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EDITORIAL

Computer censors

Don't restrict Internet usage

In a blatant denial of First Amendment rights, the University of Texas at Dallas has kicked a graduate student off its computer network for expressing opinions that are inconsistent with university policy.

The student, Gregory N. Steshenko, who was deported from Russia for political reasons in 1986, is suing for the right to discuss foreign politics on Internet.

state universities. "The university has the right to tell its students what the facilities can be used for," said Howard Funk, acting executive director of the Internet Society.

The student, Gregory N. Steshenko, who was deported from Russia for political reasons in 1986, is suing for the right to discuss foreign politics on Internet.

The university insists that Steshenko did not follow its rules, which limit Internet use to exchanges related to coursework.

This means it is only likely to take action against those who are perceived as troublemakers, and not against those who violate the rules without receiving complaints.

Steshenko discussed Ukrainian and Russian politics, sometimes using racial epithets or implying "a homosexual relationship between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukraine President Leonid Kravchuk."

The world of electronic idea exchange is one that has yet to be tested by law. For this reason, Steshenko's suit is likely to become a landmark case that will either grant or deny students the right to say what they think on a state university's computer system.

Despite the fact that some other users found Steshenko's statements offensive, he has the right to say what he thinks.

The outcome could eventually affect Texas A&M students in their usage of Internet here on campus. Presently the University only disciplines a student for sending harassing messages through E-mail. Let's hope that the courts find in favor of Steshenko and the First Amendment.

According to Shari Steele, counsel for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, court precedent has extended the constitutional requirement so that no laws can abridge free expression to "government-run institutions," including

Midnight Yell becomes Midnight Jail Aggie tradition a little too loud for some in Oklahoma

Friday night while attending a conference of Residence Hall Associations in Stillwater, Oklahoma, Chris Thompson, RHA President, was arrested for leading a Midnight Yell Practice.



MELISSA MEGLIOLA
Columnist

According to Thompson, every year the conference serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas and policies on RHA leadership and also provides a place for RHA delegates to display their spirit for their schools. Although every school is enthusiastic, A&M continually stands out. Because the conference always falls during the final stages of Bonfire, A&M often has fewer delegates than other schools. Even so, A&M continues to win the award for most spirited.

students how to hump it. Everyone was visibly motivated and having a great time. Thompson overheard comments like, "Aggies have more fans at yell practice than we do at our football games."

Just after practicing "Gig 'Em," some of the conference hosts came over to say that a nearby resident had complained about the noise. They gave the students three options. "We could stay and take our chances on getting in trouble. We could go back to our rooms and go to sleep, or we could take shuttle buses to the Oklahoma State campus and continue Yell there," said Thompson.

Unanimously, the students decided to ride to campus and continue the Yell Practice. "Everyone wanted to keep going," said Thompson.

As the students were boarding the buses, a police officer arrived. He asked Thompson who was in charge of the group. Thompson replied that he guessed he was.

The officer then informed him that he was under arrest. He admitted that he didn't see anything wrong with an Aggie Yell Practice but explained that because the complaint had already been signed, he was obligated to bring someone into the station.

Watching the exchange, students from Stephen F. Austin, the University of North Texas, Oklahoma State and the University of Oklahoma began collecting money to post bail. "You shouldn't get in trouble for motivating people," said the RHA president from Baylor as he donated a \$20 bill.

The other students followed Thompson directly to the station where they were able to retrieve their friend for \$55.

"The police officer was really cool about the whole thing," said Thompson. "He never even bothered to book me."

Before returning to the hotel, the students

wanted to collect a souvenir of the event. Luckily someone had a camera.

"The police officer took a picture of all of us in front of the patrol car. It was very good bull," said Thompson.

Still in awe of what had happened, the next morning the delegates voted on the 1994 conference site.

"If this is what A&M is like, we want to go there," they told Thompson.

Next November roughly 900 students will visit A&M for the Southwestern Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls convention. They will again discuss news among residence halls, and they will again attend a Midnight Yell Practice.

"I told them nobody can shut us out of Kyle field," said Thompson.

When Thompson returned Saturday in time for the Louisville game, he was greeted by administrators and students who wanted to hear the story.

