

ONLINE MUSIC COMMUNITIES

**ONLINE MUSIC COMMUNITIES:
CHALLENGING SEXISM, CAPITALISM, AND AUTHORITY IN
POPULAR MUSIC**

By

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ABSTRACT

With its almost exclusive focus on the economics of the music industry, the early-21st century debate over digital music piracy has obscured other vital areas of study in the relationship between popular music and the Internet. This thesis addresses some of these neglected areas, specifically issues of agency, representation, discipline, and authority; it examines each of these in relationship to the formation and maintenance different online music communities. I argue that contemporary online trends related to music promotion, consumption, and criticism are, in fact, part of a much larger socio-cultural re-envisioning of the relationships between artists and audiences, artists and the music industry, and among audience members themselves. The relationship between music and the Internet is not only subversive on the level of economics.

I examine these issues in three key areas. Independent women's music communities challenge patriarchal authority in the music industry as they use online discussion forums and websites to advance their own careers. The tension that exists between the traditional for-profit music industry and the developing ethic of sharing in the filesharing community creates the conditions whereby we can imagine alternative ways that music can circulate in culture. "Citizen media," such as blogs and "open source" encyclopædias, allows for those who otherwise had no avenue for presenting their thoughts and ideas to engage in public discourse. Traditional understandings of authority and expertise are subject to revision as new ways of assessing authority develop for online sources. This is also evident in the struggles of "old-media" groups in reconciling their established publishing and editorial practices with emergent online practices.

This thesis foregrounds the work of individuals by drawing extensively from interviews, personal blogs, and online discussion forums. In this way, the monolithic "grand narratives" of the Internet, such as the filesharing "battle" or the democratic potential of online discourse, are shown to be the product of many individual subjectivities, each of whom contribute to authoring the online environment.

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INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 2003-04 I spent several months compiling a list of contact information for music festivals, promoters, and booking agents in the hopes of organising a summer tour for my jazz quintet. The process involved many hours spent online surfing the individual websites of numerous festivals, promoters, artists, and city councils; it also necessitated several hours on the telephone, and probably several more emailing. All of the information I gleaned was publicly available through the World Wide Web. It was at times mind-numbingly boring, involving cutting-and-pasting addresses and phone numbers into an ever-growing (and increasingly disorganised) database. I spent a great deal of time asking myself “Why am I doing this? This is taking away from time that could be spent actually *playing* music!” Of course, in the back of my mind the point was clear: this was a necessary step toward the goal of performing. I needed to contact all of these potential venues if I hoped to perform for the types of audiences I desired. As the professional musician’s mantra goes: I needed to get gigs, get gigs, get gigs...

Along the way I began to wonder why such a list had never circulated among my many musical colleagues. After all, things did in fact circulate. There were always stories of terrible gigs (and sometimes good ones, rarely great ones) and unseemly club owners (and sometimes good ones, even more rarely great ones!). I suspected that such a list was out there—surely someone had put in as much time and effort as I had into compiling such a thing. Of course, I am writing here of a freely available list that would circulate amongst musicians in order to help everyone to succeed, not one of the many *How to Get Gigs and*

Influence People-type books that are available to professional musicians who have the extra money (!) to spend.¹

I thought that among my small group of colleagues we perhaps hadn't yet begun to fully utilise Internet communications technologies to help get us gigs. I sent an email to as many of my musician colleagues as I could. I asked why we shouldn't begin to share resources, and speculated that, since we were all in the same boat looking for gigs, perhaps we should pool our collective abilities to get work: in doing this maybe we could all be more successful, play to more audiences, make more money? I added that even if the people on my list didn't have anything like a database of contacts to offer, they would at least relish the opportunity to connect with one another on a virtual social level—this email list could be a place to share positive and negative experiences as musicians in addition to sharing resources, and also a way to let each other know of our upcoming performances. To this email I attached my database of festival contacts as an initial offering for our new professional music email list. I felt good about this and eagerly anticipated a flood of responses to my ideas. In retrospect, I was more excited about the opportunity to hear some “chatter” amongst the musicians than I was to see what kind of gig-getting treasures I would receive in return. I waited.

I only received two replies to that email, both expressing the sentiment “good idea, thanks.”² It was disappointing, but I can't say it was entirely unexpected. Musicians, in my experience, are often a secretive bunch when it comes to sharing their contacts. There are many reasons for this. In smaller cities like mine, performers have to hold on to what few gigs they do have in order to make money, and thus they are reluctant to share their contacts for fear that they will lose these critical income sources. In order to be seen as having “made it,” professional musicians have to work frequently, and must do so in many different situations at as many venues as possible. Therefore, musicians, if they have lists of contacts, prefer to hold on to them—this way they can continually exploit the opportunities they do have without fear of competition. Pride and ego are also at work here: no one wants to lose a gig to another performer, regardless of whether they are “better” or “worse” than the other. Certainly, this is how I conducted myself for a long time, but it was this sort of closed door strategy that I found ineffective in the long run. Sure, I had a lot of gigs at various points, but overall these periods were few and far between; feast, or famine. In fact, it was during a famine that I had compiled my list, having had the “luxury” of time that I could devote to such a pursuit.

¹ This is an imaginary title, reflecting the sentiments of many “how to” manuals for success in the music business.

² In an ironic twist, at one point during this time period I sent out a mass email to hundreds of people on my announcement list, inadvertently including their email addresses in the “To:” field, thus exposing each address to the whole list. This led to the organiser of a prominent Toronto jazz festival adding each of my exposed contacts to *his* database, and emailing everyone with promotional materials! I never got a gig at this festival.

The failure of my attempt to elicit any significant responses or inspire participation in dialogue is what ultimately fuelled my interest in how musicians use the Internet to communicate with one another. Moreover, since the primary goal of my email was to find greater performance opportunities, I became ever more interested in how musicians communicate with their audiences online. And finally, another scenario presented itself: how do music listeners use Internet technologies to communicate among themselves about music? For each of these parallel interests, similar questions arose: What avenues are used? Who participates in them? What boundaries/barriers exist for participants? What is communicated? Crucially, each of these questions is necessary for establishing what *impact* the nexus of listener/listener, artist/listener, and artist/artist communication has on the way these groups understand each other and themselves as producers of on- and offline culture. Guided by these questions, this thesis examines what it means to participate in online music communities, and the challenges this participation can and does present to the ways we as musicians and listeners have traditionally related to one another and the cultural products we create.

COMMUNITY

The concept of “Community” takes different forms throughout this thesis, and I draw on Robert Plant’s definition of online communities as “collective group[s] of entities, individuals or organizations that come together either temporarily or permanently through an electronic medium to interact in a common problem or interest space.”³ Plant’s definition is sufficiently broad to acknowledge the ever-changing nature of Internet communications (“temporarily *or* permanently”), it foregrounds interactivity as a key feature, and avoids narrowly defining what types of “problem or interest” spaces can be appropriately described as communities. For my purposes, this is a useful starting point as I focus on three distinct yet related music communities: independent women musicians in Chapter One, filesharers in Chapter Two, and those who constitute emerging “citizen media” in Chapter Three.

Benedict Anderson famously formulated the notion of “imagined communities” to refer to the invisible “ties that bind” disparate geographic and language groups into larger organisational structures such as the nation-state. Anderson wrote, “All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined,” these communities “are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”⁴ The online communities discussed here, all of which certainly

³ Robert Plant, “Online Communities,” *Technology in Society* 26 (2004): 54.

⁴ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

qualify as larger than villages, can only be imagined ones: they are comprised of people from around the globe, most of who will never meet face-to-face. Anderson's conception of community further emphasises the role of communications technology (in particular, the printing press) in widening the scope of community in such a way that facilitated the creation of nation-states. In this formulation, the printing press allowed these new "citizens" to gain knowledge of one another and feel connected, despite their geographic separation. Departing from Anderson's formulation, and setting aside his focus on the nation-state in favour of foregrounding online social organisation, I argue that a similar opening up of knowledge is happening through the Internet, but with one crucial difference: the disparate online citizenry are able to connect directly with one another.

Returning to the latter portion of Plant's definition, the "common problem or interest space" can be further examined in order to determine how this space comes to be defined by asking the questions: What roles do these communities play in the lives of the individuals who comprise them, and what roles do the individuals have in shaping the orientation of these communities? In order to understand these roles, and reach a clearer conception of the "styles" in which community is imagined, I find it useful to consider Robert Putnam's concept of bridging and bonding social capitals. These capitals help explain how the individuals within a community are related to one another. For example, bridging social capital is that which orients a group outwards, and is characterised by reaching across social boundaries such as race, class, age, or gender. Types of bridging communities might be Parent-Teacher Associations or community outreach groups and their heterogeneity tends to be associated with a positive social environment. Bonding capital, on the other hand, is characterised by an inward focus. Bonding groups are those that consist of members united under a common ideological orientation, for example, and are prohibit membership by those with different views. Bonding communities, though they can provide positive environments for their members, run the risk of negative externalities via exclusion of others.⁵ For example, the Ku Klux Klan or the Irish Republican Army defend their own existence and value systems through outward hostility toward differing views. Putnam explains,

Bridging social capital refers to social networks that bring together people of different sorts, and bonding social capital brings together people of a similar sort. This is an important distinction because the externalities of groups that are bridging are likely to be positive, while networks that are bonding (limited within particular social niches) are at greater risk of producing externalities that are negative.⁶

⁵ Pippa Norris, "The Bridging and Bonding Role of Online Communities," in *Society Online: The Internet in Context*, ed. Philip N. Howard and Steve Jones (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 32.

⁶ Robert D. Putnam, ed., *The Dynamics of Social Capital* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) quoted in *Ibid.*, 32.

Pippa Norris, building on Putnam's ideas, suggested that bridging and bonding social networks should be seen on a continuum rather than as a dichotomy. Her research indicates that the "easy-entry, easy-exit" nature of these communities can deepen their ideological homogeneity (i.e. those of an opposing viewpoint could simply leave a forum, or not visit a website). Yet, the textual communication of online communities breaks down standard "social identity cues" such as race, class, and gender and allows for greater heterogeneity through the participation of those from a number of different backgrounds. Thus, groups can feasibly perform both bridging and bonding roles despite tendencies toward one or the other extreme.⁷

In the case of *GoGirlsMusic*, addressed in Chapter One, an online forum exists in which women musicians come together to share resources and contend with sexist practices in the music industry. This community based around the connection shared by women musicians who see themselves as at once in opposition to male domination in the entertainment industry and who, through the creation of this alternative space, strategise ways to make positive inroads into this industry in order to satisfy whatever their own individual definitions of "success" might be. This community prizes discourse as a means of effecting change. In my observations of this forum, it was clear that not all discussions on the *GoGirls* forum are directly aimed at changing the music industry; in fact, a lot of the discourse is related to sharing experiences (both positive and negative) of their lives as professional musicians. *GoGirls* serves a bonding role based on shared gender and the general assumption that women artists will be somewhat united in having to contend with sexist practices in the music industry. These bonds are developed discursively as the participants express their ideas through writing. Moreover, *GoGirls* is fairly explicit in the presentation of a feminist agenda, and presumably those who did not agree with the community's goals would not be interested in participating. While it is the explicit goal of the site to provide a positive space for women musicians to communicate and learn, it is problematic to assume that all women musicians desire/need such a space, and that all necessarily feel oppressed by sexism. I think that this concern is tempered somewhat by the bridging aspects of the *GoGirls* community. The forum is open to anyone who wishes to register (including men) and the public face of *GoGirls*, in the form of the website and sponsored *GoGirls* showcase concerts, both of which present the community to the wider world, making the community a welcome space for those from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of interests.

