out clearly the answers to her research questions in summary (pp. 109-113).

More unusually, at the end of the book is a section that addresses the problems put forward by the movement's critics. It is strong not only in Turkey, but also in the Turkish diaspora. Through its outreach by its education and media works, as well as by its outreach to local non-Turkish residents, it has grown quite considerably. Ebaugh addresses these questions in this Appendix:

- The Fear of an Islamic State
- That the Gülen Movement is an agent of the CIA (many movements and organizations seem to have such accusations aimed at them)
- That they brainwash poor and illiterate people
- That it is taking Turkey backwards in its movement towards modernization
- That the Gülen Movement supports only its own supporters
- That it is a secret society or sect
- That there are problems with integration in society
- That there is a lack of visibility and transparency—which Ebaugh disputes, backing her findings up with evidence.

Ebaugh answers these questions honestly and with the benefit of solid research. Her final comment is that Mr. Gülen was invited to address the World Parliament of Religions in Melbourne, Australia in 2009, which Ebaugh suggests is a recognition of his work for peace and dialogue.

This is the first academic book on this movement and Professor Ebaugh is to be congratulated on taking on such a thorny topic and treating it so well.

—Maria Way
University of Westminster, London

Gleick, James. *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Pp. 544. ISBN 978-0375423727 (cloth) $29.95.

If readers read only one book this year, it should be James Gleick's history of information. This for two reasons: first, because we all live in a world of information from our smart phones, iPads, and immersion in music and images that absorbs more of our lives than we care to admit. Second, as communication scholars, we will do well to understand better our historical connections with the beginnings of this flood. The author makes a compelling argument from his Prologue that the crucial moment in the start of the information era began in 1948. At Bell Labs the two events of that year encompassed, first, the creation of the transistor by William Shockley and his team that made the present information economy possible; but more important in the author's opinion was the second: the publication of Claude Shannon's "The Mathematical Theory of Communication" in the Bell System Technical Journal (and the next year as a book by the same title with and added chapter by Warren Weaver who helped explain the highly mathematical theory more in layman's terms) (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). In trying to explain why he considers the Shannon theory more important than the Shockley transistor, Gleick uses the remainder of the book to provide the historical struggle to find a unifying theory for all of the world's codes from the creation of the alphabet to the modern world of the information ocean in which we swim (and sometimes drown). His thesis is that Shannon's relatively brief but elegant theory provided the unifying vision in which the budding computer age found a way forward to the age of instant and pervasive information. Weaver's contribution was his argument that the engineering problems that Shannon helped to solve for measurement, storage, and movement of information in as distortion-free a system as possible was necessarily involved with the question of the message or content of the information bits that were sent and received and of the consequences for those receiving these messages. He thought the theory was not just about information but about communication. (As a footnote and an additional tie to our field, Wilbur Schramm at the University of Illinois who is credited by some as the founder of the field of communication helped to get the book published at the University of Illinois Press.)

The author begins his history with the African Talking Drum to return the reader to a time even before the creation of writing. In this first chapter he begins to lay out his argument for the development of codes, in acoustic and in tonal forms in the drums that lasted up to the mid-20th century. In a second chapter he synthesizes a discussion of what writing meant to culture in the Greek classical period but also with illustrations from other forms of writing, including that of cuneiform which emphasized the even more abstract form of coding in written form, mathematics. He begins the written language phenomenon with citations from Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan to have readers try to imagine what a pre-literate or oral culture was like. He argues that with the translation of spoken lan-

guage into written form, we have begun the transition of the coding of thought into more abstract symbols and the emergence of human history and even of human consciousness.

