

Clogging the Internet

Universities restrict access to audio/video sites

BY SCOTT JENKINS
The Battalion

Texas A&M is bucking a nationwide trend among universities to restrict access to Websites that allow users to download music and videos.

For now, increasing numbers of universities across the country, including the University of Texas, are using filtering programs to block Websites that store and provide music and video online, such as Napster and iMesh.

Although there are copyright issues related to downloading music and video from the Internet, the more pressing concern for universities is the network traffic generated by the downloading.

Computer officials at Oregon State, the University of Chicago and other universities, said that downloading music and videos creates a disproportionate amount of network traffic since MP3 and other related files require a good deal of digital space.

For example, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Napster has at times accounted for 60 percent of the school's internet traffic, according to a Feb. 26 article in *The Dallas Morning News*.

Thomas Putnam, director of A&M Computing and Information Services (CIS), said that A&M has not had that kind of a problem yet, but it may need to be dealt with in the future.

"We're watching it very closely," Putnam said. "We are also looking at how other universities are handling this."

According to Putnam, A&M provides the network primarily for use in education.

Although taxpayers could probably tolerate students using it for entertainment on a limited basis, there is a problem when entertainment starts to infringe on the educational mission of the University, he said.

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— Don Tomlinson
A&M journalism professor

Still, CIS has no plans to use filtering programs to restrict access to Websites, Putnam said.

If network traffic becomes a bigger difficulty, the University could use other methods to keep the electronic peace.

A university can approach the problem

by either increasing the capacity of the network or employing a bandwidth allocation scheme, where a limit would be placed on the amount of bandwidth, or data space for information transfer, that each user is allowed.

To increase the network capacity, Putnam said, "the question becomes, who is going to pay for it?"

CIS is watching the University of Southern California carefully to observe the results of a bandwidth allocation program there.

Theoretically, a scheme where network users pay more individually for heavier traffic is conceivable, but practical problems of accounting and theft of bandwidth space make it very tough to enforce, Putnam said.

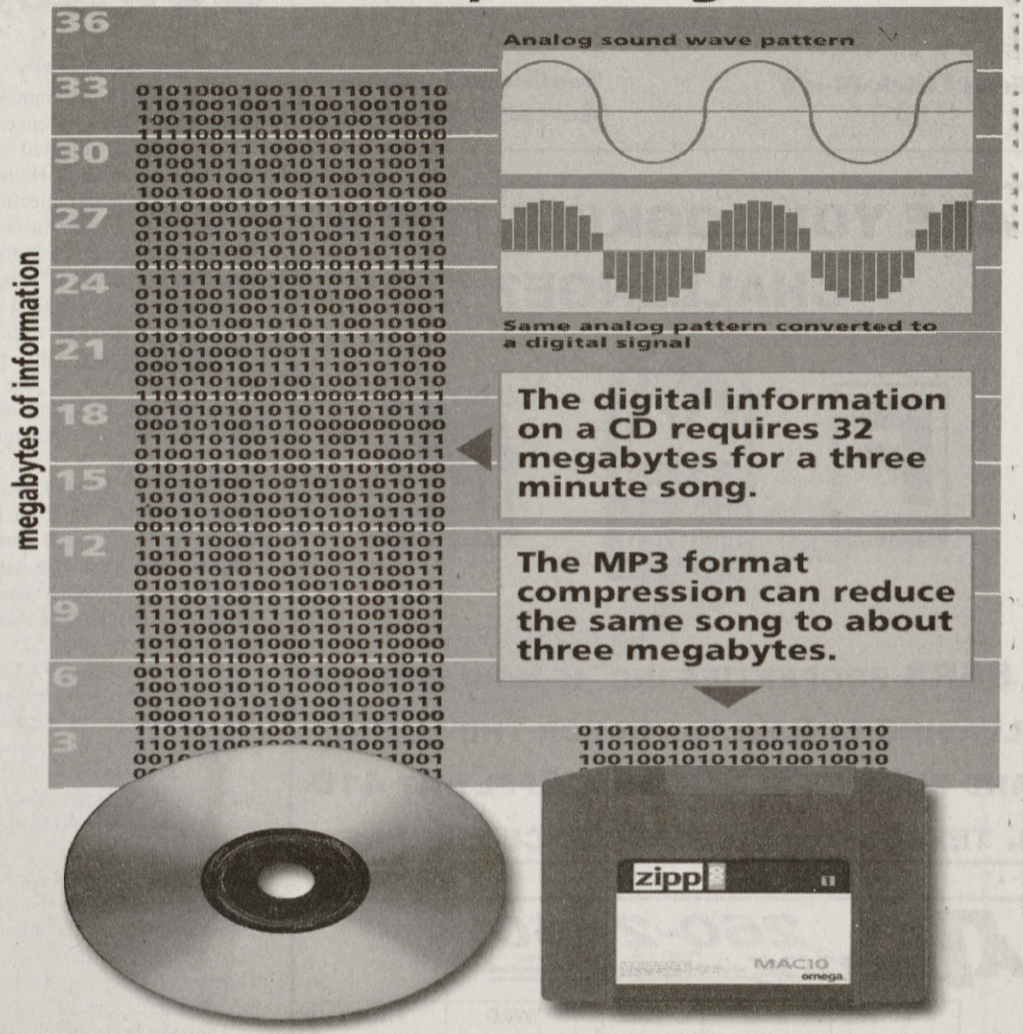
Issues of copyright infringement are also being addressed in the world of music downloading.