Whereas *GoGirls* caters to a community based on shared gender and profession, *OiNK*, an invite-only community, is a gathering place for the "in-crowd" of filesharing. *OiNK* is a website where members can access a large and diverse collection of music, software, and ebooks, all available for free using the

⁷ Ibid., 32-35.

decentralised BitTorrent filesharing protocol. *OiNK* is a BitTorrent “tracker,” meaning that it does not directly host any data, but rather provides a constantly updated database of items that the membership are actively sharing. “Community” at *OiNK* is an arrangement that has developed out of a desire to obtain free cultural products. Since *OiNK* is goal-oriented, community is something of a default arrangement, with the forum and IRC channels of secondary importance to downloading music, books, and software; it exists because its users all happen to be in the same place doing the same thing at the same time. Yet, the site administrators have gone to great lengths to introduce regulations to ensure that the site’s goals are achieved, and, as I discuss in Chapter Two, these regulations are a powerful force in producing this particular form of community. For example, ratio requirements are employed to compel members to upload as well as download music, and there are minimum sound quality requirements for any music files shared on the site. There are similar regulations that proscribe members’ behaviour within the site’s forums and Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels. These rules facilitate an almost exclusively bonding role for those sections of the *OiNK* website where members interact. And, because the *OiNK* administrators want to keep the site “closed” and maintain control over who is allowed to be involved in the community, there are few bridging possibilities. Moreover, the invite system, coupled with the development of a “sharing ideology” that propagates among the membership as they engage with the site’s regulatory system, creates a membership that is fairly judicious when deciding who else to invite. Importantly, the forum, IRC, and ability to send personal messages to other *OiNK* members, marks filesharing, which is often cast as anonymous, as a *social* activity at *OiNK*—members communicate among themselves for a variety of reasons, not always with the intent of getting free music. In fact, one of the sections of Chapter Two deals directly with a discursive event related to the disciplinary procedures that are in place for breaking the site’s rules.

The citizen media community is based on the collective use of various online tools for user-generated content such as video sharing websites, blogs and other avenues for individual publishing, and “open source” knowledge initiatives like Wikipedia. It is also the largest and most diverse community and in fact pushes the above definitions of community to their limits. In contrast to the forum at *OiNK*, which augments the primary goal of obtaining free music, books, or software, the citizen media *community* comes about as the result of the *production* of citizen media. The importance of hyperlinking in this community cannot be understated, for it is the ability to link between citizen media avenues that gives this phenomenon its power. This sense of community is dependent on what I argue is a fluid (and deteriorating) binary opposition of old-media sources (magazines, newspapers, encyclopædias) and emergent non-professional avenues for expression and critique.

Though it is possible to identify a blogging community—there are those who blog, and those who do not—the “coming together” factor plays a

diminished role as the spaces for citizen media are largely individualised. Citizen media is an example of what Barry Wellman described as “networked individualism” where “the Internet and other new communication technologies are facilitating a basic change in the nature of community from physically fixed and bounded groups to social networks.”⁸ Citizen media is thus an aggregate term used to illustrate the actions of many individuals in a way that situates them in relation to one another and orients them toward the common goal of creating spaces for expression and critique that provide alternatives to professional or mainstream journalism or academia. Citizen media is a bridging community because the interests of its participants are widespread, they do not always share the same political views, and, as I will address shortly, authority in this community is established largely through hypertext links between the various citizen media outlets—bridging, in a sense, the gaps that separate these individualised spaces. Yet, the hypertext links also facilitate bonding between outlets of a similar topical orientation. Consider that there are loosely defined blog “genres” (i.e. MP3, Political, Personal, etc.) and “corners” in the blogosphere (such as that constellation of blogs written by and for members of the academic community). The individuals in these loosely associated groups become known on one another’s blogs as their blogging identities tend to reappear several times throughout the comment threads and blogrolls that accompany most blogs.

AUTHORITY

The common thread that links these online-communities is the challenge that each of them presents to the traditional power and authority of the institutions (and the ideologies that underpin them) that have guided the professional popular music industry for almost a century. The authorities that are challenged are the prevalence of sexism and patriarchy that pervade all steps in the music production and marketing system; the capitalist ideology that situates profit as the primary goal of the mainstream music industry; and the authority of traditional print-media and knowledge resources such as magazines, newspapers, and encyclopædias. These new communities do not cast aside authority as such. Instead, they establish new authority paradigms that are contingent on the use of the Internet as the primary enabler in the creation of these communities. That is, for each of these communities, authority is (re)conceived in ways that are borne out of both the liberating potential of the Internet for widespread communication and knowledge proliferation, and also the limitations inherent in the virtuality of the Internet.

⁸ Barry Wellman. “Connecting Community: On- and Offline.” *Contexts* 3, no. 4 (2004): 22-28. Available from <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications/contexts/contexts-3a.htm>; Accessed April 2006.

Max Weber introduced three key categories of authority: traditional, legal, and charismatic.⁹ It is the first two of these that are of greatest concern here. Traditional authority is that which is in the form of a “right,” passed down through history, and is wielded irrationally, with little justification for its legitimacy. Legal authority, in contrast, arises out of the formal organisation of a system for implementing limits and is fundamentally based on rationality.¹⁰ As Peter Blau suggested, Weber’s categories, since they are generalised analytical tools, are necessarily “ideal types.” In practice though, these authority categories operate on a continuum. Weber’s theory also hinges upon the notion that any authority must be, to a certain extent, voluntarily sanctioned by the public. Blau wrote that “authority is distinguished from persuasion by the fact that people *a priori* suspend their own judgement and accept that of an acknowledged superior without having to be convinced that his is correct.”¹¹ In this paradox, authority is something that is also *granted*; it is, in effect, a tacit contract between the authoritative person or institution and those who seek leadership or guidance. Underpinning this contract is necessary reliance of authority on *legitimacy*, a concept that Blau suggested Weber took for granted and which American sociologist Martin Spencer, in his explication of Weber’s theories on authority and legitimacy, defines as the “sense of duty, obligation, or ‘oughtness’ towards rules, principles or commands.”¹² In order for authority to be effective, there must be a general consensus that it is in fact deserved. Spencer points out that, for example, though the President of the United States possesses codified legal authority, the *legitimacy* of this authority changes with time and context; it is dependent on a host of other factors such as political support, his party’s relative power in other branches of government, and, importantly the trust of the electorate.

Anthony Giddens’s theorisation of how, in modernity, we place a certain amount of trust in “abstract systems,” especially “expert systems,” can be useful in further elucidating the how authority functions in society.¹³ Abstract systems are those aspects of modern life about which the average person knows very little; these can range from urban infrastructure (such as water and electricity utilities systems), to electoral politics, to wider concepts such as “science” or “democracy.” For Giddens, the “frontstage” presence of “representatives” of these systems, for example doctors, lawyers, or priests, personalises the system and allows the lay-person to develop a greater sense of trust via the

⁹ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

¹⁰ “Charismatic Authority” is that which is found in particular individuals—e.g. inspiring speakers, religious prophets, etc.

¹¹ Peter Blau, “Critical Remarks on Weber’s Theory of Authority,” *The American Political Science Review* 57, no. 2 (1963): 307.

¹² See *Ibid.*

¹³ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 79-92.

“trustworthiness” of the representative.¹⁴ Another important factor for Giddens is the role that socialisation has in creating an “aura of respect for technical knowledge of all kinds.”¹⁵ This socialisation, which begins at an early age, leads to a “bargain with modernity” that is characterised by a balancing of deference toward experts and scepticism of their claims to expertise.

Crucial to Giddens’s point is that “expert knowledge does not just provide the calculus but actually creates (or re-produces) the universe of events, as a result of the continual reflexive implementation of that very knowledge.”¹⁶ This assertion is key in describing all of the different authorities challenged here: 1) the proliferation of sexism (though not an “expert” knowledge, it has nonetheless historically enjoyed a similar legitimacy) certainly depends on the reproduction of sexist attitudes; 2) the capitalist logic of the music industry requires constant re-articulation and application of so-called expert knowledge in advertising, taste, demographic study, and economics; 3) the authority of traditional media is reliant upon the continual restatement of their legitimacy, manifested in changing marketing campaigns, and appeals to the authority of the brand. In each case, the crucial similarity is that the entrenched expert/traditional knowledge/authority, which “create[s] the universe of events” is that which, in doing so, also prevents people from imagining alternative forms of thought. And thus, this thesis imagines alternative answers to the questions: How can the music industry operate without the sexism that stems from deep-seated patriarchal power? How can music circulate without regard for profit? How can knowledge be considered useful or accurate without the backing of a time-honoured institution? I will address these questions by observing how the communities discussed here challenge or reinvent the systems that have given authority.

GoGirls and the independent artist websites of singer-songwriters Kristin Sweetland and Meaghan Smith, which I discuss in Chapter One, challenge sexism—a product of patriarchy, a traditional authority if ever there was one—as it pertains to women musician’s agency in their own career choices; in effect, these women’s actions replace the authority of male producers and promoters with a self-made authority based on agency and self-determination. In Chapter Two, filesharing challenges the music industry’s traditional and legal authority to profit monetarily from the work of artists by replacing the authority of capitalism with a “gift economy,” regulated through the imposition of strict rules for music quality, downloading/uploading habits, and forum etiquette. Here, the new method of circulating cultural products appropriates networked communications, global capitalism’s most crucial tool, and uses it in ways that subvert the goal of profit. Finally, in Chapter Three, I discuss how citizen media challenges the symbolic and economic authority of traditional media institutions and knowledge

¹⁴ Ibid., 86. In Weberian terms, we might classify this as the “charismatic authority” of the system’s representatives, whose task it is to legitimise the abstract system in order to make it authoritative.

¹⁵ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶ Ibid., 84.

resources by developing an authority paradigm based around cultural and social capitals.

MUSIC

Studying the online interactions of musicians, music media outlets, and music audiences is an important access point for understanding the significant role the Internet plays in reshaping the musical landscape. Moreover, this inquiry is also valuable for determining the ways in which the Internet has been used to suit the needs of musicians and their listeners. The relationship between what the Internet enables, and how it is ultimately put into practice by users, is best understood as a part of a dialectic in which already existing techniques and desires are at first augmented by the features of new technology. This activity generates new possibilities previously not possible with older technologies. Consider that before there was a World Wide Web, there was already an MP3, but it was not until network technologies “caught up” that the MP3 became a viable medium for circulating music. Yet, would the MP3 have caused the same upheaval in the music industry if Internet users themselves did not demonstrate an insatiable desire to listen to music? Independent musicians had already been promoting themselves through word of mouth, graphic-intensive printed press kits, physical mailing lists, and by providing singles to local and college radio stations well before any of them thought to use a “website” to centralise these promotional endeavours. Yet, can we imagine a contemporary musician without a website (much less one that didn’t allow visitors to sample his or her music)? These same musicians also organised themselves into loose collectives, often creating alternative spaces for performance and discussion, and forming independent record labels. Music listeners had long communicated with one another in small groups through publishing independent magazines, and by hosting public and college radio shows and cable access TV programmes; they communicated with their favourite artists via mail and fan club letters. Now, band websites have forums, virtual gathering spaces for all of their fans to interact.