Gleick's third chapter begins with the first printed dictionary in the London of Shakespeare's time, 1604. He draws two themes from this long chapter on dictionaries. First, Robert Cawdrey who drew up this Table Alaphabeticall was the first person in the English language to think of listing his 2,500 words in an alphabetical order, a technological invention that changed the notion of searching definitions and of organizing words in a way that abstracted from their meaning but made the search so much more efficient. The author argues that this was a breakthrough that helped to not only organize the meaning of words but led eventually to formalizing of spelling and helped to teach literacy to a largely illiterate population. The second theme is his focus on the creation and growth of the Oxford English Dictionary in the 19th century when James Murray tried to include all of the words in English with their multiple meanings and their historical origins. The work was so massive that the final printed version came many years after the first editor's death. At present English is spoken by perhaps a billion people, and in its online version the OED includes almost a million words, with no end in sight. The point that he makes is that with the modern way of thinking about definitions and word creation, the explosion of dictionary "information" fits in directly with the availability of modern computing. He finishes the chapter to remind readers that his book is about communication: "Like the printing press, the telegraph, and the telephone before it, the Internet is transforming the language simply by transmitting information differently. What makes cyberspace different from all previous information technologies is its intermixing of scales from the largest to the smallest without prejudice, broadcasting to millions, narrowcasting to groups, instant messaging one to one" (p. 77).

In Chapter 5 the story of the telegraph is told in some detail, but it does not resemble the usual tale of Samuel F.B. Morse and his code. Rather, Gleick, as he does with all of his chapters, writes a dense history of science and technology that leads back to Shannon. The long detour through the French system of mechanical semaphores promotes the search for codes that could translate into an efficient system of information. The Morse code was a flash of insight into how the alphabet could be coded into 1s and 0s or dots and dashes, a march toward Shannon's bits of a century

later. The chapter includes a discussion of how codes began to include numbers and, in some cases, could substitute numbers for language-based codes. The author returns to Shannon's story in Chapter 6 and winds this part of the story into the development of the telephone and the creation of the Bell Telephone Company where Shannon would create his theory of communication. Chapter 7 provides not only a history but also a detailed technical background to Shannon's theory along with its publication as a book from the University of Illinois where Wilbur Schramm as director of the UIPress recognized its relevance to the new field of Communication that he was just beginning (Rogers, 1994, Chs. 11, 12). Gleick points out the critical meeting of Shannon with Allan Turing, the British mathematician who is credited with the first concept of the modern computer. They met in 1943 when both were working on cryptography for their governments.

In Chapters 8 through 13, the author turns his gaze from what led up to the 1949 publication of Shannon and Weaver's book to the spread of the basic idea of information theory to other scientific fields and to the world of computing that today is so pervasive. Shannon had, for his doctoral dissertation at MIT, applied his thinking about information to genetics, a field that had not yet been created. The dissertation was never published, but it foreshadowed the view that the body's genetic system is essentially a code system with what would later be called a genome. Even the double helix would come a decade after Shannon finished his Ph.D. Chapters 14 and 15 of the book look at one of the dark sides of the information system that Shannon helped to foment: information overload. And Gleick begins with Jorge Luis Borges grim story of "The Library of Babel" where the narrator recounts that the mythical library contains all of the books in the world—but none can be opened. The joy of universal knowledge turns to bitter frustration, and the reader is reminded of the Tower of Babel allegory from the Bible. Gleick paints a graphic picture of how we are more and more experiencing the sense of being overwhelmed by the very information machinery that we have woven into our culture. But he also invokes Marshall McLuhan—to argue that we are entering a new age of communication and information just as McLuhan had suggested for the age of television in the 1960s—and Elizabeth Eisenstein who explains the positive consequences of the printing press. With the likes of Google's algorithms, Gleick has more hope for the future than some other critics of our age of information.

A word about how and whether Shannon fits into the general field of communication as it is manifest today in the thousands of university departments that have sprung up since 1948. Wlibur Schramm, who Everett Rogers (1994) argued was the founder of the field of communication study, was certain in 1949 that Shannon would be central to the field. But that expectation has not been met over the past 60 years. Yes, information theory has had wide influence in many fields besides computer science, but if we heed Warren Weaver's argument, Shannon's theory necessarily encompasses not only the engineering side of information but also the human meaning of the term. If Shannon was in some sense seminal to the creation of all of the information and communication technologies that have followed from his theory in 1949, then his legacy is certainly tied closely to our field historically. James Gleick's history of Shannon theory, then, becomes our history as well.

The book has extensive notes, a lengthy bibliography, and a complete index.

—Emile McAnany
Santa Clara University

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Graf, Heike. (Ed.). *Diversity in Theory and Practice: News Journalism in Sweden and Germany.* Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom/University of Gothenburg, 2011. Pp. 192. ISBN 978-91-86523-12-1 (paper) SEK 280, €30.

