

The never-ending wait The Internet fails to be all it can be

The Internet is going to crash. So what? It's stupid anyway. Don't take my word for it. Bob Metcalf, cyber-guru and creator of the Net, made this claim on National Public Radio.

The Net has risen beyond its original intent, he says. Too many people, too many commercials and too much porn will be too much for the system's structure. So long, Mr. Web. Good riddance.

The Net wasn't always an outlet for bitter cynicism, though. Once upon a time (and a very good time it was), I, too, was seduced by the Net. I, too, surfed the web, opened and closed, pointed and clicked, refreshed, died, rebooted, sat dazzled by the ads and waf files.

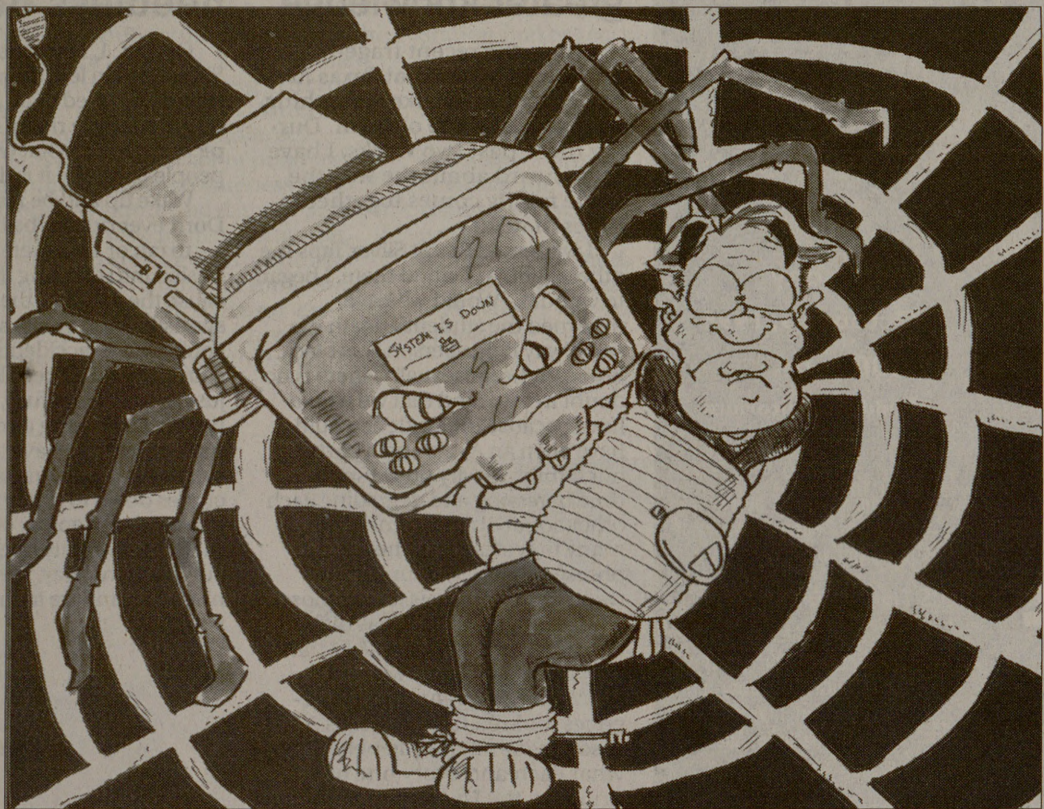
I, too, found naughty pages of which I dare not speak. The Net started out as a fairy tale. Manual research would be obsolete. Magazines, books, papers and experts would be just a site away. But my modem never delivered happily-ever-after.

Instead, there was a frustrated ever-after, and an infuriated ever-after, and a bored-death-waiting-for-this-site-to-respond-ever-after.

Like a sick narcotic, the Internet offered just enough substance to keep a geek pleading for more. Why go all the way to the campus library and expend so much physical energy when the glory of the gods is at our PC terminals?

At least, in theory. If the modem decides to work, if the phone lines aren't overloaded, if the system is ever busy, then maybe a little information will appear. When this column, these very words you are reading, induced me to surf the Net.

Only, the Web would have a self-referring site. Modernism couldn't be completely dead. To summon the favor of the cyber-gods, the humble writer began his séance. I offered them incense smoking next to my



monitor and the aroma of burning flesh rising from a sacrifice of Spam.

I was an ancient Greek hero, Odysseus, wandering aimlessly but for the will of these gods. My search led me to far-off places, lands of Cyclopes and whirlpools and six-armed monsters.

There, in all their glory, were the Bible and Shakespeare's sonnets translated into Klingon. There was the Button That Does Absolutely Nothing and the home page for people named Bob. Still, the wonders came.