Until the advent of the Internet, the dominant way in which popular music audiences experienced music was heavily mediated by the various promotional and commercial layers that comprised the entertainment industry. And, as is the case today—though, as I argue, to lesser extent as a result of Internet technologies—audiences’ music consumption was largely subject to decisions made by major record labels that deemed which recordings were worthy of release and subsequent promotion. The experience of purchasing music was further filtered through record stores, where similar decisions based largely on profitability were made. With few exceptions—notably, the “mixed tape” phenomenon—opportunities for audiences to intervene directly in the distribution of music were scarce, as were their opportunities for alternative consumption

practices.¹⁷ Artists were bound by a similar hierarchy; if they wanted to have their music heard by a wide audience, their only choice was to engage with the systems put in place by the entertainment industry. Avenues for popular music fans to publicly participate in criticism and the production of discourse were similarly limited, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century when there was an unprecedented consolidation of the corporations and private companies who controlled print and broadcast media.

Though many of these established practices remain instrumental in defining the popular music landscape, these systemic restrictions are rapidly being eradicated online, replaced instead by decentralised alternatives for consumption and critique. Steve Jones employs the term “disintermediation” to describe the process of “cutting out the middle layers” in distributing and promoting music online.¹⁸ I add to this that disintermediation is also operative in discourses that develop around music, both among listeners and among musicians themselves. In terms of distribution, since the 1999 introduction of Napster, the middle layers of record labels and physical retailers are rapidly being replaced by the proliferation of filesharing networks and digital music retailers. As a promotional avenue the World Wide Web is host to millions of independent musicians’ websites, each with its own presentation of the artists’ identities. Finally, given the opportunity to interact globally, audience behaviours online have shown that people are more than willing to share ideas and opinions about music; the advent of “citizen media,” a term that refers to non-professional avenues for expression and critique, is testament to this.

I envision the phenomena discussed here as part of an overall practice of what Christopher Small has described as “musicking,” a concept that acknowledges the importance of how those phenomena and audience practices that are sometimes understood as “extramusical” play a central role in how we experience music.¹⁹ The Internet exhibits a similar centrality; for many people it is now not simply a “tool” for communicating, but an actual “space” in which social and musical life is acted out. Multifaceted experiences with music can now take place online: learning about new recordings and researching the history of an artist are augmented by downloading music and contributing reviews to online magazines or discussing opinions with other listeners on a web forum. It is also

¹⁷ See Reebee Garofalo, ed., *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 11 and Serge Lacasse and Andy Bennett, “Mix Tapes, Memory, and Nostalgia: An Introduction to Phonographic Anthologies,” in *Incestuous Pop: Intertextuality in Recorded Popular Music*, ed. Serge Lacasse (Québec: Nota Bene, Forthcoming).

¹⁸ Steve Jones, “Music and the Internet,” *Popular Music* 19, no. 2 (2000): 219. See also Emma Janson and Robin Mansell. “A Case of Electronic Commerce: The On-line Music Industry – Content, Regulation and Barriers to Development.” *Science and Technology Policy Research: Electronic Working Paper Series (SEWPS)*, no. 25 (1998). Available from <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/spru/publications/imprint/sewps/sewp25/sewp25.pdf>; Accessed February 2006.

¹⁹ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

becoming more common for live concert performances to be “webcast.” Music, as in the “real world,” is also crucial in the articulation of the lives lived in this space. Social networking websites such as MySpace and Facebook allow members to post songs or their own creation or use digital players to allow their friends to listen to specific music directly from their profile page. The video hosting service YouTube is frequently used by young musicians to showcase their work and share their progress as they learn instrumental techniques, and their videos are accompanied by comments offering words of encouragement or critique to the performers from those who have watched them.

“Music ‘machines’” wrote Simon Frith “have not...been as dehumanizing as mass media critics...have suggested.”²⁰ The communities I discuss here are vibrant and dynamic places that embody Frith’s assertion that the music technologies best received by the public are those that further decentralise the processes of music making and listening.²¹ This is a fundamental reason why the Internet is such an important site of inquiry, and it is why Lawrence Lessig asserted, “The Internet has unleashed an extraordinary possibility for many to participate in the process of building and cultivating a culture that reaches far beyond local boundaries.”²² For it is online where the traditional barriers that have isolated music fans from artists and from each other are broken down, re-imagined, contested, and sometimes re-articulated.

Inasmuch as the following chapters are “about” music and the Internet, they are also about coming to grips with the bewildering amount of cultural expression available online. These expressions are at times contradictory, confusing, infuriating, and elating—they are impossible to comprehend in their totality. Thus, this thesis is the product of distilling hundreds of hours spent online, getting to know both the technology, and those who use it. It is about people who love music enough to write about it, share it with each other, and find ways to present their own to a wider audience. Indeed, this thesis is firmly a part of my own musicking, and yours too.

METHODOLOGY

Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to foreground the practices of individuals as a way of tempering what are often monolithic and homogeneous debates about the future of democratic participation online. To that end, the research for this thesis was partially informed by the results of an online survey that was conducted between late-2006 and mid-2007. The survey results were disappointing. Many of the responses to questions about participants’ experiences

²⁰ Simon Frith, “The Industrialization of Popular Music,” in *Popular Music and Communication*, ed. James Lull (London: Sage, 1987), 72.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 9.

online did not yield much detail, and perhaps some of this is due to badly composed questions. As a result, though these response did not provide material for direct analysis in the text of this thesis, they did provide invaluable guidance. (The survey text is available in Appendix Two.)

The paucity of the responses to my survey served a more generalised purpose of guiding my research; as a result, web forums began to take on a more central role. Surely, I thought, if people are unwilling, or if my questions had made it difficult, to provide thought provoking details about online experience, then web forums would be an excellent place to find this sort of dialogue. I was correct. I attended both the *GoGirls* and *OiNK* discussion forums as a “lurker.” I did not contribute to the discussions, but I observed and analysed specific threads. Importantly, the discussions on which I ultimately focussed were not currently active ones. In the case of the *GoGirls* discussions, many dated from the late-1990s, and were sufficiently old that they no longer caught the attention of the membership. In the case of the *OiNK* discussion, though only a few weeks old at the time of my research, it had become so lengthy, heated, and problematic that the website’s administrators had “locked” the thread, making it impossible for members to contribute new thoughts.

Meaghan Smith and Kristin Sweetland, the two artists who are the focus of the second half of Chapter One, participated in email interviews/questionnaires. I specifically chose to focus on these artists because neither is explicitly feminist in their music or their websites. Also, they are of a similar age and both make music in the folk singer-songwriter tradition. I think that the similarities between the two make their contrasting approaches to web promotion all the more intriguing. The questions that guided our correspondence are found in Appendix Two.

Chapter Three’s focus on citizen media involved participating in “blogging,” not only as a medium for communicating, but, as danah boyd stresses, as a *practice* of communicating.²³ I started my own blog and wrote for it when I could (which, incidentally, seems to be far less frequently than most bloggers). My posts can be found at <http://www.paulaitken.com/blog>. I also learned how to use Real Simple Syndication (RSS) to aggregate content from many blogs—I could read blog entries as if they were emails. I read many different blogs daily, from the humorous to the academic, the political to the culinary. In this way I gained a sense of frequency, of language style, and importantly, a sense of the diversity of the blogosphere and citizen media more generally. I concomitantly kept watch on “mainstream” media sources such as the websites for major newspapers and radio and television networks, comparing and contrasting coverage on current events.

²³ danah boyd. “A Blogger’s Blog: Exploring the Definition of a Medium.” *Reconstruction* 6, no. 4 (2006). Available from <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/064/boyd.shtml>; Accessed December 2006.

When it came time to focus on Lollapalooza 2006, six months had passed since the event, enough time for blog search engines, and Google, to have indexed a great many sources of information on the festival. My research began with a close reading of each of the AT&T sponsored blog's posts from the festival weekend, and their follow-up posts. Non-AT&T blogs were found by using the popular *Technorati* search engine and I provide an analysis of its "authority" paradigm in Chapter Three. I also searched mainstream media sources to get a sense of how Lollapalooza was covered in mainstream media, especially in the Web incarnations of traditional print resources such as the *New York Times* and *Rolling Stone*. In my analysis of the constellation of media coverage surrounding Lollapalooza 2006 I have included the commentary of blog visitors, and focussed as much as possible on the content written by individual bloggers.

As the research for this thesis progressed, it became apparent that each chapter's focus would be firmly entrenched in what could be considered part of "hegemonic" or "dominant" culture. Indeed, each chapter deals with aspects of the "mainstream web." The women discussed here are, from all indications, largely white and middle class. The filesharing phenomenon, as suggested by the types of music most downloaded in the *OiNK* community, and by the PEW Internet and American Life studies, is largely rooted in the practices of the white, Western, and middle class.²⁴ Moreover, despite the tension that exists between filesharing practices and the economic concerns of the music industry, it is somewhat of a mainstream practice in that it is a "badly kept secret," and many people admit to having downloaded copyrighted material. Lollapalooza 2006 was criticised for featuring too many white acts, and in fact the discourse that surrounded the event did not focus much on issues of race, ethnicity, or class. To be sure, another approach for this thesis would have been to examine the websites of radically feminist artists or networking groups, or to research those who have been more dramatically marginalised from participation in filesharing or online discourse due to lack of access to Internet technologies, such as many in the third world, or those who live in poverty in the West. Indeed, there is very little that is inherently "radical" about the subjects or approaches discussed here. Nonetheless, through a focus on the dominant culture of the Internet, it is my intention in this thesis to make visible that which appears invisible, or, in effect, to de-normalise that which is considered so "normal" as to be beyond criticism.

Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to remain aware of my own subject position, both as an aspiring academic and as a relatively privileged white, Western, middle-class male. Indeed, my access to Internet technologies has allowed me to conduct a great deal of this research. It has allowed me to access

²⁴ See Amanda Lenhart and Susannah Fox, *Downloading Free Music: Internet music lovers don't think it's stealing* (Washington: The Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2000). and Steve Jones and Amanda Lenhart, "Music Downloading and Listening: Findings from the Pew Internet and American Life Project," *Popular Music and Society* 27, no. 2 (2004): 190. See also the discussion of the OiNK filesharing community in Chapter Two.

filesharing communities and participate in publishing citizen media. My position as an academic, and my affiliation with an institution of higher learning, likely gave me a certain amount of credibility when requesting interviews and soliciting information from Internet users. Thus, Chapter Three, through its examination of “official” knowledge, authority, and expertise, should be considered somewhat self-reflective. As I problematise aspects of authority, I do not intend to undervalue the pursuit of knowledge in an academic setting, or to dismiss the work of those with considerable training and expertise their fields. Rather, I aim to deconstruct those factors that legitimise such pursuits and positions of authority and to reveal some of the barriers to participation in the “knowledge economy” of modern Western society in both old- and new-media paradigms.