One of the "pertinent legal questions for universities," according to A&M journalism professor and media law expert Don Tomlinson, is whether a university is liable if its network is used for illegal copying and distributing of downloaded software, music or videos.

"The question of who's in trouble in these cases is one that is unanswered in the law right now," Tomlinson said.

But with an increasing number of activity in this area and number of lawsuits, that question may be answered in the near future.

Music downloaders use the MP3 format to compress digital music



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Gene therapy boosts blood clotting

(AP)—Amid controversy over the risks of gene therapy, scientists reported that an experimental gene-replacement procedure appears to improve blood clotting in hemophiliacs without triggering complications.

Researchers at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Stanford University cautioned that their success in treating hemophilia B, a relatively rare form of the illness, was encouraging but preliminary. Just three patients participated in the experiment, in which researchers injected patients with a healthy gene to stimulate production of a blood-clotting protein.

An expanded trial with more patients and higher doses is under way.

If the method continues to work, it would be one of the few successful genetic treatments of any disease since the approach was introduced a decade ago.

The new gene's effect is "modest, but measurable," said Stanford geneticist Mark A. Kay, who led the study. "It changes from severe disease to moderate, which really increases the quality of life for the individual."

The hemophilia study appears in the March issue of *Nature Genetics* amid a public backlash against gene therapy. The outcry was prompted by the death last September of a Phoenix teen-ager who had volunteered for a different gene experiment.

Jesse Gelsinger, 18, was the first person believed to die as a direct result of a genetic experiment.

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania had infused his liver with a gene therapy aimed at reversing a rare metabolic disease.

The procedure triggered an extreme immune-system reaction that caused multiple-organ failure.

In recent weeks, several leading scientists, including Caltech president and Nobel laureate David Baltimore, have questioned whether gene therapy is too risky.

And the National Institutes of Health, which funds gene therapy research, is evaluating 400 trials conducted with more than 4,000 patients.

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— Arthur Beaudet
Baylor College of Medicine geneticist

Other geneticists said the hemophilia B study in *Nature Genetics*, while not conclusive, is a confidence-builder.

"What I like is that it was a very low-risk study," said Baylor College of Medicine geneticist Arthur Beaudet. "There is a lot of uncertainty in the field now. It's reassuring to see some positive studies."

About 5,000 Americans suffer from hemophilia B. They produce insufficient levels of a clotting protein known as Factor IX. As a result, blood leaks into their joints.

Many patients are disabled by age 30.

Researchers believe hemophilia B is suitable for gene therapy because the factor IX gene is small and a healthy copy can be easily substituted.

FDA to inspect saline breast implants

GAITHERSBURG, Md. (AP)—Federal regulators opened scientific hearings Wednesday to determine if saline-filled breast implants are safe enough for thousands of women to continue getting — or if they break open and deflate too often.

Some 9.2 percent of saline-filled implants given to breast cancer patients ruptured and deflated within three years of implantation, manufacturer Mentor Corp. told a Food and Drug Administration meeting.

That risk was three times greater for breast cancer patients than for women who had their breasts enlarged cosmetically, the study of 1,680 implant recipients found.

In addition, 40 percent of cancer patients who received saline implants needed some repeat surgery within three years, and 24 percent of these implant recipients suffered breast hardening from scar tissue, a complication that can be very painful.

For cancer patients whose first implant deflated, Mentor said the chance a second implant would break was 22 percent, the company said.

Data on the risks of saline-filled breast implants has long been awaited.

About 130,000 American women received saline implants last year, even though the FDA never has declared them safe.

Saline implants currently are sold because of a government loophole: They hit the market before the FDA began regulating medical devices.

These implants are the only option for most

women seeking breast reconstruction or cosmetic breast enlargement.