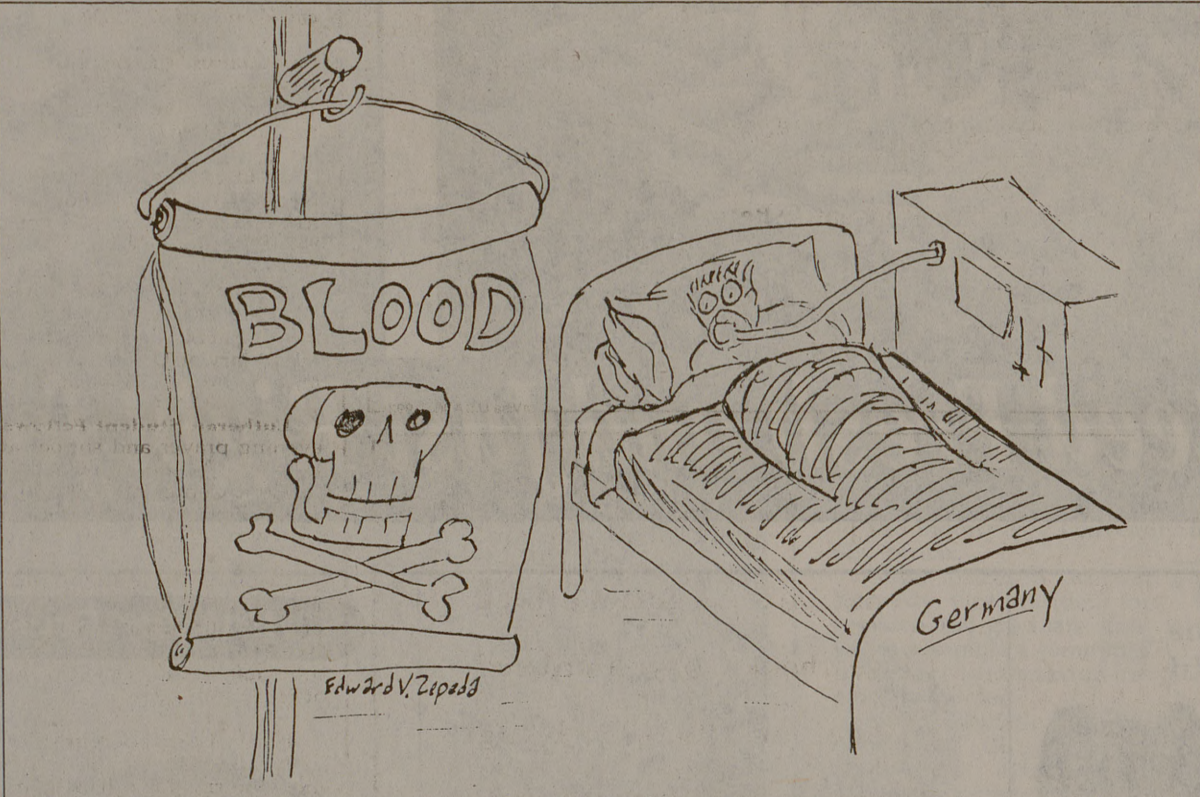
"We thought we were going to have to come after you," said Jim Reynolds, Director of the MSC.

Brian Walker, Student Body President, admitted that he was a little bit jealous.

"I wish I could tell a story like that," said Walker. "What a great display of Aggie Spirit."

Sometimes we forget how lucky we are to be Aggies. We forget that other schools are not bound by the friendship, camaraderie, traditions and pride that we call Aggie Spirit. We forget that things like Midnight Yell, Muster, Bonfire and Silver Taps are unique to Texas A&M. And then something happens that reminds us that we attend the greatest university in the country.

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Education means searching for the questions, not answers

You ever wondered if it's worth it? We spend numerous years laboring over seemingly infinite quantities of books so that someday we can say we have an education. Yeah, so what? What is knowledge? Is it really that important to the grand scheme of the universe? When we pose these questions to theologians, we get all sorts of differing answers. Yet, because we live in a "rational" society, we toss off these answers as just religious beliefs; prejudices fostered in an irrational, opinionated forum.



JOHN SCROGGS
Columnist

So, let's take another approach in trying to discover the value of knowledge - the history of education.

