

Re: Evil monopolists and the future of the internet

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- *From:* "sinister" <sinister@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Thu, 9 Feb 2006 18:04:48 -0500
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"The Ghost In The Machine" <ewill@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:5vvqb3-d5a.ln1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

In sci.econ, sinister
<sinister@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
wrote
on Wed, 8 Feb 2006 10:17:31 -0500
<JMKdnZnZVJwMInfeRVn-sg@xxxxxxxxxxxx>:

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060213/chester>

"The End of the Internet?" by Jeff Chester

First 'graph:

"The nation's largest telephone and cable companies are crafting an alarming set of strategies that would transform the free, open and nondiscriminatory Internet of today to a privately run and branded service that would charge a fee for virtually everything we do online."

It costs money to move those electrons, after all. How much, I'm not sure, but ideally we'd be able to establish a standardized number of joules or watts per terabyte or terabyte/second, and charge users appropriately.

But you miss the point entirely.

The big bandwidth oligarchs aren't attempting to recover cost and realize a reasonable profit. Rather, they're trying to collect economic rent.

If they want to charge per bandwidth, that's fine. But if you actually read the article, that's not what they want to do.

(Not that I like the idea, but one pays either directly

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or by taxes. Pick your poison.)

I should note that, if one is paying \$19.99/month for 512 kb DSL service, then one is paying about 1 1/2 nanocents per bit — regardless of whether one uses them or not. So it's not all that much — but it's not zero, either. In fact, there used to be a secondary market for selling excess bandwidth after hours (I don't know if such is still the case admittedly), and one prime requisite of piracy is something that is "free of charge"; one may recall, for instance, that high seas got very safe once ships had to put into port to refuel, though the privateers helped, and a fair number of phone pricing plans differentiate between peak and off-peak minutes.

So maybe charging by the gig is a good idea. (Or not.)

Additional considerations ensue if one uses any routers (usage thereof is really unavoidable anyway!), and since TCP/IP can use any router it wants (within hop limits) things get interesting if tracking software gets installed thereon. There's also the question of hop distance; I'd have to look up the signal lossage per mile of cable. I do know that fiber optic's good for a few miles but that's about it; it then has to go through a repeater, at least.

Again, pick your poison: track your costs, or track your data, or track the fact that one established multiple connections to a website based somewhere in Rio de Janeiro to find an attractive 20something to have a fling with, while away from one's significant other.

(Substitute as appropriate.)

Or all of the above. The possibilities make J. Edgar Hoover look like a milksop, and there's already a debate regarding a "two-tier" internet: one is either with a service and gets preferential treatment, or against a service and gets to hop through — *that* router, the one with the slightly dodgy connections, the occasional hiccup, and the undermaintained power supply and/or bandwidth card and/or prone to overheating because nobody changes the filters. Don't like it? Pay the moohlah. They're amenable, corrupt, and in power. (At least until the electricity runs out.)

And then there's the now-laughably-outdated Telecommunications Act, which among other things requires tarriffs and such for long distance providers. Could they have envisioned VoIP?

And that's just at the transport level. At the data level,

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one can get even more creative; witness, for example, Google/Baidu's helpful censorship of Chinese subnets. (Admittedly, I'm not sure how effective this is, but then I'm not in China, either.) The good news: 6/4 is available to anonymously browse and/or communicate. Or perhaps it's Six Four. I can't say offhand, but my understanding is that it's based on a rather infamous date: 1989-06-04, the day maybe thousands of students died (the officials put the figure between 400 to 2600).

Not quite as bad as 2001-09-11, perhaps, but far more significant to the Chinese, and possibly to the world at large, as 9/11 was an economic disaster (if a nasty one) but 6/4 a political one, very broadly speaking. Besides, tanks can't run over planes.

Of course, it'll cost extra; https:// versus http:// gives one a little more security but might sap as much as half one's bandwidth.

Welcome to the New World Order. Did the Founding Fathers envision this? Is it speech? Is it press? Is it media, and therefore censorable as it might influence little Timmy and little Sally to hear those Seven Little Words on the 'Net? Is it fairer (and to whom?) to pay by the bit, by the second, by the socket connection, all of the above?

Stay tuned.

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It's still legal to go .sigless.