Overall, it is my hope that a greater focus on individual online practices will suggest that this complex and often incomprehensible “thing” that is the Internet owes its very existence to those people who email, blog, chat, and make personal webpages. Behind the “grand narratives” of online society, such as those that surround issues of democracy online, freedom of expression, and the purported breakdown of traditional social prejudices that Peter Steiner famously lampooned in his cartoon “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog,” there are many much smaller, more localised narratives that fundamentally impact these larger ones.²⁵

²⁵ Steiner’s cartoon features one larger black dog atop an office chair working on a desktop PC who is explaining to a smaller dog, sitting on the floor: “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.” The cartoon can be found here: Peter Steiner. “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.” *The New Yorker* 69, no. 20 (1993): 61. Available from <http://www.unc.edu/depts/jomc/academics/dri/idog.html>; Accessed August 2007.

ONE**SISTERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES*****GOGIRLS.COM*, MEAGHAN SMITH, AND KRISTIN SWEETLAND¹**

The Internet is a powerful tool for independent women artists who choose not to participate in the corporate music industry, and also for those marginalised by gender biases in the industry. By accessing the power of community in their use of the Internet, many independent women musicians are challenging long-entrenched notions of women's representation in popular media and the role they play in their own representation. The structure of the World Wide Web promotes connectivity and, through hyperlinks and instant and (mostly) free access to information, enhances the speed and scope of communication among marginalised voices. Women's use of the Internet today continues and builds upon feminist practices and attitudes involving community, networking, and resource sharing. These practices, along with the desire (or necessity) to circumvent male hegemony in the music industry, ultimately challenge that industry's established power structure. These women present this challenge from "the bottom up," in a sense, because this is not necessarily a direct challenge to actual positions of power within the industry—women are not necessarily ascending *en masse* to CEO positions within the industry. Instead, the individual practices of women who wield greater control over their individual careers creates the conditions in which musical and professional successes are redefined.

In this chapter I discuss the web presences of the women's music community *GoGirlsMusic*, an online resource offering practical assistance for women pursuing musical career paths. I briefly touch on another community by

¹ A version of this chapter, entitled "Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves: Women Artists and Internet Self-Promotion," was presented at the 2006 annual conference of the International Association for Popular Music (US Branch), Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, February 16-19, 2006.

way of contrast: *Little Red Hen*, an artist collective that provides a centralised promotional space and networking support for its members. Both collectives valorise community as means to help women musicians succeed, yet each approaches the concept differently. *Little Red Hen* is smaller than *GoGirls*, consisting of only a handful of self-identified singer/songwriters, and is a less entrepreneurial venture. *GoGirls*, headed by its founder, Texas musician Madalyn Sklar, functions as the “community” part of a much wider initiative to help women musicians succeed. *GoGirls* is much more commercially oriented than *Little Red Hen*; Sklar also offers paid clinics, marketing and promotional packages, career advice, and a record label. *GoGirls* features an online discussion forum and mailing list that provide an important vehicle for women musicians of all genres to share their experiences making music and contending with the music business. In these forums the members of *GoGirls* discuss myriad issues. I focus on discussions of their experiences negotiating the gendered politics of the music industry, their reactions to an attempt by an outsider to “spam” the forum with a less than appropriate request for a formulaic “all-girl” pop act, and the importance of the forums for mentoring.

The *GoGirls* online discussion forum, especially early in its existence, was a place that demonstrated the importance of “just talk” for the community members. The subjects addressed in the forum ranged from the practicalities of having a successful live performance to the more intimate and personal stories of members as they celebrated their accomplishments and contended with the difficulties of their lives as professional musicians. In many cases the communication among members was less about direct “goal oriented” strategies for combating systemic music industry sexism than it was an opportunity to simply share their successes or vent their frustrations. This runs counter to the dominant discourse regarding the ability of widespread use of the Internet to realise the democratic potential for which it was much lauded in the mid-1990s, a discourse that often elides the importance of “just talk” in the process of social change through a focus on the “big issues,” which can obscure individual practices that influence the conditions necessary for widespread social change, such as Internet forum discussions. For example, this is evident in the debate over “net neutrality,” in which the interests of media corporations are pitted against those of “the people,” and is also evident in the debate over filesharing and copyright that I take up in Chapter Two, where “the music industry” faces off against “piracy.”² This is not to suggest that this wider discourse isn’t necessary,

² Net neutrality is one of the crucial debates of our time. It is concerned with whether Internet Service Providers (large corporations like AT&T) will be legally allowed to prioritise Internet traffic based on how much a content provider is willing to pay them. This means that if, for example, AT&T and Microsoft entered into an agreement, AT&T could technically throttle traffic to Microsoft’s competitors’ websites. If this becomes a widespread practice, then it amounts to content censorship, which goes against many of the founding principles of the deregulated Internet. Though this is currently a debate mostly in the US, it is reasonable to assume that in our contemporary corporate climate, similar debates will be had in other industrialised countries. See

but rather that it tends to occupy a greater space in the popular imagination than do the practices of “the people” who are, as I argue throughout this thesis, responsible for making the Internet such a major site of contention. So, it is crucial to examine the localised practices of individuals, especially in the context of this chapter, because monolithic discourses such as those described above are often rooted in social structures that have historically proven so problematic for women’s participation in the music industry (and in the public sphere and politics more generally) in that they assume a particular type of Internet user, and in doing so strive towards a totalising, universal, conception of virtual subjectivity, not just for women, but for everyone.

As I discuss later in the context of community, women musicians have, since the 1970s, made positive challenges to sexism in popular music through the creation of alternative spaces for discourse and performance that acknowledged a much more local conception of how change can be made, a recent example of which was the Riot Grrrl “movement” of the early-1990s. Yet, the contemporary music industry remains based upon a hierarchical structure of male-controlled media corporations, which—via equally male-dominated manufacturing, promotional, and marketing institutions—control the production and distribution of most popular music. Building on Riot Grrrl’s decentralised organisation, *GoGirls*, is a contemporary online manifestation of a strategy that foregrounds affinity and the celebration of difference, as opposed to homogeneity—a strategy that Donna Haraway identified as crucial for modern women to overcome the dominant patriarchal social order. Totalising views, suggested Haraway, represent “a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now.”³ She acknowledges “partiality” and emphasises use of modern technologies as a positive strategy for resisting universality.⁴ Following Haraway then, women’s access to and use of modern communications technologies are widely evidenced as a crucial factor in both the professional and personal success of the independent women musicians discussed here.

Community formation is but one of many different strategies that women musicians can and do use to challenge sexism in the music industry. Another strategy, which I discuss later in this chapter, is the use of self-administered individual promotional websites. Sheila Whiteley and Jacqueline Warwick among others have argued that historically, the popular music industry has been characterised by an often antagonistic alliance of (usually) male artists with (usually) male entrepreneurs. In this arrangement women artists have generally had diminished agency, or been excluded completely from participating. And still, even when there *is* evidence of strong participation, women are often excised

Hands Off The Internet. <http://handsoff.org/blog/>, *Save The Internet*.
<http://www.savetheinternet.com/>. Accessed July 2007.

³ Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” in *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39.

⁴ *Ibid.*

from “official” historical accounts.⁵ In addressing women’s agency in popular music, Susan McClary suggested that the endemic over-emphasis on women’s appearance has often been accompanied by a *dismissal* of a woman’s agency in how her visual image is presented.⁶ Using a website as a promotional tool increases actual agency for women musicians in controlling what images of themselves are used and there is also a concomitant emphasis on that very agency as such; the automatic assumption that a woman musician is without agency is challenged when, especially in the context of the independently produced website, it is understood that she wields considerable creative control over the content she displays. Moreover, as these assumptions are challenged, the actual content of the image itself can become a powerful way to articulate new possibilities for women’s subject positions.

Websites and the images/text/audio that constitute them are as much a product of the designer’s authorship as the viewer’s readership, and are particularly effective at foregrounding the dialectic between self- and socially-constructed identities. These avenues for personal and professional expression embody Teresa de Lauretis’s emphasis on the socially and discursively constructed elements of gender as a more nuanced way in which to engage with women’s subjectivities rather than a gender-sex system that understands “woman in relation to man.”⁷ Additionally, these sites are examples of contemporary self “writing” that have particular resonance with Donna Haraway’s emphasis on the importance of language and its intersection with new technologies in challenging the dominant (patriarchal) social formation.⁸ Thus, I continue this chapter with an examination of the websites of Meaghan Smith and Kristin Sweetland, two young Canadian performers whose music is strongly rooted in the folk singer-songwriter tradition. Both websites emphasise the importance of establishing and maintaining community ties for support and sharing resources, but they (re)present their artist’s online identity differently. That both of these women participate in the singer/songwriter tradition makes their contrasting (re)presentations more intriguing since artists and fans of this genre have traditionally privileged a vision of authenticity that relies heavily on the musical expression of an artist’s personal and interpersonal life experiences. Despite the similarity in their music, the fact that there are considerable differences *between* each woman’s website resists the totalising view that women (musicians) as a group have a homogenised experience. There is also a certain amount of

⁵ See Rebecca Daugherty, “The Spirit of ‘77: Punk and the Girl Revolution,” *Women and Music 6* (2002), Lucy O’Brien, *She Bop 2: The Definitive History of Women in Rock Pop and Soul* (London: Continuum, 1995, 2002), Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s* (New York: Routledge, 2007), and Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁶ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 148-49.

⁷ See Teresa de Lauretis, “The Technology of Gender,” in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

⁸ Haraway.

cognitive dissonance experienced *within* each site—design aesthetics and the relative amount of space each artist devotes to personal narrative creates some intriguing internal conflicts with presuppositions about authenticity in the folk singer-songwriter genre. Thus, there is yet another resonance with Haraway: Meaghan Smith and Kristin Sweetland’s cyber- (or cyborg-) “selves” are indeed “contradictory, partial, and strategic” in their resistance to unified identity and simple binaries. Moreover, through their use of computer technologies and the World Wide Web to articulate and promote their online identities, Smith and Sweetland’s multifarious selves are constructed along the continuum of woman and machine.⁹

Smith’s website, www.meaghansmith.com, emphasises her role as a professional performer, with a only a small portion of the content dedicated to her other pursuits (such as visual art) and features a minimalist design that echoes the musical aesthetics of the folk singer/songwriter genre . Yet, the site downplays explicit presentations of her private identity, so characteristic of the genre, and instead constructs the identity of a successful professional. In contrast, Sweetland’s design aesthetics at www.kristinsweetland.com, are more dramatic, featuring many graphical effects and brighter colours, rather than the muted, rustic aesthetic suggested by folk music, which is commonly associated with acoustic instruments, traditionalism, and the organic. Yet, her site gives equal space to her music career and her visual art and photography pursuits, and devotes a significant amount of space to autobiographical narrative, including an online diary that chronicles her travels and her creative writing from her youth to the present. This holistic approach to presenting her personal and professional identities—her emphasis on the personal, confessional, and intimate—suggests a version of authenticity in ways that are traditionally associated with the singer/songwriter tradition, which prizes intimacy and confession both in its lyrics and musical aesthetics.