In early 2011, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, caused some furore when he announced that, in his opinion, multiculturalism had failed as a project in the United Kingdom. There is a strong feeling, according to BBC Radio 4's *World at One* program (14th March, 2011) that there is a need for immigrants to the United Kingdom to adapt to the British way of life and to the British culture. We, particularly in our cities, are a very diverse population from many countries. In my own London Borough it is estimated that children in our primary schools have around 120 mother tongues among them. In other parts of the country, the actualities of life are considerably different, despite a developed tourism industry. There has been continual discussion around whether ethnic minorities are suf-

ficiently represented in our media. It is expected that the 2011 UK Census will show that 10% of our population is from an ethnic minority and 80% of these people are under 25 years old (http://www.whichfranchise.com/ethnicMinorities/article.cfm?ethnicID=5 – accessed 14th March 2011). Most of the second generation of ethnic minority immigrants are upwardly mobile and research has shown that many feel that the media do not reflect their presence in society (see, e.g., http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/nov/09/race.broadcasting). It seems, however, that when the media try to assist in appointing those from ethnic minority backgrounds, they may then be castigated. A report appeared (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/8321675/BBC-accused-of-lowering-standards-to-encourage-more-ethnic-minorities.html) in which Samir Shah, formerly head of current affairs at the BBC and Indian born, is quoted as saying that the BBC had lowered its requirements in order to recruit people from ethnic minorities.

This new book from the Nordicom series comes from an idea first mooted in 2005 but which actually began when funding was obtained from the Baltic Sea Foundation in January 2007. The project was entitled "Lines of Diversity: Multicultural Perspectives on Journalistic Production in Stockholm and Berlin," thus focusing on two countries, Sweden and Germany, that are seen both as liberal and as having a free media industry. The research was carried out in newsrooms and centered on how journalists from ethnic backgrounds experienced working conditions, career possibilities, and their possibilities of changing media coverage. The research was mainly carried out through semi-structured interviews with editorial staff who worked on permanent or fixed term contracts, but also with freelancers in Swedish and German newsrooms. In addition, material was taken from reports, policy documents, enquiries, and "other documents" (p. 9) so that their findings could be contextualized. The researchers conducted 48 interviews in all, 35 with people from immigrant backgrounds and 21 from the total living in Germany. It was decided to focus on Berlin and Stockholm because multicultural ideals were entrenched in the two capital cities, thus enabling researchers to compare and contrast aspects of the industry that might normally have been taken for granted.

They found that, in general, media faced similar challenges. In both countries journalists pointed to similar experiences, but there were differences because Sweden has had a longer experience of multicultural-

ism than its neighbor, Berlin. The book outlines some of these similarities and differences. Graf and Jan Inge Jönhill give a brief outline of previous research and discuss normative and descriptive approaches to research and what it is that they mean by the concepts of ethnic or national backgrounds and social identity. They note that, in the field of media diversity, Sweden is a forerunner. Their exploration of media diversity in the two countries follows.

The second chapter, by Jönhill, explores the possibilities and opportunities, as well as the limitations offered to media organizations by diversity. It takes as its theoretical basis work based on observation and systems theory. In the third chapter, Gunilla Hultén presents findings from interviews with 14 journalists with foreign backgrounds working in Swedish newsrooms. Hultén's work aims to discern the differences between Sweden's declared policies on ethnic and cultural diversity and the journalists lived experiences. Graf's fourth chapter, based on interviews with 21 journalists from ethnic minority backgrounds, uses a theoretical background taken from inclusion/exclusion work to unravel these interviews' results and to comprehend how inclusion and exclusion mechanisms become interdependent in these major national newsrooms.

Leonor Camauër, in her fifth chapter, looks at the topic from what is perhaps the opposite viewpoint, by interviewing 12 media workers from non-immigrant backgrounds on their perceptions of how working with immigrant media workers has encroached on their working practice and experience.

There is an appendix which gives a survey on diversity in media companies, undertaken in June 2008 and a brief introduction to each of the authors.

