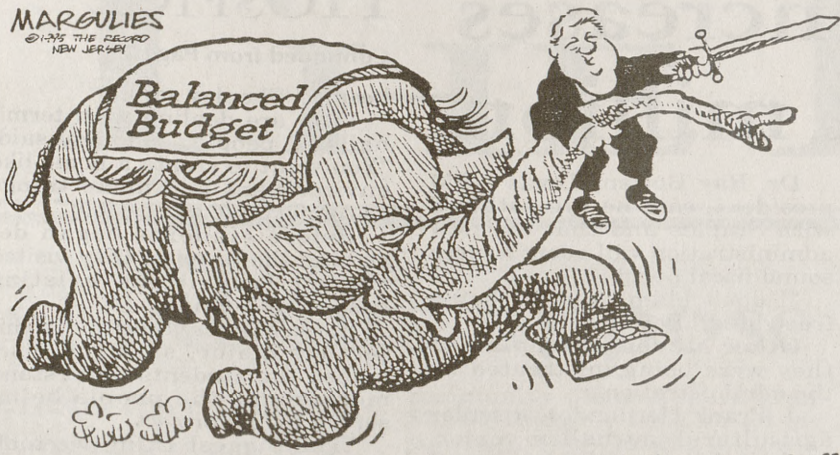


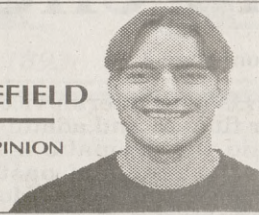
OPINION



"I decided to get off the sidelines and lead the charge."

Theives abuse freedom of Internet

KYLE LITTLEFIELD
ASST. OPINION EDITOR



The Internet is referred to by many as a "democratic" medium. It is accessible to all, provided that the user has a computer and a form of access to the "Net."

That is all they need — one does not need to pass a test or acquire a license to use the Internet. However, just like another "democratic" medium of communication — voting — some people have the privilege but do not use it responsibly.

As a result of the relatively easy access to the Internet many people have, one can meet or encounter the works of all kinds of people. Yes, that means computer-nerds to sleazeballs to people who use the Net to spread their religious or political beliefs and any mutation in between.

And then there is the obligatory share of thieves who reside on the Net. These "thieves" do not steal computer hardware or anything of physical form. They are thieves of intellectual property.

For example, an article available on the World Wide Web chronicles the author's "enlightenment" on the copyright law. He had written what is commonly known as a "FAQ," or a compilation of frequently-asked questions on a certain subject.

The subject in this case was the video game "NBA Jam." The author posted the FAQ to a "bulletin board" where the FAQ was downloaded by another user.

This user made minor alterations to the FAQ and reposted the it without mentioning the original author.

Much to the author's dismay, a few months later a copy of the FAQ, which still contained a large portion of his original work, was published in a magazine devoted to video games. The article did not include any reference to the author either.

He contacted the magazine and explained his situation, to which the editors were sympathetic, and he was paid.

This is but one example of how theft can occur on the Internet.

It could be that the ease of duplication of files on the Internet causes people to forget about this sort of theft. But as the author of the article points out, some people are out to exploit others.

Because Texas A&M is becoming more Internet literate, some facts about copyright laws should be clear to all users. Hopefully, if more people are aware of the copyright laws, which are just as applicable to electronic mediums as they are to other mediums, theft of intellectual property will not be so common on the Internet.

Copyright protects any original expression fixed in a tangible form — for instance, if you created a sound file and saved it on a disk, that file is protected. It is a form of expression fixed on a communicable medium. Email, graphics and functional computer programs are all protected.

The "Guide to United States Copyright Law as Applied to Multimedia Productions" states that copyright laws protect literary works, musical works, dramatic works, pantomimes and choreographic works, pictorial, graphic and sculptural works, motion pictures and other audiovisual works and sound recordings.

Just because the word "copyright" or the copyright symbol doesn't appear, doesn't mean a file, article, work or whatever is not protected under the copyright law.

Copyright law does not protect: ideas, facts, titles, names, short phrases and blank forms.

Now just because you incorporated some graphics you found on the Internet for your BANA 207 presentation, don't worry. There is a convenient clause known as "fair use," which states that reproduction of a copyrighted work

is not an infringement if it is used for educational purposes, criticism, news reporting, scholarship or research.