GoGirls, and the individual websites of Smith and Sweetland, are representative of the some of the ways in which independent women artists’ author online space and, in doing so, challenge long-held assumptions about women’s participation in popular music. My analysis of these virtual social spaces and identity performances proceeds with the claim, following Haraway, that women’s use of the Internet, though not all that different from that of their male counterparts, is of much more import if positive challenges are to be made to the patriarchal organisation of the music industry and of society more generally. The contrast between the collectively authored space of *GoGirls* and the individually authored identities of Smith and Sweetland’s sites demonstrates that women’s use of the internet is operative on different, but related, levels—in this case, the global and communal, and the local and personal. The *GoGirls* discussion group is representative of how a group of individual women gather and communicate amongst themselves and in doing so make a strong collective

⁹ Ibid., 13.

statement about their practices in popular music. The individual artist websites show that the increased agency afforded by using the World Wide Web as a primary promotional avenue—an agency manifested in the differing ways that each artist presents her “self”—results in negotiations of individual identity that challenge the notion of stable subjectivities (and, by extension, universalised subjective experience) and also alter visitors’ perceptions of women’s own agency in their music careers.

COMMUNITY/NETWORKING: FROM RIOT GRRRL TO *GOGIRLS*

In the history of feminist music movements, and indeed in the history of most social movements, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on ideals of community and networking. The Riot Grrrl movement of the early 1990s was a recent manifestation of a community not as a place, but rather as a “practice of collective identification.”¹⁰ Though initially (mis)cast in popular media as a cohesive “movement” or “scene,” Riot Grrrl has been variously defined as “a support network,” “a group of women (grrrls) who work together,” and “a community of cooperative young women.” Recent perceptions of Riot Grrrl have shifted from locating the movement as simply a “fashion statement” toward a greater understanding of the political import of the collectivism and networking that characterised the movement for many of its participants.¹¹ For example, Kristen Schilt locates Riot Grrrl as a positive space in which “young feminists [could] learn from past generations and make a feminist community that incorporated and addressed the racial critiques of second wave feminism.”¹² Moreover, the importance of independently produced printed ‘zines, the primary method of disseminating the central ideas of Riot Grrrl, has been recognised by Dawn Bates and Maureen C. McHugh who suggest that “in a society in which there are few mainstream avenues for women to articulate their experiences with injustice ‘zines are a site where women can describe their struggle to make their way in the world.”¹³ Indeed, while record and concert reviews were common, the content of Riot Grrrl ‘zines was not limited to cultural aesthetics and tackled many issues, ranging from date rape to abortion rights. Although the ‘zines were

¹⁰ Francis Mulhern, “Towards 2000 or News From You-Know-Where,” *New Left Review* 1 148 (1984). Quoted in Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd, eds., *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989), 17.

¹¹ These descriptions quoted in Marion Leonard, “Rebel Girl, You Are The Queen of My World: Feminism, ‘subculture’ and grrrl power,” in *Sexing The Groove*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (New York: Routledge, 1997), 231.

¹² Kristen Schilt, “‘The Punk White Privilege Scene’: Riot Grrrl, White Privilege, and Zines,” in *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women’s Movement*, ed. Jo Reger (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2005), 39-40.

¹³ Dawn Bates and Maureen C. McHugh, “Zines: Voices of Third Wave Feminists,” in *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women’s Movement*, ed. Jo Reger (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2005), 183.

localised endeavours with small circulations, often only distributed in the hundreds, they shared a commonality of content from city to city. These publications were crucial in disseminating Riot Grrrl politics throughout North America and parts of Europe.¹⁴

The DIY culture that surrounded Riot Grrrl translated well to the Internet and this is borne out by the plethora of websites that continue the practice of addressing contemporary social and cultural issues along with a focus on music.¹⁵ The creator of *Riot Grrrl Online*, a site that began in 2001, indicated a desire to connect with other Riot Grrrls when she wrote about the history of her site

I guess a lot of people figured when the movement and music went away that the riot grrrl movement did too. I read and researched more about it through Yahoo! [...] I still believed in the philosophy of riot grrrl and feminism [...] I wanted to make a riot grrrl resource/information site. I also wanted to connect other riot grrrls to each other by making the site and that's when I decided to start "Riot Grrrl Online."¹⁶

Here, she recognises that the Internet enables ideas to be communicated to a much larger audience and also enables people to enter into direct dialogue via discussion forums, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), and email. Whereas in the past 'zine publishers were aware of the existence of similar publications, opportunities for publishers to connect personally were few because of the temporal and distribution limitations of print media and the disparate locales in which they operated. Now, the World Wide Web allows for fully organised virtual 'zine-style websites—available at all times and linked mostly without boundaries, accessible to anyone, provided that they have the technology to access the Web. Furthermore, through blogs and webforums, these sites become places of interactivity, where the participants—site administrators and viewers—each exhibit agency and are co-responsible for the creation of online content.

Effective networking is important for any musician, male or female, who is attempting to make a living by their creative work. The creation of networked communities is of even greater importance for women musicians who have to contend with the vagaries of a system based on the subjective valuation of creative endeavours, which is imbued with entrenched gender biases within this system. The Halifax-based singer/songwriter Meaghan Smith emphasises the

¹⁴ Leonard.

¹⁵ *Riot Grrrl Online*. <http://www.hot-topic.org/riotgrrrl/>. See "Riot Grrrl Online 'The Story Behind This Site and How I Got Into Riot Grrrl'." *Riot Grrrl Online*. Available from <http://www.hot-topic.org/riotgrrrl/articles.php?do=viewart&id=57&cat=2>; Accessed July 2007. There are hundreds of Riot Grrrl related websites, some examples are *Riot Grrrl World*. <http://www.geocities.com/rebelina89/>, Accessed July 2007, and *The Riot Grrrl Online Message Board Forum*. <http://riotgrrrls.proboards67.com/>, Accessed July 2007.

¹⁶ "Riot Grrrl Online 'The Story Behind This Site and How I Got Into Riot Grrrl'."

value of community in her career as a musician, stating, “working with each other and promoting each other is the best way to go. Everyone gets ahead that way.”¹⁷ Smith’s comments echo Alexa Freeman and Valle Jones’s suggestion that “feminist communication must incorporate the notion that to communicate is to share, that it is, through whatever medium, a process by which something is exchanged.”¹⁸ Smith further emphasises the practical importance of networking with other artists when she says, “it’s good to have a group of people that you’re able to play with because they’re in the same genre.”¹⁹ This is an important effect of involvement in a musical community, one that has direct impact on Smith’s opportunities for performance, and one that demonstrates the central role of affinity in her conception of community.

Kristin Sweetland, a singer/songwriter from London, Ontario, emphasises the importance of communities like *Little Red Hen*, a women’s music collective of nine artists from the US, UK, and Canada, who perform in the folk singer/songwriter genre:

As an independent musician who spends a lot of time alone on the road it is so essential to know that I have community. My sisters keep me strong. I have had the best experiences and developed incredible relationships with my dearest female musical peers. I have leaned so much and made such amazing connections [...] through networking with other women [...] these ladies have saved my life more than once.²⁰

Sweetland’s comments reflect what appears to be the primary aim of *Little Red Hen*: to provide artists with a sense of community. The website explains:

Little Red Hen is an artist collective whose itinerant ways form a partnership built upon friendship and the power of music. Together we bring our songs and stories into the heart of our community, supporting one another on the road. Wherever you are, you’re never far from a Little Red Hen.²¹

Though Little Red Hen is a small community, it does resonate with Freeman and Jones’s assertion that “this principle of mutuality [in feminist communication] demands both that [women] have access to the tools of communication

¹⁷ Meaghan Smith. Email interview. November 18, 2004.

¹⁸ Alexa Freeman and Valle Jones, “Creating Feminist Communications,” *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* 3 (1976): 10. quoted in Leslie Regan Shade, *Gender & Community in the Social Construction of the Internet*, Digital Formations v. 1 (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 34.

¹⁹ Meaghan Smith. Email interview. November 18, 2004.

²⁰ Kristin Sweetland. Email interview. January 17, 2006.

²¹ *Little Red Hen*. <http://www.littleredhenmusic.com/index.html>. Accessed August 2007.

and...actively participate in it.”²² This proactive use of technology is important when considering the Internet as a venue for social change. Though there are opportunities to purchase members’ recordings, these are all off-site links and the *Little Red Hen* website is largely non-commercial. Instead, the site itself seems to be more of a statement of mutual beliefs in the importance community and a place where those who are interested in these artists can visit to get information on the artists. As I learned from Sweetland’s online diary, most of these women are friends and often provide accommodation for members who are currently touring. This suggests that for the Little Red Hens, community is maintained both through their virtual Web relationships and their “real world” connections.

In contrast to *Little Red Hen*’s modest reach, there is *GoGirlsMusic*, a women’s music network that is much larger and wider in scope, of which Sweetland is also a member. Spearheaded by Madalyn Sklar, herself a professional musician, *GoGirls* was founded in 1996, fairly early in the Internet’s deregulated history and slightly after Riot Grrrl had grappled with mainstream appropriation of their aesthetic.²³ The historical emergence of the *GoGirls* community is important because it shows that early on, women musicians were keen to exploit developing network technologies as a means to further their goals and give voice to their issues. It is a gathering point for women musicians who want to learn about the music industry, make contacts, and share resources. Born out of a common frustration among women musicians struggling in a patriarchal industry, *GoGirlsMusic* is founded upon the ideals of communication and networking as a means to both relieve the tension experienced by women artists in a male dominated music world and gain exposure and success as a musician.²⁴ *GoGirls* at once creates an alternative space in which women musicians can discuss issues germane to their experiences as women while also creating a space that, rather than forsaking the mainstream altogether, engages with it by focussing on ways in which women musicians can gain agency and have positive experiences within the already existing music industry. Sklar describes the circumstances that led to her founding *GoGirls*:

In 1996, I came up with the idea of starting an online women’s music community after being extremely frustrated with the way I was treated at the local guitar shops in Houston, where I live. I was tired of being ignored and figured there must be others out there experiencing this, too. The Internet was new back then—it seemed like a great way to connect with other female musicians.²⁵

²² Ibid.

²³ See Leonard, 244-49.

²⁴ See Mavis Bayton, *Frock Rock* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30-31.

²⁵ Julia. Bloch. “DIY Queen Behind The Music.” *Curve* (2004). Available from <http://www.curvemag.com/Detailed/587.html>; Accessed November 2004.