This is an interesting book that would be useful to anyone teaching on, or interested in, issues around multiculturalism, diversity, the media and journalism. It would widen the world view of those in countries with other journalistic cultures, particularly since the Scandinavian countries have some of the highest readership levels of newspapers in the world, although even there readerships are falling. This book, of course, focuses not only on newspapers, but also on other media. Once again, it is an excellent book from our colleagues at Nordicom, who are to be highly commended on their continuing good work in publishing research on communication and the media.

—Maria Way
School of Media, Arts & Design
University of Westminster

Hodkinson, Paul. *Media, Culture, and Society: An Introduction*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2011. Pp. xii, 320. ISBN 978-14129-2052-0 (cloth) $108.00; 978-14129-2053-7 (paper) $51.00.

Few institutions are changing as briskly as global media. The span of the 24-hour news cycle is growing smaller, media channels are converging if not crashing together, and the newspaper business as we knew it a mere 10 years ago is now nearly a whisper in the larger media conversation. Despite the changes, particular theoretical, methodological, and sociological constants in media studies still undergird our understanding of media dynamics. Paul Hodkinson's *Media, Culture, and Society* might've been written 15 years ago, and would have included overviews of theorists such as McLuhan, Gerbner, and Marx, with special emphasis on emerging technology such as expanded cable television and the Internet. The book may be revised years from now with emphasis on continuing convergence and increased accessibility to customized content. The speed and depth of the changes underscore the importance of freezing in time an examination of media content, structure, and power. "We live," Hodkinson argues, "in a media culture, a media society" (p. 1).

Hodkinson's book introduces readers to media influence in three sections: (1) Elements of Media; (2) Media, Power, and Control; and (3) Media, Identity, and Culture. Chapters in the first section deal with understanding media with respect to the technology used to deliver messages, media content, and audiences. Hodkinson provides an overview of theoretical perspectives from Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman, and Jerry Mander to compare and contrast views of the proliferation of media from the 1960s through the 1990s. The three are identified as technological determinists for their focus on the media channels shaping consumers' worldviews. The chapter Media Technologies provides a theoretical foundation to explain how technological devices shape message interpretation. In addition to pointing out key theoretical tenets, the author critiques the theorists.

Hodkinson then addresses the media industry, media content, and media users in three separate chapters. The Industry chapter addresses issues such as media ownership, revenue generation for media companies, and government regulation. An analysis of the stakeholders in the media industry (the media organizations themselves, sponsors, government, etc.), illumi-

nates the conditions under which media function. The Media Content chapter is divided into sections that explain two overriding methodologies: qualitative methods that feature semiology, and quantitative methods that focus on content analysis. The Semiology chapter provides a foundation of the principles of semiotics and also compares and contrasts the approaches to semiology of Barthes, Saussure, and others. The content analysis section provides a primer in the methodology while also citing example studies (the work of Gerbner, McCombs and Shaw) to illustrate how it functions. Both sections include a discussion of methodological limitations. The Media Users chapter separates the subject into U.S. perspectives and European perspectives. The U.S. section focuses on research into the traditional areas of media effects and uses and gratifications. The European section focuses on Cultural Studies driven primarily by the work of Stuart Hall.

Section II builds on the basic elements of media in the first section to unpack the function of power and control in the media. Chapter 6 addresses ideology drawing from Marx and the Frankfurt school for examples of how the media have dominated culture through instrumentalism. Hodkinson moves more specifically in Chapter 7 to address the construction of news. Here, he enumerates news values from Galtung and Ruge (1973) that determine how stories are selected. Each news value, which includes characteristics such as frequency, cultural proximity, continuity, and others, plays a role in constructing the news. The events of September 11, 2011 serve as a short case study that illustrated many of the news values. In the end, a story is *never*, Hodkinson points out, free of bias and can never truly mirror the world. Class bias, institutional bias, and "pressure for news to be profitable" (resulting in "infotainment") seriously jeopardizes the integrity of a news story (p. 144).