Gang home pages and millions of whining political extremist sites appeared. There was a British couple's wedding picture, a photo of my linguistics prof and a couple of flamenco dancers. The gods became offended, denied my offering and refused to bless me with information.

Bob Metcalf's creation has become a monster. It is monstrously slow and monstrously useless.

Microsoft may be battling Netscape for market control, but even Bill Gates admits

that "people are overestimating where the Internet will be in two years."

Metcalf knows. He is a modern-day Frankenstein that has seen his simple network of scientists and scholars degenerate into a commercial mess. Millions of people bounce from site to site everyday, sorting through gigabytes of junk.

Luckily, Metcalf predicts the sheer number of Internet exploiters will destroy the framework of cyberspace. Servers everywhere will become as overloaded as the Texas A&M system.

One by one, cyber-hubs like UUNET, the world's largest internet service provider, will find that phone lines can only process so much information. A cyber jam will cause the Internet traffic to crash.

And life will go on. Metcalf and others envision a better world — like the one before cyberspace, before movies like *The Net*, even before *Wargames*.

Join their vision. Imagine there's no cyberspace. It's easy if you try. No Internet below us. Above us only sky.

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board members. 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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COMPETING INTERESTS

University Concessions Committee turns deaf ears to students again.

Adding insult to injury, the concessions committee made a token gesture to one student group yesterday while holding strongly to a policy that tramples on students' ability to raise funds for their organizations.

The University Concessions Committee, which earlier this semester limited the types of sales student organizations can sponsor, granted an extra two weeks of exemption time to the Class of '97 Council.

K.C. Allan, Class of '97 president, asked the committee for additional time to give the Council a fair chance of reaching its goal of \$97,000.

Class councils have traditionally been granted a blanket exemption to the rules limiting the amount of time an organization can sell merchandise on campus.

But the committee scaled back that exemption. In a fashion that is almost comical, the committee has aggressively tried to fix something that was never broken.

It has tampered with a system that worked to raise money for past class gifts to the University.

If the Class of '97 does not meet its goal, it will serve as the martyr for a battle that never should have been fought in the

first place.

In a challenge by The Battalion Editorials Board on this page Monday, those responsible for the policy change were asked to write a letter to Mail Call giving one benefit the changes will have for students.

As of press time yesterday evening, no such letter had been submitted.

It should worry students when administrators do not answer public accusations of caring more about the interests of an outside entity than those of students. However, it should not be surprising.

The task asked of the policy makers was impossible because there is no benefit in this action for students. Nothing proves that point more than their silence.

Mary Jo Powell, a member of the committee, said in a front-page article today that the committee was committed to working for students to "give them the best deals they can have." But what students cannot have is the opportunity to work with outside vendors as mentors in the sales process.

The committee is clear on this point: The students do not have the right to compete with the bookstore.

Columnist



Marcus Goodyear

Senior English major

Like a sick narcotic, the Internet offered just enough substance to keep a geek pleading for more.



MAIL CALL

Justin Harrell
 Class of '00

A&M's traditions provide a choice

When I enrolled at Texas A&M University, I became an Aggie. I didn't, however, become a member of a "herd." I, like all good Aggies, follow traditions because I want to, not because I have been brainwashed or have succumbed to peer pressure, and certainly not because of "dullwittedness."

For example, we have Bonfire. Smiley says that we build Bonfire out of an inferiority complex and that it is almost a "phallic symbol."

When my yellowpot and crew chiefs woke us up for cut at 5:30 a.m., it wasn't because we felt inferior, nor was it because any of us saw Bonfire as an extension of our phallus, as Smiley would have it.

It was because we're motivated Aggies who want to do more for Texas A&M than just watch Bonfire burn, which Smiley will almost certainly do.

If people don't want to help "build the hell," that's their business and their choice, but don't put down those who do.

As for me, when Smiley is sleeping late on Sunday morning, I'm going to be awake, motivated and ready to build the hell outta fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire.

Corry Clinton
 Class of '00

Pedestrians should show understanding

Regarding Erin Fitzgerald's Sept. 30 column, "Bad bicyclists should hit the roads": What Fitzgerald apparently overlooks in her column is the side of the bicyclist.

Bicycles are non-polluting, quiet, and economical modes of travel. They increase the health of the rider through aerobic, low-

impact exercise and cut the transportation time between classes dramatically.

They permit students living just off campus to make it to their classes on time, and allow those of us unlucky enough not to be English majors to make it out to our West Campus classes in 20 minutes.

Although bike lanes do exist, they are more often than not blocked by large delivery trucks, people parking with their hazards on, or pedestrians walking there to avoid "the crowd." Pedestrians, or as I like to call them, "street cows," are just as much a part of the problem as the bicyclists. Some walkers even get "deer in the headlights" syndrome.