However, there is a fine line between fair use and infringement. If the purpose of the reproduction is for commercial use, it is likely to be an infringement.

The portion of the original work used in relation to the work as a whole and whether the reproduction has an effect on the potential market or value of the copyrighted work both are factors considered in determining whether a copyright has been infringed.

One example of how complicated the world of Internet copyright can be is the On Line Guitar Archive, which contains thousands of songs transcribed by many different artists.

The archive includes a disclaimer that all files the archive contains are provided for educational use only.

However, some files are merely electronic copies of copyrighted books available on the commercial market. A free copy of the song available on the Internet definitely would reduce the demand and value of the original copyrighted work.

It is just this type of thing that is a big attraction for the users of the Internet: the feeling you are getting something for nothing.

From "shareware" programs that are distributed freely with the clause that the user will send money to the creator of the program — and there are many who ignore this implied agreement — to documents that are simply copies of commercial works, the Internet seems too good to be true.

And it's a just a hunch, but with all of the proposed legislation about regulating the Internet and its uses, copyright soon will be strictly enforced.

Whether this will be a good thing is uncertain — it remains to be seen if the Internet can be regulated and still be thought of as a "democratic" medium.

Kyle Littlefield is a senior journalism major.

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorials board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors. Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

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EDITORIAL

LIMITING ACCESS

The government should not attempt to censor the Internet.

The ideas on which our country was founded have not changed. Morals, ideals and the basic fabric of our society have evolved somewhat, but what makes America different from other nations has not.

Today's world has the Internet, which for some people is a fresh, exciting way to communicate, meet others and educate themselves.

To others, the Internet provides the opportunity to spread filth, pornography and material that can lead to moral decay.

The Internet is what the user makes of it, and yes, some things of objectionable taste float around it.

For example, if the user so desires he or she can index the heading of "bodyart" and view images of pierced and tattooed genitalia.

A person also can read an eight-page tale of a sadomasochistic sex game played between a 21-year-old male and his 53-year-old homosexual lover; can view instructions on how to build a bomb; or can find a list of legal substances that produce natural highs.

Not many parents would want their children to see or read these kinds of things. Parents rightfully could decide what their children can see, but does that give the government a right

to censor the Internet?

The U.S. Senate currently is debating on a piece of legislation titled the Communications Decency Act. The bill, if passed, will attempt to censor the Internet and its users.

This approach is wrong and arguably unconstitutional.

This world often is an ugly place, but Americans should learn to deal with their fears and those things they don't like, not cover them up.

The Supreme Court once was quoted collectively as saying "one man's vulgarity is another man's lyric," in response to the popular expression "f-k the draft" during the Vietnam War.

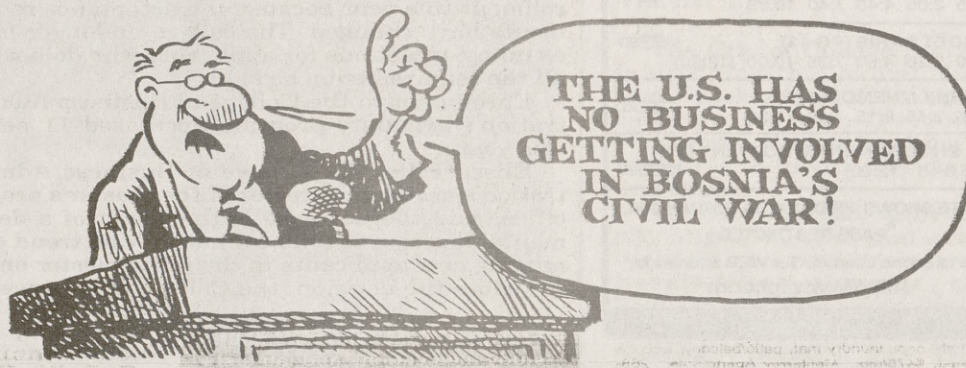
No matter how obscene, vulgar or offensive an item on the Internet is, censorship and other types of "Big Brother" government will always be a thousand times more vulgar.

Parents should begin to take more responsibility over their children and govern their children's exposure to "adult" computer services.