Whatever Socrates' true intentions, Plato thoroughly screwed things up after Socrates was executed. Plato's later writings are filled with answers to these seemingly unanswerable questions. Love, Truth, Virtue and other terms gained exact definitions thanks to Plato. A sense of an over-arching truth permeates Plato's writings. His opinions are written as fact.

This tradition of making personal

opinions sound like fact filters through 2000 years of logical-minded scholars and academics, ending up here in our laps.

It is now up to us to question the basis of what we assume to know.

First of all, it is important to remember that all disciplines in education are based upon unprovable theories. A theory, by its own definition, is not provable. Theories can only be disproven. To prove a

theory, one must have undeniable proof that it is true for all time. It is impossible for anyone to know any particular thing for all time. Instead, we have sciences based upon probabilities, not proofs.

A second point of interest is that with a complete study of the major disciplines in education, you find a basis of vacuous beliefs strung together to form founda-

tionless ideologies.

For instance, geometry, a shape-based mathematics, has its origins in the point. Yet, if you confront anyone with a working knowledge of geometry, they will tell you that a point doesn't really exist. It is just a theoretical assumption; a spaceless position without mass. Yet space is then said to be constructed from an infinite number of points, points that don't even exist. Geometry, like all mathematics, is based on a theory, and as we know, theories can't be proven, only disproven.

Another example is history. The study of history is not the retelling of absolute facts that form our past, rather it is a collection of individual interpretations of certain events that some opinionated person deems significant. History is not a study in facts, but a collection of interpretations.

At this point, we find the basis for the downfall of knowledge - interpretation. In language, we always have a difficulty with interpretation. Words are just symbolic representations of ideas, similar to metaphors. As with all symbols and metaphors, there are no ultimate truths that are represented, only individual interpretations. What we think we understand is really just an interpretation of

what is being communicated.

Words can only be defined by other words or communicative processes - like the pointing of a finger, both of which are metaphorical representations. This means that our language is just a network of meaningless words faced with interpretative problems. It is through a leap of faith that we believe in an ultimate truth belying our attempts at true communication.

The only value of education, then, is to pass down a series of cultural beliefs that permit us to operate in a social context.

While geometry is only based on a theory, bridges are still built. While history uses opinions as its glue, cultural lessons are still learned. Education does not, as it is popularly believed, illuminate some overarching, grand truth. Just as religion is based on belief, the truth of science and philosophy is also achieved through a leap of faith.

Maybe Socrates was right. We can ask the questions, but we should never expect to find the supreme truth.

John Scroggs is a senior English and philosophy major

COLLEGE STATION, TX
 NOV 17
 1993
MAIL CALL

Battalion trying to make A&M look bad

If The Battalion wasn't free, I would have to accuse Juli Phillips and the editors of the Batt of trying to sell papers. What the hell is the deal with the head-

line covering the front page of the Nov. 10 Battalion? Is Miss Phillips' goal in life to write for the Dallas Morning News?

With our hearing in front of the NCAA Infractions committee just days away, I was appalled that the Batt is making our own university look bad. The headline itself is inaccurate.

No one knew that Mr. Warren Gilbert was paying players illegally. He mentioned that he thought that Greg Hill was working for him when one of the other boosters said that Hill was working for Mr. Eldon Jaynes. The others at the meeting questioned whether he was serious or if he was just "blowing smoke." They discussed the situation with Mr. Gilbert, and he assured them that he would check into the situation and make sure everything was okay.

Mr. Gilbert is a big boy and shouldn't have to be checked on by those other boosters who were at the meeting.

The article did nothing except try and dig up something that's not there to begin with to make A&M look bad.

I can't believe that The Battalion was so irresponsible! I suggest that an apology to all those mentioned in the article be issued immediately by the editor.

*Tim Fricke
Class of '95*

Aggie dad says keep up good work, Batt

After reading several issues of The Battalion, the thought occurred to me that not many Aggie parents write to you ... based on a review of the Mail

Call column. I'm not sure why. They are probably too busy keeping up with their kids and paying the bills scattered between College Station and the home station.

First, I want to say I like your conservative slant and editorial courage to stand as such. Keep it up. Also, you have an adult appeal in the format and blending of commercial ads with editorial content and other newsy items.

I like that, and it appeals to me when I come to campus to see my daughter. I can quickly scan the latest issue and get a feel of current issues. Keep up the good work.

*Art Mullan
Tyler, Texas*