

Current Internet Issues

Spam

Spam involves the abuse of electronic messaging systems to indiscriminately send unsolicited bulk messages.

Usually spam involves the use of robots or 'bots that troll the web for e-mail addresses, open blogs such as Wordpress or cell phone numbers for sending SMS messages. It is most widely associated with undesired e-mail, but can apply to any open messaging system, including:

- **Blogs such as Wordpress through comments**
 - **Instant Messaging such as AOL Instant Messenger (AIM)**
 - **Mobile phone spam that uses text messaging**
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Costs of Spam

A study by Sophos released on April 17, 2008, indicates that 92.3 percent of all e-mail sent in the first three months of 2008 is spam. More than 1 million computers worldwide are compromised to send spam with a majority of those in the United States running Windows. 23,300 spam-related web pages are created every day or about one every three seconds.

Costs of spam include:

- **Lost productivity for time spent trolling through spam messages**
 - **Network costs for receiving**
 - **Storage space for storing spam on your computer**
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Malware

The term **malware**, derived from "malicious software," refers to any software specifically designed to harm your computer or the software it's running.

Conventional wisdom says that malware comes from sites you shouldn't be visiting in the first place, but more trusted sites are being compromised without their owner's knowledge.

- **Use anti-virus software.**
 - **Make sure your operating system and browser are up to date.**
 - **Be careful about what you download.**
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Taxation

In the current recession, several states are considering taxing online purchases from places like iTunes and Amazon to make up for revenue shortages from more traditional retail outlets.

There has never been a moratorium on sales taxes charged on goods purchased over the internet, but most states have chosen not to pursue companies like Apple and Amazon or to pursue their customers.

Traditionally, governments only tax companies that have a physical presence in their taxation area, but that will change.

Legal Issues

The same laws that apply to printed or broadcast materials apply to material published on the internet. Such laws include libel, patent, trademark, privacy and copyright laws as well as criminal laws such as assault.

Online legal issues are complicated by:

- **Ease of making digital copies (RIAA)**
 - **Difficulty in tracking down responsible parties**
 - **Worldwide distribution (multiple jurisdictions)**
 - **Fair use (search and RSS aggregation)**
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Open Source

Open source is a set of principles and practices on how to write software, the most important of which is that the source code is openly available. Recently, the concept has been expanded to include any kind of intellectual property, including music, articles, books, etc. Examples include:

- **Wordpress**
 - **Mac OS X**
 - **Articles written by Harvard faculty**
 - **Curriculum developed at MIT**
 - **Music released by Nine Inch Nails and other bands**
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Convergence

You are not in the newspaper business or the TV business or the radio business; you are in the media business and there has never been a better time to be there.

In my professional life, we've moved from typewriters to terminals to personal computers to Wordpress.

With the internet there are more opportunities for distributing your story, your film, or your music than ever before. And every day new opportunities are created to give a long professional career.