Parents should educate themselves on the broadcast over the Internet and what their children may see.

Then the government could provide things such as roads and public schools, and stop trying to be the guardians of us all.

MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY



MAIL CALL

Students should not have to pay more

In response to the announcement of the fee increases for the upcoming year, we would like to ask a few questions.

Why are the students attending Texas A&M told to "tighten their belts" because "the Legislature did not grant [A&M] the money," while the faculty and staff are given a "well-deserved raise in pay?"

The blow should be equally distributed to both the students and faculty to show our Aggie unity. The faculty should be understanding about waiting for their raises while the students can adjust to the increase from the lost monies.

Why can't the Board of Regents find more efficient ways of

compensating for the money lost?

The sprinklers on campus run entirely too much and in the wrong direction. The sidewalks are always wet as a result.

The air conditioning in most buildings is so cold that sweat-shirts are usually necessary. And let's face it, the maintenance staff on campus could be given many suggestions on efficiency, allowing for job cuts.

The housing department's inability to fill residence halls to full capacity last fall is responsible for some of the increased on-campus housing fees.

Student's well-based lack of trust in the questionable staff at "the Quack Shack" and their diagnoses makes it ridiculous for all students to automatically pay a large fee for a facility they never will use.

Why were all of these deci-

sions about fee increases made during the summer, when the majority of the students attending Texas A&M are not here?

And although if the Student Senate had been in session, they only would have brought strong opposition to these increases, at least a compromise could have been found, and the students' interests could have been represented.

Ginger Coffin
Class of '97

Accompanied by 19 signatures

Scott O'Grady should be admired

I just read Elizabeth Preston's June 19 column, and it made me sick to think that some Americans feel this way.

Scott O'Grady's job as an Air Force pilot is to protect and serve this great country. If people like him weren't flying reconnaissance flights, we would not remain "a bigger and stronger country," as Preston put it.

Bosnia is a country we should be monitoring closely, and that is what Scott

O'Grady's mission was.

If we weren't watching Cuba throughout the '50s and '60s, there's not telling what could have happened.

If someone doesn't agree with the manner in which this country is run, then they should leave. This is the same system that has kept us and our parents feeling safe and protected from the violence in the rest of the world for decades.

It also is the system that will keep our children safe in the future. O'Grady and every other person in the United States military are heroes.

They risk their lives and do a job that I and many others are unable or afraid to do.

They should all be admired and hailed as heroes for protecting our freedom and our very lives, on a daily basis.

Kristina Webb
Class of '97

In response to Elizabeth Preston's column on June 19, I would reserve my comments, being an international student, that deciding who is or isn't a hero is up to the American people. But her question, "Why exactly was he flying over enemy

territory where he could have been shot down in the first place," draws my attention.

U.S. soldiers are there by an international mandate, and Capt. O'Grady was following orders and performing his duty. Isn't that what a professional soldier is supposed to do?

You might have heard the phrase, "thiers is not to who and why, theirs is just to do and die."

It was his duty to undertake that mission, and after the crash it was his duty to evade the enemy and try to reach his post safely, which he did.

He never claimed to be a hero, rather he called the rescuers heroes.

Rakesh Dubey
Graduate student

Actors have right to play politics

I always enjoy reading The Battalion's Opinion section because the articles stimulate the intellect. Some people who call themselves conservatives claim the press, including The Battalion, is infested with liberals.

I have always found The

Battalion to print a wide variety of opinions. Alex Miller's June 21 column, "Entertainers should stay away from politics," screams conservatism and should satisfy the conservative appetite for repression for quite some time.

I have been labeled "liberal" several times, but I refrain from accepting the title from the standpoint that I am an individual and refuse to be herded and corralled like ignorant cattle.

I suppose independent thought is what has earned me the label of liberal and is what gives the conservative powers the illusion that liberals are some force or entity to be reckoned with.

I suppose now that the term political correctness has been formed, people need another target besides minorities and communism to aim their petty fears at, and that is their so-called "liberalism."

Miller's column is based solely on fear that a liberal is lurking around every corner, when, in fact, the people he cited were merely individuals stating their opinions — their Constitution-given right.

James Rohrer
Class of '95

THE BATTALION

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