Sklar's valorisation of connectivity and cooperation is evident in most of her public statements about *GoGirls*: "It's not just me who runs *GoGirlsMusic*," she asserts, "it's everyone. We all make it happen together."²⁶ The website contains articles on topics that are vital to understanding the music business, opportunities to network with other musicians through mailing lists and band databases, a running calendar of *GoGirls*-related events, and a *GoGirls* record label. Also available are coaching/consultation sessions, which Sklar provides herself. These sessions offer women musicians marketing strategies, motivation, press kits, and web design, and cost anywhere between \$50 for a one-time, half-hour consultation to \$174 per month for the "high maintenance" plan.²⁷ Sklar also maintains the blog *IndieMusicConsulting* which offers freely accessible career advice.²⁸ Interestingly, *GoGirlsMusic* has also entered the Internet music sharing debate by promoting use of the *Weed* file-sharing model, which rewards both artists and fans financially for sharing music online.²⁹

As part of my research for this chapter I signed up for the *GoGirls* mailing list and discussion group at *Yahoo! Groups* in early 2007. As a male author, I was initially tentative when joining these groups, thinking that even though I planned not to post in either forum, my presence would nonetheless disturb the proceedings; however, I was pleased to see on the group's sign-up page that "Men are always welcomed!" I found that the discussion group participants were eager and interested in sharing thoughts and ideas with one another: there had been almost 20,000 posts since 1999 when the list began. I deliberately focussed on early postings on this forum because I think that they demonstrate how rapidly women musicians began to utilise existent and available Internet technologies. In 2007, it is by now axiomatic that web-promotion is essential for any business (especially a music business), but in 1999, not even five years into widespread use of the World Wide Web, this wasn't necessarily the case. The following posts indicate to me a willingness on the part of women musicians to engage with the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Indie Music Coach*. http://www.indiemusiccoach.com/coach/consult_form.htm. Accessed February 2007. These prices are current as of March 2007 and have gradually increased since I first began research for this chapter in 2005.

²⁸ *Madalyn's Music Biz Blog*. <http://www.indiemusicconsulting.com/coach/blog/>. Accessed March 2007.

²⁹ From the *Buzz Music* website: "The concept works specifically like this. Once the free *Weed Media Activator* is downloaded, *Weed* files are immediately available for sharing. You can play the file three times for free. After the third time, you are asked to pay for the file at a price determined by the artist. Purchasing a track allows you to play the song on up to three PCs, burn them onto a CD or transfer them to a portable device. You can also share the file with anyone you like as long as it isn't tampered with. If the person you shared it with purchases the file, you will receive a payment as a distributor through a PayPal account. The distribution of money breaks down as follows: the artist always receives 50% of each sale; 20% goes to you as a distributor. The person who shared the file with you gets 10% and the person who shared the file with them gets 5%. *Weed*, like any good manager, collects 15%." *Buzz Music*. <http://www.buzzcommunicationsmusic.com/onstage/articles/article?id=22>. Accessed December 2005.

technology as a means to promote their creative works and also, crucially, to share their experiences with other women.

The discussion forum for *GoGirls* is a place where women engage with communications technologies and demonstrate the power of “talk” by communicating with women from various geographical locations, musical genres, and differing career ambitions. One of the first things that struck me about the communication happening on the *GoGirls* forum was the incredible willingness of the membership to share advice and tips on various aspects of working as a professional musician. In one of the earliest posts, most of which find the forum members introducing themselves, PaigeMusic wrote:

I really wanted to share some stuff with you guys because we’re pretty much all in this together. I just finished recording a three song demo with my drummer, Angelo. A couple of pointers for anyone who’s thinking about recording in a professional studio or who is in the process of...³⁰

PaigeMusic continued recounting her experiences in the studio, making useful suggestions, such as “make sure you have all of your parts planned out! there’s nothing worse than paying for time that should be spent actually recording or mixing on writing or working out parts with your band members,” and, “there are 3 parts to the recording process: recording, mixing and mastering.” She concluded with the injunction to be meticulous when accounting for the costs of studio production and, having done so, to “go kick some ass.” Later, another member replied, “How great of you to post the basics of recording. We should add this to the *Go Girls* site as a service to those just starting out. Thanks for sharing.”³¹ In a similar post, answering a query from anne of the band Poptarts, Christine offered tips for being prepared for a debut performance: “Guitars in tune. Cords coiled and ready...a fresh 9-volt battery,” she suggested, along with “extra sticks for the drummer. Setlists already prepared.”³² After a few similar posts that suggested various strategies for a successful first show (many of which suggest simply to “just have fun”), one forum member asked: “OK....so we’re all curious! How did your first show go anyway?”³³ Gratefully, anne responded:

Well, if your [sic] all curious, the poptarts first show was great. I broke a string twice, but *thanks to you guys* i brought extra strings!

³⁰ PaigeMusic. “brand new.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 27 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/6>; Accessed February 2007.

³¹ Blanche. “Re: brand new.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 28 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/37>; Accessed February 2007.

³² Christine Beatty. “The First Show.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* August 31 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/338>; Accessed February 2007.

³³ ethylrocks. “The First Show.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* September 1 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/341>; Accessed February 2007.

If anything the drums were too loud but the voice really came out well, which was cool because most amateurish bands around here really drown the vocals out. The reaction was far out too, we were like in our element there. the only hitch was that after the police came, we had to take it indoors. Thats [sic] it, it really flew by, and i'd like to thank y'all for the support. We're going to scan in the show photos, so i'll let you know so you can live vicariously through the show, multimedia-style.

Sharing technical tips is an important aspect of the discussions at *GoGirls*. In sharing her new-found knowledge of the studio experience, PaigeMusic is seeking to demystify what can often be the most intimidating aspects of a woman's experience in the studio. Indeed, the technical side of music production (recording, mixing, and mastering) has historically been the purview of male producers and engineers. Ellen Waterman discusses women's involvement with radio technologies by emphasising barriers to participation such as "technophobia" and the intimidating experience of male instructors providing training on the technology. As a means of combating these barriers, she advances the concept of "purposeful play"—a strategy whereby women engage with technology in a low pressure environment with an emphasis on making an artistic creation. This approach to learning foregrounds a purpose to the activity (a tangible finished product) and avoids intimidating didacticism by allowing the processes involved in realising the artistic work to lead to a greater knowledge of the technology.³⁴ Importantly she emphasises that

purposeful play usefully includes community building strategies such as creating affinity groups, seeking information from peer communities, focussing on limited and specific projects, and dovetailing with work and play.³⁵

The participants in the *GoGirls* forum separate the purposeful play activities into the virtual and "real" worlds where the affinity groups and information seeking is done in the low pressure space of an online forum, and where the information gleaned online is then put into practice in the various women's "real" world performance and recording experiences. By sharing tips on successful performances, the *GoGirls* are able to take ownership over the presentation of their music from a variety of positions, not only the performance, and promotion, but also its technical production.

More generally, the discussions amongst *GoGirls* members are meta-dialogues on technology. Discourse itself takes place in the technologically

³⁴ Ellen Waterman, "Purposeful Play: Radio Artists in Canadian Campus and Community Radio," *Atlantis* 30, no. 2 (2006).

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 85.

mediated space of a Web forum and often addresses the use of Internet technologies for gaining exposure and finding opportunities to perform. Indeed, this fits well with Sadie Plant's reading of "cyberfeminism" in which "there is an intimate and possibly subversive element between women and machines—especially the new intelligent machines—which are no longer simply working for man as are women no longer simply working for man."³⁶ The computer is a technology that has been traditionally marked as male, both in its material creation (i.e. hardware design and software programming are fields that are largely male dominated) and in its traditional uses (i.e. initially in military and business applications). More recently, the prevalence of heterosexual male-oriented advertising on music downloading sites (e.g. ads for dating sites that exclusively feature traditionally beautiful women) and the multi-billion dollar male-targeted online pornography industry have continued the trend of a male focus online. But, following Plant, the women of *GoGirls* are using this technology and turning it towards their own purpose of networking in order to share issues germane to the experiences of professional women musicians and, in turn, further their own career goals.

In fact, unsurprisingly, the issue of using Internet technologies in effectively promoting a music career is a common topic in *GoGirls* discussions. Prompted by other forum members, one of the few male members, Rich, offered a tutorial on good Web promotion strategies; his first suggestion for effectively using the Web was to join a discussion group.³⁷ A discussion also developed around the idea of legitimacy and the authority of self-proclaimed promotional companies that may or may not have their own web presence. "It is SO easy now to get a .com or .net or .org that even THAT isn't a validation of their honesty," wrote one member in response to Geoff Currey who had instructed the membership to "NEVER DO BUSINESS WITH A PROMOTIONAL COMPANY OR LABEL WHO DOES NOT HAVE THEIR OWN DOMAIN NAME."³⁸ Richard Lynch provided a more measured response:

Getting your own domain is *SO* easy and cheap that I don't consider it an indication of professionalism at all...I'm sure there are plenty of old-school promoters/labels who don't even *have* a web-site, much less their own domain name. Sure, if I wanted them to do my web

³⁶ Sadie Plant, *Zeroes+Ones: Digital Women + The New Technoculture* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

³⁷ Rich Newman. "Re: Website Promotion." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* September 1 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/340>; Accessed February 2007.

³⁸ CJPStaff. "Fwd: [-unsignedsingers-] Warning about so called." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* March 1 (2000). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/860>; Accessed February 2007, NickyC. "Fwd: [-unsignedsingers-] Warning about so called." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* March 2 (2000). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/857>; Accessed February 2007.

promotion, I'd expect them to have a domain name: But if I'm looking for traditional marketing? No big deal either way.³⁹

This discussion indicates an implicit understanding of how contemporary paradigms of legitimacy and authority are challenged online. Indeed, simply possessing a web presence is not necessarily an indicator of legitimacy in that, provided they have the means, anyone can register a website address and host any number of “legitimate” business operations. Yet, while Richard’s response may have been an accurate assessment of the 1999-2000 era of Web promotion, in 2007 it does seem unlikely that a reputable promotional firm would not have a website. This is especially true in the context of this thesis, where I consistently argue that the idea of the legitimacy of traditional music production/promotion institutions is the very thing that is challenged by widespread use of the Internet among musicians and music fans. Indeed, Richard’s statement is further indicative of how the *GoGirls* forum provides a means for members to understand how modern music promotion could work; CJPstaff’s warning to “never do business” with a company without a website seems now more prophetic than naïve.

Aside from those topics that are directly related to their music careers, such as responsible accounting practices and technical edification, the *GoGirls* forum is also a place in which members can both seek and provide mentorship on less tangible aspects of being a professional musician. For instance, Michelle shared a dilemma with the membership in August 1999:

I need some advice. I met a band through drummergirl.com back in March. We kept communication and finally I decided to go to Florida and meet them ... I played Drums for them one afternoon for 3 hours and the chemistry was there. They have wonderful personalities and we seem to have much in common. I also enjoyed playing their music. Anyway, I have made the decision to move there at the end of this month. I am not moving all of my belongings just yet. I am taking my drums and some clothes. Thing is I guess I am a little nervous about moving for people that I haven't known very long even though I got good vibes. I suppose it is the unknown that scares me. I am leaving my job and family but I love music more than anything. (Even more than my computer job!) Do you all think I am crazy for making this move? My family doesn't think much of it. Thanks for listening.⁴⁰

³⁹ Richard Lynch. “Fwd: [-unsignedsingers-] Warning about so called.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* March 2 (2000). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/858>; Accessed February 2007.