In 1992, the FDA banned silicone gel-filled implants except for a small number of women in strict clinical trials.

The FDA now is reviewing saline implants to decide if they are safe enough to continue selling and, if so, how to make sure women understand that — despite what many plastic surgeons now claim — their implants are not guaranteed to last a lifetime.

About a dozen women, some angry and some tearful, urged the FDA to declare the implants dangerous and defective.

Some held up implants removed from their bodies that were blackened with fungus, and blamed them for causing infections, excruciating breast pain or repeated surgeries.

The implants may have a higher failure rate than any other medical device FDA lets sell, said Dr. Norman Anderson of Johns Hopkins University.

"Only fools will call these risks acceptable," said Patricia Faussett of Henderson, Nev., who said her illnesses disappeared once her implants were removed.

But some breast cancer patients happy with saline implants called them vital to emotional recovery after a mastectomy. "It has given me back my self-esteem and sexuality," said Jennifer Gardner of Washington.

Tens of thousands of women in the 1990s claimed implants gave them serious diseases, from arthritis to cancer.

But after repeated scientific studies, the

prestigious Institute of Medicine last year declared that breast implants, whether silicone gel- or saline-filled, do not cause major diseases.

The FDA always has considered saline implants less risky simply because if they break, they release salt water into the body, not a foreign substance.

But officials are concerned about how often the implants break or cause local complications.

In addition, University of Maryland radiologist Dr. Wendie Berg told the FDA it is significantly harder for mammograms to detect breast cancer when the X-rays have to penetrate breast implants.

"We provide a safe and effective option for women," responded Mentor vice president Bobby Purkait.

Mentor cited studies that found no cancer diagnosis problems, and contended many women have repeat surgeries because they want bigger implants or are upset that one breast turned out larger than the other.

Implants were riskier for cancer patients because they already were in poor health, prone to infections and undergo repeated breast exams and treatments that could stress the implant, company officials said.

In contrast, 3.3 percent of the implants used in cosmetic breast enlargement broke and deflated within three years, Mentor said.

Some 6.9 percent of the cosmetic patients had hardened breast tissue and 1.7 percent infections.

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The Texas A&M University Student Media Board is accepting applications for

Editor THE BATTALION

— Including radio and online editions —

Summer 2000

(The summer editor will serve May 22 through Aug. 11, 2000.)

Fall 2000

(The fall editor will serve Aug. 14 through Dec. 15, 2000.)

Qualifications for editor in chief of *The Battalion* are:

- Be a Texas A&M student in good standing with the University and enrolled in at least six credit hours (4 if a graduate student) during the term of office (unless fewer credits are required to graduate);
- Have at least a 2.00 cumulative grade point ratio (3.00 if a graduate student) and at least a 2.00 grade point ratio (3.00 if a graduate student) in the semester immediately prior to the appointment, the semester of appointment and semester during the term of office. In order for this provision to be met, at least six hours (4 if a graduate student) must have been taken for that semester;
- Have completed JOUR 301 (Mass Communication, Law and Society), or equivalent;
- Have at least one year experience in a responsible editorial position on *The Battalion* or comparable daily college newspaper, — OR — Have at least one year editorial experience on a commercial newspaper, — OR — Have completed at least 12 hours journalism, including JOUR 203 and 303 (Media Writing I and II), and JOUR 304 (Editing for the Mass Media), or equivalent.

Application forms should be picked up and returned to Francia Cagle in the Student Media office, room 014A Reed McDonald Building. Deadline for submitting application: noon Wednesday, March 22, 2000. Applicants will be interviewed during the Student Media Board Meeting beginning at 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 28, in room 221F Reed McDonald.

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The Texas A&M University Student Media Board is accepting applications for

Editor AGGIELAND 2001

Qualifications for editor in chief of the *Aggieland* yearbook are:

- Be a Texas A&M student in good standing with the University and enrolled in at least six credit hours (4 if a graduate student) during the term of office (unless fewer credits are required to graduate);
- Have at least a 2.00 cumulative grade point ratio (3.00 if a graduate student) and at least a 2.00 grade point ratio (3.00 if a graduate student) in the semester immediately prior to the appointment, the semester of appointment and semester during the term of office. In order for this provision to be met, at least six hours (4 if a graduate student) must have been taken for that semester;
- Have completed JOUR 210 (Graphics) and JOUR 301 (Mass Communication, Law and Society), or equivalent;
- Have demonstrated ability in writing through university coursework or equivalent experience;
- Have at least one year experience in a responsible position on the *Aggieland* or comparable college yearbook.

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