The section continues with a contrast between broadcast for the public good and broadcasting for personal entertainment (Chapter 8). The author describes arguments for and against Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) as a means for challenging audiences and providing programming for the public good or consensus as described by Britain's first regulator of PSB, Patrick Devlin. Hodkinson addresses censorship including specific issues such as pornography and violence, and places them in a context that contrasts the moral consensus of Devlin with the privilege of individual freedom as described by John Stuart Mill. Hodkinson then describes the position of neo-liberals who view the "invisible hand of the market" controlled by individual

preferences (demand) as the driver that ought to control media content (p. 165).

Hodkinson also draws on the work of Habermas to address the effects of contemporary media on the public sphere, drawing heavily from Habermas' view of the public sphere as a "space for the development of shared culture and ideas" (p. 174). The media have a role in facilitating the public sphere through stimulating debate and representing public opinion. This public sphere is essential as a means for establishing national identity. Increasing fragmentation and individualized use of the media by consumers has resulted in short-term cultural gratification, fueled by the commercialization of media. Hodkinson is somewhat critical of Habermas to close, however, pointing out that the public sphere may not have been all that inclusive in the first place.

The third section of this book is Media, Identity, and Culture. In Chapter 10, the author addresses the representation of ethnic minority groups including underrepresentation both on screen (drawing from statistics on African American character representation) and in decision-making roles. Hodkinson provide a cycle of representation that shows how stereotypes and subordination of ethnic minorities perpetuates imagery of ethnic minorities that undercuts self-esteem and leads to unfavorable attitudes by society. Drawing form the "blaxploitation" drama *Shaft* and the comedy *The Cosby Show*, Hodkinson traces the changes in stereotypes of African American representations from criminally influenced, indulgent in drugs, etc. to affluent and integrated. The representations of the characters in the media may appear to move from unfavorable to favorable, but may still not be representative of African American culture beyond the screen. Diaspora is also addressed as a way to conceptualize representation in film ("diaspora films") with various examples such as *Bend it Like Beckham* and the UK series *Goodness Gracious Me*. Similar analyses of constructions of gender and sexuality are addressed in Chapter 11. The author reviews constructions of femininity that present women as marginalized and objects to be viewed, but also identifies the more empowering nature of representations of women since the 1970s. The rise of feminist approaches to media representations has also established the study of masculine representations (where Hodkinson points to "lads'" magazines and popular films such as *Casino Royale*) and descriptions of non-heterosexual representations such as the occasionally more mainstream films such as *Brokeback Mountain,* and more specialized (and therefore still subordinated) gay and lesbian channels.

Chapter 12 begins with the work of Tönnies (1963) and his concept of *Gemeinshaft* (smaller more organic communities) and *Gesellshaft* (larger "societies" based more on self-interest) as a framework for addressing how media affect communities. The author reviews positions on each side and suggests that the media both have the potential to co-opt communities but also to act as a means of binding people together. While the media have played a role in the demise of communities as a cultural construction, they have also served to build community through DIY media and other communication technologies.

The effects of the media lead to a saturation effect which is explored further in Chapter 13. The cycle of media representation and societal influence presented in Chapter 1 is revisited here, but Hodkinson broadens the point of media representation feeding itself to review postmodernist claims that the co-constructive nature of media representation and influence essentially eliminates any real truth. He reviews the work of Baudrillard, for example, to represent the position that images and representations mask any real meaning. He discusses simulacra, a lost reality in which representations refer to nothing but other representations, and pastiche, the borrowing of elements of genres, such as in music, that when executed several times, eventually blurs the lines of any identifiable style (meaning). Ultimately, Hodkinson argues that the postmodernist claim that there is no truth is itself a significant truth claim, and he reminds us that we ought not ignore the practical value of referents that media representations signify.

The book addresses complex theories and issues of power, control, and representation, but does so in a style that is accessible without being simplistic. Hodkinson uses contemporary examples to illustrate points and takes time to define terms that readers of introductory texts are likely to experience for the first time. Each chapter concludes with exercises and discussion questions. The text would be useful in media seminars at various levels. The book also includes a glossary and combined author/subject index.