⁴⁰ Michelle. “Moving For A Band.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* August 19 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/286>; Accessed February 2007.

The post indicates several intersections with modern communications technologies. Michelle's dilemma began with her meeting other musicians through the online community *drumnergirl.com*, a site for "women who drum," which features discussion forums, lessons, equipment advice, and articles written by women drummers.⁴¹ She is employed at a "computer" job with which apparently pleased. Because she has this job in the first place, and because she likes it, it is safe to assume that she has a certain amount of competency with information technologies (i.e., she is likely not involved in manufacturing computers, a job that is usually reserved, as Haraway alludes, for "the nimble little hands of 'Oriental' women").⁴² Furthermore, while Michelle refers to having to leave this job in order to join the new band, finding gainful employment in her new city seems to be less important (she likely has a marketable skill in terms of "computers") than whether or not she is doing the "right thing" by moving in pursuit of her musical goals. In an encouraging response, Eva suggested that "you always have to take chances ... and moving to another part of the country definitely comes with the territory of being a musician." Eva didn't focus on matters of "success" or profit, but rather on having connections, a good relationship ("vibes") with the new band members, and how much Michelle "believes" in the music of the new band.⁴³

A frequent topic of discussion in the early days of the *GoGirls* discussion forum is sexism in the music industry and the various members' experiences with it. The issue was most explicitly dealt with when the forum was "infiltrated" by someone with a commercial agenda that contrasted with the sensibilities of the *GoGirls* membership. In the broken, badly-spelled English and CAPITAL LETTERS (called "shouting" and frowned upon in online forums) typical of email "spam," *mercybeatlondon* posted the advertisement:

LOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND MUST BE GREAT WE
WANT TO HEAR HITS MUST BE ATTRACTIVE NOT
OVERWIEGHT MUST HAVE STAR QUALITIES ONLY ALL
FEMALE POPBAND NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND TENC
RECORDS DESHIMA MUSIC DIST BY BMG SONY
INTERNATIOAL⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Drumnergirl*. <http://www.drumnergirl.com>. Accessed July 2007.

⁴² Haraway, 12.

⁴³ Eva. "Moving For A Band." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* August 20 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/304>; Accessed February 2007. From personal experience, I have moved long distances in search of musical opportunities, and I don't recall this type of conversation developing among my male musician friends. Even though I often had these very same thoughts and reservations about my moves, the discussions I have had have almost always revolved around the economic potentials of moving to different places in search of opportunity.

⁴⁴ *mercybeatlondon*. "LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999).

Inevitably, this prompted some severe rebukes by the *GoGirls* members, including several rewrites of the original ad. Linda Dunn wrote

Looking for a record label or management company that cares about music and does not put looks-criteria and a plea for quality work in the same sentence, as if it is of equal importance. Knowledge of spelling and punctuation a must.⁴⁵

while Magdalen Hsu-Li wrote

LOOKING FOR RECORD COMPANY WITH STONE AGE IDEOLOGIES. ALL EXECUTIVES MUST HAVE BIG TITS AND ASSES AND MUST BE ALL FEMALE. MUST AND BE WILLING TO POSE NAKED ON THE COVER OF ROLLING STONE.MUST ONLY BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO MARKET SAPPY LOVES SONGS ABOUT BOYFRIENDS WHO DUMPED YOU. MUST BE CLUELESS AND BEHIND THE TIMES. INTEREST IN MUSIC NOT A PLUS!⁴⁶

and Rebecca (Icing) Walter wrote

Savy, kick ass, intelligent, and creative female bands looking for a decent management team. Must be all male, extremely attractive, well hung, willing to get coffee and basically do whatever mistress says. Pay will be shitty you will receive no credit for your work and you will smile while you are eating shit. This is what women are expected to settle for all the time.⁴⁷

merceybeatlondon, perhaps ignoring or unaware of the ire raised by the original post, posted again later the same day, and was more explicit about the criteria

Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/90>; Accessed February 2007.

⁴⁵ Linda Dunn. "LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/93>; Accessed February 2007.

⁴⁶ Magdalen Hsu-Li. "LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/98>; Accessed February 2007.

⁴⁷ Rebecca Walter. "LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/99>; Accessed February 2007.

needed to satisfy the ad: “WE WANT A FEMALE POPBAND ALA GO GOS ANGELS POPMUSIC WE WANT TO HEAR HITS THATS WHAT SELLS IN THE REAL WORLD.”⁴⁸ The post also emphasises the legitimacy of “Ten CC Artist Management” and Roland Cassadine, who appears to be responsible for the post, by stating that they have money to invest, that they already represent “major stars,” and they have a distribution relationship with Sony-BMG.⁴⁹ The responses by GoGirls members turn from humorous adaptations of the original ad to all-out criticisms and attacks on Roland. Laura Preble’s response was:

PERHAPS THE REAL WORLD YOU LIVE IN ISN'T THE SAME ONE THE REST OF US CHOOSE TO INHABIT. I HAPPEN TO LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE GOOD MUSIC AND CONTENT COUNT MORE THAN SMALL HIPS AND BIG BREASTS. I MUST SAY THAT YOU ARE DEFINITELY BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE ON THIS SITE, AND I THINK YOU SHOULD RECONSIDER WHAT YOU'RE IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS FOR. I SAY BUSINESS BECAUSE YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE NO CLUE ABOUT THE TRUE NATURE OF MAKING MUSIC. YOU ARE A SCAVENGER LIVING OFF OF (OR TRYING TO LIVE OFF OF) THE TALENTS OF WOMEN. AS FOR ME, I AM TALENTED, ATTRACTIVE, HAVE A FAN BASE OF PEOPLE WHO LOVE MY MUSIC, AND I'VE SOLD A LOT OF CDS. SO I GUESS YOUR "REAL WORLD" IS NOT NECESSARILY THE ONLY WHEN WHERE PROSPERITY REIGNS.⁵⁰

ethylrocks continued with:

But what you said the first time is that they must be attractive and not overweight. So the fact that an all female band who is truely [sic]

⁴⁸ mercybeatlondon. “LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/105>; Accessed February 2007.

⁴⁹ As of Spring 2007, there is very little information available online about “Roland,” “Ten CC Artist Management,” or “Merceybeat London,” though it appears that Roland Casadine once ran a “Super Model Booking Agency” called “Girls on Film Productions” (website now defunct), . There is a MySpace page that looks suspiciously like it may belong to Roland. In the “about me section” the following is listed: “CashMoney Entertianment U.S.A. London England, NewYork, LosAngels CA. Represents Major & International Recording Artist, SuperModels, Famous DJ,S PlayBoy PlayMates, International Booking Agency ArtistManageMent, A Division Of CashMoney Entertianment (LAGUNABEACH TALENT MANGAEMENT).” See *majorstar*. <http://www.myspace.com/majorstar>. Accessed June 2007.

⁵⁰ Laura Preble. “LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/114>; Accessed February 2007.

talented and TRUE MUSICIANS carries no weight with you if they are not up to your standards as far as looks goes. Sounds like you want to manufacture another Spice Girls.⁵¹

ethylrocks makes the connection to one of the most successful all-female groups at the time, the Spice Girls. Her implication, made perhaps more explicit through her use of capital letters, is that the Spice Girls are an example of what she and, because this thread can be seen as numerous individual declarations of group identity, her *GoGirls* colleagues, are *not*. Laura Preble made a similar connection, casting mercybeat's post as concerned with "business" and not "music." The criticisms of the Spice Girls as a commodified/manufactured brand of pop music, and what was seen as the co-option of feminist principles into a "girl power" marketing campaign were remarked on by Gayle Wald, who pointed out that, among critics, there was a

tendency to conflate disdain for the group's musical production (i.e., disdain for musical commodities) with disdain for women, generally speaking. This latter aspect of the backlash seems particularly insidious, given the tendency to elide female subjectivity not only with consumption, but with the commodity form itself.⁵²

In the *GoGirls* forums, while the conflation of commodity with women isn't quite as dramatic, there is nonetheless in this conversation, and among many others, a privileging of the DIY aesthetic of punk, or more recently, that of Riot Grrrl. Few of the women involved in the forum speak of their involvement in projects that align with the Spice Girls-style "pre-packaged" ensemble. Of course, given that, as many in the forum pointed out, highly produced pop was what "was selling" at the time, there would likely be no need for women involved in those projects to participate in a forum for women trying to "make it" on their own terms.

Magdalen Hsu-Li, a forum regular and someone who appears to have significant music industry experience and success (in an earlier post she claimed she made nearly \$100,000 per year as an independent label operator), contributed the following response, which is worth including in full.

Dear Roland/Mercybeat Records,

You sir are the one that's out of touch with the real world. Quit posting your ads on this listserver. The women here are real people and you live in showbizland. Sure hits are the best calling card an

⁵¹ ethylrocks. "LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/116>; Accessed February 2007.

⁵² Gayle Wald, "Just a Girl? Rock Music, Feminism, and the Cultural Construction of Female Youth," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 23, no. 3 (1998): 586-87.

artist can have (right now). As an independent label I take hit writing, radio promoters, distribution, and publicists just as seriously as your company does. We don't have a problem with hits...just the T+A part. You sent us that ad cause you need to make your living...it's your job...you're just trying to pay your bills. But have you ever thought about how women are portrayed in the music industry? Like you could give a shit! Would you like your other or sister to dress up like Brittany Spears [sic] and pose half naked on the cover of famous magazines? You probably wouldn't mind as long as you made \$ off of it. The sad thing is that for now...you're right...that is what's [sic] selling.

I'm sure you'll secretly get a lot of replies to your ad. There are many desperate artists that need a break and a recording contract will give them that. If a company approached me and cut me an excellent good deal and didn't make me dress up like a prostitute I'd be just fine with that. I'm no Ani DiFranco...I have no "corporatism sucks" t-shirt on. But you're initial message said it all. It shows where you and your new company are really at. And there will still be plenty of desperate [sic] sniffers begging at your door.

But let me just leave you with one thought. Young women today are more self respecting. They have a stronger sense of themselves and their power and sexuality than the previous generation. Had you sent us a less inane message you would have gotten nicer replies and genuine interest. Have you ever thought that a house of cards is a terrible place to stand but there you are? Teetering away. Record companies are always the last to catch onto what culture is doing...and as soon as they do they're the 1st ones to jump on the bandwagon to try and market it.

I wouldn't be surprised [sic] to see in the next few years your company marketing several "new generation, powerful, non sexualized" female artists. Wouldn't be surprised [sic] at all.⁵³

Hsu-Li establishes the problematic binary between what she sees as the "self-respecting" contemporary woman, presumably one who doesn't engage with the "T+A" of the music industry, and the "desperate sniffers" willing to do whatever it takes to get ahead in the music business.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Hsu-Li's

⁵³ Magdalen Hsu-Li. "LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE." *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/119>; Accessed February 2007.