They stand transfixed as I approach and as I go to pass behind them, they decide to jump out of my way (except they decide the best method is to jump toward me).

Please Ags, just walk normally when you see a bike approaching.

The solution to our problems is a little bit of sympathy and understanding for the poor, abused bicyclist.

Coincidentally, in the three years I have attended A&M, I have been in only one collision. Some guy walked blindly into me as I was getting off my bike.

Mark Lawson
 Class of '97

Committee refuses to justify its actions

Regarding the Sept. 30 editorial "Selling short": I completely agree with the Editorials Board on the issue of the new concessions policy on campus. Students are getting shafted by the higher powers here. In years past, on any given day, one would find the MSC filled with student organizations and vendors selling all manner of goods to promote their groups.

Now that these new rules have been tossed around, one is lucky to find two or three lone tables attended by organizations trying to make a profit. And then there's the "mission and purpose" rule — what if the old T-shirts didn't have the groups' names on them? The profits still went to the same place before everything had to be monogrammed. No one complained about the sharing of profit between vendors and student groups — not the students, anyway.

Though no one will own up to the only goal of this whole mess seems to be to hand a monopoly over to the Barnes and Noble bookstore.

Students, get ready to empty your pockets. I am annoyed by the committee's decision; our spirit is being soured by all this tape. Now everyone is forced to pay — and not just the ridiculous prices in the bookstore.

Melissa Johnston
 Class of '00

Editor's Note: The University Concessions Committee and Dr. Sutherland has yet to answer

Fleeing from fright

The girl at the registration desk got a month's worth of exercise trying to keep from laughing. "You wanna know more about what?"

"Aerobics," I replied sheepishly. "I want some information on aerobics classes."

She shook her head and shrugged an "OK." Handing me a red brochure, the girl asked for two dollars for a one-class pass. "We'll see you tomorrow morning," she chuckled.

I would've thought it was funny too: a 6-foot, 200-pound black man asking for information on an aerobics class. But even we have to exercise.

Unfortunately, I've never really enjoyed exercising.

Lifting is no good because I always feel intimidated. After a jog up the street, I crawl through the door wheezing and begging for Primathene. I'm terrible at all sports except football, and one can't do that everyday.

Then I realized my gift for dancing hours on end at dance clubs. My landlady wouldn't let me turn my apartment into a gay club (they play the best music and fighting is rare), so an aerobics class would have to do.

I stepped into the room with as much confidence as one could muster, but everyone could smell my fear.

One girl noticed how much I reeked and consoled me. "Don't worry. It won't be too bad."

I noticed that I was one of three males and the one black in the class. I was also considerably bigger than everyone else.

The instructor couldn't keep her eyes off me or chisel the smile off her face.

She came in the room smiling, cued the music smiling; I could even feel her staring smile in the next room as she gathered her equipment.

She was bubblier than peroxide on a bloody, gaping wound. Everyone around me looked incredibly thin and I began thinking to myself, "This class isn't for beginners. I know it's not. Lord help me."

For the first ten minutes, we didn't use the step at all; we just danced around and stretched. I

Columnist



H.L. Baxter

Senior
 geography major

did everything wrong because I was watching the guy in front of me. After stretching to the right, then left, arms in the air, we had to walk right, then left, then center — a sort of square dance for wallflowers. But I went to my left first, and I kept colliding with the girl next to me. I could tell she was getting

upset after the fifth time; her pink face quickly turned a combustible shade of red.

All of a sudden, we had to use the step and the instructor flashed an open-mouthed smile my way as if to say, "You are going to be so funny. I'm going to enjoy watching you slowly die."

One would've thought I never learned how to walk on my own. The directions were a jargon, so I confused "knee step" with "knee repeater," which meant I was on the step when everyone else was off. I kept forgetting to breathe. I kept running around the step the wrong way.

I wanted to take a sledgehammer to every damn mirror in the classroom. I could feel every stare like I was the Elephant Man. The instructor kept staring, kept smiling.

Halfway into the exercise, we took a break and the instructor mumbled something about heart rate.

I saw everyone put two fingers to the side of their necks and walk around aimlessly like the Living Dead. I tried to do the same, but my fingers kept jumping off my skin with each maddening pump.

The instructor approached me and suggested water, however, instead of heading for the fountain, I made a break for it. I ran down the stairs, past the desks, through the gate, hit my ankle on the sliding door, and hobbled through the parking lot screaming "Why? Why?"

I thought about asking my landlady to reconsider, then about bombing the Rec Center, then considered whether or not I needed angioplasty. Then it hit me: I climb dozens of stairs every day of my life.

My Stair Master class starts Monday morning.