—Pete Bicak
Rockhurst University

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"Risk," as a friend of mine who teaches risk management always tells me, does not mean "health and safety." This book addresses the task faced in communicating risk in today's society. Recent conversations with elderly relatives have demonstrated one of these problems, that some in society think we are living in an increasingly risky society, where our very safety is in peril. These conversations have shown that they believe that the weather is getting worse, there are more problems relating to natural disaster, crime is becoming more prevalent. Their anxiety levels have become heightened and no statistic that I can put before them reduces these levels. It is perhaps for this reason that Nohrstedt's book focuses on the consequences that arise from the construction of mediatized risk as threat. The book results from a research project "Threat Images and Identity." All of the articles but one, that written by Mats Eriksson on "Conceptions of Emergency Calls: Emergency Communication in an Age of Mobile Communication and Prevalence of Anxiety," which was previously published in the *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management,* are new.

In his introduction, Nohrstedt notes that communicating risks is becoming more and more complicated due to the wider spectrum of media, both old and new, now available and, following Beck's writings (1996) to the technical production and distribution processes that Beck believes are central to the notion of the risk society and the dangers associated with globalized media. He gives some examples: problems associated with industrial production, disease, natural disaster, migration, travel, trade. and politics—all of which are now more reported than ever due to the global nature of the media industries. An example of this might be the reporting on troubles in the Middle East and North Africa which, in Europe at least, have rarely been far from our television and computer screens, radios, and news media. This coverage may feed the appetite of those with xenophobic tendencies, particularly in countries with a tradition of immigration from such countries. Not only does the book cover the mediatized construction of risk as a threat, but also threat and risk construction within organizational settings.

Nohrstedt's first chapter, following his introduction, presents a theoretical background to risk following an historical change which he believes has altered the way live so that we now live, or think we live, in what he describes as "a threat society" (p. 11). He notes that the media have built a world full of dangers and risks and the political world, culture, and economics have, in his opinion, moved from distributing such risk to spreading and promoting messages full of fear and dangerous scenarios that encourage the feeling that we are being threatened by the "other." This form of promotion of the "other" is a very important part of the construction of such messages. He builds on Beck's theorization of the risk society and world risk, noting that with the media's increasing importance and the "mediatization" of messages, the audience has an increased sense of uncertainty and unease about the "Others"—a mythic variety of groups who may come from many disparate places, such as those of a different religion, race, country, or civilization. All of this has become more and more the topic of political and media discourse. A good example might be the Hutu-Tutsi conflicts in Rwanda, which were encouraged by both politicians and the media.

Birgitte Mral, Helena Hansson, and Orla Vigsø, in the second chapter, consider risk rhetoric. Rhetoric is seen by many today as something relating only to the ancients and their rhetors, but they use analytical tools, described as both "sophisticated" and "modern" to consider this ancient discipline, whose "rhetoricity" they believe is used to persuade the modern media audience. Their case study focuses on the siting of nuclear waste in Sweden. They conclude, by utilizing Habermas's work, that this discourse, formed of dialogical and deliberative promises, was based on a preformed plan with a disguised agenda was put in place to underpin commercial nuclear interests. I am sure that it is not only Sweden which has had such a problematic discourse around this thorny subject.

Chapter 3 written by Johanna Jääsaari and Eva-Karin Olsson, uses a theoretical approach based more closely on crisis management situations—or their failure—by media companies. Rather than using these organizations' routines and structures when dealing with crisis management, they use the ways that the identities of companies/organizations interact with rules in such situations. As a case study they consider how Finnish and Swedish public service television managed reporting on the 9/11 attacks on the U.S.

Whereas public service broadcasters in the United Kingdom, Italy, and elsewhere immediately went over to live, on the ground reporting (easy to do because such companies have reporters both in Washington and New York as a standard), both Finnish and Swedish public service broadcasting companies kept to their normal rules. There was a felt need to retain their own values, norms, and the identities they had themselves constructed, while also considering the audiences' expectations. This event had repercussions for the companies. They needed to reconsider both their public service remit and their program quality, but the conclusions to which each company came in the aftermath differed slightly.

The following chapter, by Ulrika Olausson, considers climate change and the way this has been treated by Swedish media. The need to discuss this issue is a global rather than a national one, and the requirement to discuss the associated problematics has sometimes conflicted with the logic which is incorporated into Swedish media's own logic. While Swedish media are obviously more focused on a Swedish audience, they must also think about climate change with a European slant. Meanwhile, national cultures worldwide are in the process of change—we have only to think here of the Arab Spring and the effect this has had on the culture of, say, Egypt. Olausson considers how these conflicting demands interact in relation to the topic. They do have an effect, including the author's perception that the U.S. is seen as blameworthy in producing the causes of climate change in the production of what she sees as a culture of "otherism" that is developing in Swedish media.

Anna Roosvall's chapter looks again at the ways in which "otherness" is demonstrated. In this case, she does this through the interworking of different cultures and identities in media discourses around the notions of "world threat." In order to undertake her analysis, she completed a longitudinal study of more than 1,200 media articles taken from 1987, 1995, and 2002. She takes up four themes which she sees as relevant to inter-cultural communication and the media. These are the transformations experienced by the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc after 1989; that Islam has replaced Communism as the greatest enemy; the clash of civilizations which it is alleged occurs between Muslim countries and the West; and her idea that religion and politics should be kept separate. While I do not understand how this can be accomplished, since taking a religious stance is in

itself a political decision; it is a view that many hold and it is perhaps displayed most notably in the separation of church and government in the U.S. Constitution, although to an outsider this seems to be a dead letter as religion is so often mentioned in U.S. political discourse. She concludes, not surprisingly perhaps, that 1989 was a time of change which has affected many of the ways in which news has since been narrated to us. She writes about this with some interesting nuances.

Leonor Camauër's Chapter 6 rather than looking at the Danish cartoon fiasco, looks at the Mohammed cartoon published in *Nerikes Allebanda*. In this regional newspaper, a cartoon showed the Prophet in the guise of a dog on a carousel, a figure from Swedish folklore. This didn't cause such a problematic rift between ethnic groups or between Sweden and Muslim countries as the Danish ones had two years earlier. Camauër suggests this was because the two countries handled things differently in that they differentiated between distant Muslims and domestic ones. Otherness was, in Sweden, constructed in a totally different way. Muslims in Sweden were shown to be partners in dialogue with those writing in the newspaper and so became part of the problem's solution.

In Chapter 7, Lisa Villadsen looks at the Danish cartoon case, noting that the focus of the public debate and of communication means was on Danish foreign policy discussions, rather than on intercultural exchange. Her study casts a spotlight on the June 2nd, 2008, attack on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, and Villadsen considers rhetorical citizenship norms in the Danish public sphere and how these are affected in a such a crisis. She uses deliberated democratic and rhetorical agency theories to analyze the ensuing crisis and finds that a crisis may affect the space available for debate. This is done in the name of the national interest. A perceived terrorist threat can also be used to play into this general discourse, which feeds into the citizens' general feeling of terror.

Matts Erikson takes a different tack in Chapter 8, focusing his research on mobile phones and calls to the emergency number, 112. Those who run this service believe that there is increased anxiety amongst the public. Through focus group interviews with 36 people, Erikson came to understand that there were many complex reasons for this increased fear and anxiety. The cell phone is available at all times (so long as there is signal availability) and so these phones are more often available in situations where there is an emergency.

Unsurprisingly, he found that younger people use mobile telephony more than older people. What is considered important enough to make it worthwhile calling the emergency number has also changed, as has the possibility of discussing a situation with an operator. The conjunction of these factors has meant that the system is coming under strain due to increased call volume and he notes that this strain is also related to the establishment of public trust. His research looks not at analysis of discourses around perceived threat, but at risk perception, self image, and one's relationship with authorities, which have been changed, both at individual and mental levels.

Joel Rasmussen, in the final chapter, considers how risk management in industrial situations, including information and communication systems, which include discourses that surround different groups, changes power and responsibilities in these industrial settings. He focuses on three industries in which safety is particularly important. Rasmussen looked at safety incident reporting and the different ways in which this is done, and interviewed employees at variety of levels in the industries. He also studied the use of risk experts, thereafter using discourse analysis to answer his research questions, finding that the construction of companies' identities relates to the risks and accidents which are part of these companies' normal day-to-day work. There is also evidence of a type of "otherness"—which is here called "otherism." This is demonstrated, he suggests, by the way that people in an organization will talk about others at different levels as being part of the safety systems rather than solving problems.

Risk is an area of communication which is receiving more analysis and has been demonstrated in the media through the discourses around terrorism, disease (such as AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis), climate change, ecological disasters, and so on. This book will be useful for those considering work in this area in order to gain knowledge and to see how different analytical tools can be used to address such problems. This is a very worthwhile and useful addition to the publications on risk, coming as it does from a Nordic background

—Maria Way
University of Westminster, London

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Wanis-St. John, Anthony. *Back Channel Negotiation: Secrecy in the Middle East Process*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011. Pp. 342. ISBN 978-0-8156-3275-7 (cloth) $39.95.

and

Gerges, Fawaz A. *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 248. ISBN 978-0-1997-9065-4 (cloth) $24.95.

As these two important works of current communication scholarship detail, what is mediated remains as definitive to political cultures and public opinion about how Americans think about their enemies as what is accomplished through diplomatic channels. Both contribute to a broader understanding of the past decades of wars in the Middle East, and provide a context within which to deconstruct the glamour of war reporting in mass media as a contributing factor to normalizing violence. The fact that Americans fear without knowing the back story has multiple sources, but as both books argue, what is unknown continues to feed the anxiety that informs cultural perception.

Gerges demonstrates in a data-rich, well-argued book that the threat of Al-Qaeda is a construction of American media and political culture. According to a *Christian Science Monitor* poll, Westerners' peace of mind, shattered on September 11th 2001, is dominated by the terrorism narrative sustained by the styles of war reporting in mass media. The author argues that the fear of terrorism is much greater and more powerful than al-Qaeda's actual numbers and capabilities, diminished further by the loss of their leader, well hidden in Pakistan until his death. He argues that the dominant narrative of terrorism "trapped" President Obama into linking the identities of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and since has justified public policy shifts toward counterterrorism, based on new fears that these unidentified enemies will unleash global pandemics using nuclear or biological warfare. "[T]here is a substantial disconnect between the dominant terrorism narrative based on perception," argues Gerges, and the reality of the threat, which is significantly smaller and primarily tactical" (p. 192). Though well considered, his political argument pales before the ongoing violence of "primarily tactical" terrorism. Yet his larger purpose, to dissect the construction of mediated perceptions that influence public defense policy is a chapter that still needs to be written.

Wanis-St. John's scholarship about the Palestinian-Israeli peace process represents a decade long devotion to scholarship, using government documents, and interviews with key negotiators. His second chapter on the two decades history of the search for peace in the conflict, 1973-1991, is so solid that it could be used by itself in a graduate class in international media, or a seminar in political history. He applies similar scrutiny to the Madrid and Washington and Oslo efforts to come to an agreement, in the period between 1991-1993. He astutely titles his sixth chapter "Endgame or Endless Game?" Central to the author's argument is the complexity of the negotiations, the importance of garnering political support through media and public opinion, and the role of the secret negotiations that go on behind diplomatic channels reported in the press. Wanis-St. John argues that the prospect for peace seems "remote" given the failure of the Oslo Accords: "The prevailing political climate in the region with the return of Binyamin Netanyahu as prime minister, the political fragmentation of the Palestinians, a major Israeli offensive in Gaza, the ongoing war in Afghanistan, the tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, the political standoff within Lebanon, and the United States and European Union's standoff with Iran over its nuclear enrichment programs seemed a far cry from the global and regional peace dividends that could have been realized had Palestinian-Israeli peace been achieved in the 1994 to 1999 time frame originally set out in the Oslo Accords" (p. 201). The failures have been stark, bloody, and the author feels the loss of hope for the region, and communicates that well without losing his balance or perspective.

Wanis-St. John's final chapter synthesizes his decade of research about the role of "black market" negotiation or bargaining that takes place "in the shadows," concurrent with diplomatic "front" channel negotiation (p. 261). Central to his argument, the parallel negotiation characterizes in particular the process of peace negotiation that marks the history of struggle in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict since the 1967 war. Citing Sissela Bok, the author uses the context of the ethics of secrecy to provide a rationale for the parallel negotiations that can be positive: that is, protective cover in a fragile state engaged in political problem-solving. Therein, he argues, lies hope.

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—Claire Badaracco
Bellarmine University
Louisville, KY

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