⁵⁴ In 2007 it is almost *de rigeur* to cast Britney Spears in the role of fallen starlet who is paying the ultimate price—a career in shambles—for having "sold out" to the allure of sex in the music industry. Dr. Jacqueline Warwick pointed out in a personal conversation though that even in this narrative, Spears's own experiences are rarely considered. That she has been for a long time the

letter indicates an understanding of the complexity of sexist attitudes in the music industry and accurately portrays some of the real challenges to women who seek success as professional musicians. By noting that Roland was just doing his job by placing the ad in the forums, and by suggesting that the music industry would capitalise on anything that was profitable (even, in her parting words, “new generation, powerful, non sexualized” women), she acknowledges that sexism in the industry isn’t simply a localised practice. Rather, she indicates, it is systemic, bound up with the very mechanisms that define “success” both for artists and for those whose livelihood depends on finding and developing them. In a later post she outlines what has contributed to her success, suggesting that it is merely dedication and hard work (“work regular business hours...practice and write for 5 more hours every night”). Ultimately, in response to Roland’s ad she addresses the *GoGirls en masse*: “Every time you turn your back on sexist behavior you are making the world better for women and ultimately men.”⁵⁵

Whatever individual stances these women have on the exploitative aspects of the music business, *GoGirls* is representative of the opportunities that are available online for women to gather and discuss these very issues in ways that perhaps were less easily available before the widespread use of the Internet.⁵⁶ The *GoGirls* members are embodying feminist injunctions that it is essential that women participate in new technologies and are also continuing historical trends of adapting technologies for their own purposes. The forum is a space where women (and some men) can share their experiences with business and technical aspects of the music industry, and it is also a space where those less tangible, and often confusing and alienating, elements of life as a professional musician can be discussed. The importance of interpersonal discourse, which is often dismissed in contemporary debates over the democratic potential of the Internet are also challenged here. Clearly, given the widespread participation of *GoGirls* members in the discussion forum there is something very important about “just talk” for these women. The reactions that *GoGirls* members had to the infiltration of their space indicated a keen awareness by the membership of contemporary issues facing women in the music industry, especially in their identification that the over-emphasis on appearance was (and still may be) the greatest challenge they have to overcome as musicians. In the next section, I discuss the politics of self-representation online through the websites of Meghan Smith and Kristin

primary breadwinner in her family goes largely unnoticed as a potential factor in her eventual “breakdown.” Put simply, she may in fact be exhausted, the music industry and her responsibility as the “successful” member of the family having taken their toll. At the time of Hsu-Li’s post (1999) though, Spears was enjoying some of her greatest successes.

⁵⁵ Magdalen Hsu-Li. “LOOKING FOR ALL FEMALE POPBAND WITH HITS NO MEN ALL FEMALE POPBAND FOR EUROPEAN RELEASE.” *GoGirls Yahoo! Group* July 30 (1999). Available from <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/gogirls/message/123>; Accessed February 2007.

⁵⁶ The ways in which women musicians engage with the various levels of exploitation in the music industry are myriad. I am not suggesting here that women who are involved in packaged pop bands are solely or necessarily the victims of exploitation.

Sweetland and show that there are some intriguing issues elucidated by the distinct strategies employed by these women.

IDENTITY AND WEB PROMOTION: MEAGHAN SMITH, KRISTIN SWEETLAND

Meghan Smith and Kristin Sweetland are both in their mid- to late-twenties and both make music in the folk singer/songwriter tradition. Their songs are largely “acoustic” and are often written from a personal standpoint with subjects that reflect on friendship, relationships, travel, and mythology. Smith’s lyrics often reveal personal impressions on (presumably romantic) relationships and her own confidence within them, such as those of her song “I Can’t Do Math” (*Lost With Directions*, 2004):

Well I’m lost with directions,
In a constant state of confusion
And I’m full of imperfections
And I just can’t do math

Why when everything is going so well,
Do I automatically assume the worst
Put you and me together doesn’t it
Problematically work
Oh but please don’t ask
It’s as simple as that, oh I just can’t do math ⁵⁷

The song is clearly influenced by the mid- to late-1990s resurgence of the woman singer/songwriter tradition by such artists Jewel, Lisa Loeb, The Indigo Girls, and others. It is a lilting 6/8 mid-tempo major key meditation on self-confidence, her soprano voice accompanied by acoustic guitar, bass, drums, and minimalist electric guitar fills.⁵⁸ As with the other streaming audio on Smith’s website, the production favours her voice prominently over a dryly mixed rhythm section. Her website’s design aesthetics, as I discuss below, at once resonate with her musical sensibilities and also contrast with how (non)revealing she chooses to be with her website’s content. That is, while her website has a simple, rustic style that ties into the folk tradition of which her music is a part, her personal life is not a focus of the site, and this contrasts with the personal/confessional style that is so central to her genre and to her lyrics.

Kristin Sweetland’s music, while part of the same genre, tackles a wider range of subjects, she sometimes sings in Latin, and also features guitar

⁵⁷ See Appendix One.

⁵⁸ Meaghan Smith, *Lost With Directions* (Independent Release), Compact Disc. Produced by CBC Halifax’s Karl Falkenham. Garret Mason and/or Asif Illyas – guitar; Jamie Gatti – bass; Dave Burton - drums; Bill Stevenson and/or Johnny Theodore - keyboards.

instrumentals.⁵⁹ Her songs often focus on themes of adventure and travel, and feature diverse instrumentation including ‘cello, organ, and also those instruments strongly rooted in folk and bluegrass traditions. “O Leander” (*Root, Heart, and Crown*, 2002) weaves travel, adventure and mythology together:

Driving by, say hello
 Witchita [sic], New Mexico
 Carolina, Iowa
 Oglala, Omaha
 Late night, radio
 Arizona, Navajo
 Ride away, hide away heart

O Leander O Leander
 Since you left across the black waters wide
 O Leander O Leander
 There is none save the thunder inside⁶⁰

On her website each of her song’s lyrics are accompanied by descriptions of the writing circumstances or what she believes the songs to be about.⁶¹ “O Leander” is a mid-tempo major key “triumphant” folk song featuring full rhythm section with organ; a banjo played in a traditional manner is featured prominently.⁶² Sweetland’s vocals are mixed high and are accompanied on choruses by the backing vocalist Rebecca Campbell. Interestingly, while Smith’s lyrics seem particularly revealing and contrast with her website, which emphasises her professional persona, Sweetland’s lyrics are more impressionistic, revealing less of a personal narrative, while her website, as I discuss below, presents numerous

⁵⁹ Sweetland’s performance of her instrumental composition “Hermetica” appeared on the Canadian acoustic guitarist compilation: Various, *Six Strings North of the Border Vol. 2* (Borealis, BCD142), Compact Disc.

⁶⁰ See Appendix One. There is also a potential play on words here—“Witchita”—as much of the imagery on Sweetland’s website references aspects of the occult.

⁶¹ “O Leander” London, Ontario - February, 2002: The story of Hero and Leander is a tale of tragic love from Greek mythology. Hero was a priestess of Aphrodite and lived sequestered in a tower on the shores of what is now Turkey. Leander was her lover, and he lived across the Hellespont channel in what was then a part of Asia. Each night Leander would swim the channel to be with his love, guided only by a torch she would light in her tower. But one night there was a great tempest with winds that blew out the torchlight... Some stories say when Leander’s body washed up on shore Hero threw herself down from the tower onto the rocks beside him. Other stories say that Hero forever wandered the shores calling to her lost love, ‘O Leander! O Leander!’ After this, the white flower that grew along the sea became known as the oleander...” Available from <http://www.kristinsweetland.com/lyrics%20frameset.htm>. Accessed March 2007.

⁶² Kristin Sweetland, *Root, Heart & Crown* (Arbor Vita), Compact Disc. Produced by Ken Whiteley, engineered by Nik Tjelios. Rebecca Campbell – harmony vocals; George Koller – fretless bass; Davide Dizenzo – drums; Ken Whiteley – banjo, organ; Ben Grossman – tambourine.

aspects of her personal life. The design aesthetics of both women’s websites and the manner in which the two musicians engage with the politics of image (re)presentation resonate with their distinct brands of songwriting.

For independent women artists online, the manner in which they engage with the politics of image in their online representations is to a certain extent under their own control. I suggest that for women artists who use the Internet as a primary promotional avenue, control over image is a crucial part of the challenge that their activities can bring to the systemic sexism that exists in the music industry. Neither Meaghan Smith nor Kristen Sweetland demonstrates an explicitly feminist sensibility in their music or websites, yet, despite this, I argue that the differing ways in which they negotiate the politics of identity online, and the fact that each is in control over how this identity is presented, are exactly those factors that make their websites powerful statements about how independent women artists can and do subvert the dominant sexist paradigms of the mainstream music industry, especially in relation to the agency that women artists have in what types of images of themselves they present. Meaghan Smith stated, “My website is not plastered with images of myself...I guess that’s not really how I want to come across.” In addition to the impact of minimising the attention on her physical appearance, which can prompt her visitors to engage with her music on its own terms, I think that it is also crucial to note that *the choice was hers to make*. Nonetheless, representation still operates within a sexist society; and there is no guarantee that Smith’s downplaying of her visual appearance will be understood as the product of her own agency, as Smith indicated in her preface to her earlier remark when she offered: “I know that unfortunately image has a lot to do with how well you do in certain niches of music.”⁶³ Smith implies that she is aware that her self-representation is part of a dialectic whereby the audience’s culturally informed perceptions also serve to create her identity, which can in turn impact her potential for success. That is, viewers of her website will ultimately bring to their “reading” of her website a socialised understanding of gender, influenced as much by the ways in which women have been traditionally represented in the entertainment industry as by their own perceptions of the agency Smith displays in deciding what content is used on her website.

Kristin Sweetland also underscores the importance of independent control over her website’s content, yet her statements emphasise an understanding of authenticity that emphasises personal honesty. She states

I like to present myself exactly how I feel I am at any particular moment in time. There is no pretence or contrived representation, except in an artistic fashion [...] I just don’t always jive with other people’s representations of me.⁶⁴

⁶³ Meaghan Smith. Email interview. November 18, 2004.

⁶⁴ Kristin Sweetland. Email interview. January 17, 2006.

Sweetland touches on three important aspects of the negotiation of identity politics online and the relationship that these have to her success as a professional musician. She implicitly casts her experience promoting herself online as positive by indicating that her dynamic subjectivity is conveyed without pretence and is not subject to mediation unless for “artistic” reasons. She sees an honesty in being able to represent herself on her own terms by controlling the content of her website, and that this ensures an accurate “version” of her self-identity. Yet, in Sweetland’s assertion, the contradiction between the expression of her dynamic identity and the assumption that this is without contrivance suggests a paradox that is crucial to discussions of online identity representation. The paradox is that principally, though she controls the construction and deployment of imagery that she identifies as representative of her identity, this is also a process that hinges upon an ultimate construction of her identity that is to some extent out of her control, and subject to the mediating influences of the technology and the socialised assumptions of the viewer. Moreover, the fact that Sweetland casts her online “version” of herself as unmediated and authentic is also part of her identity construction. The idea that identity construction is a shared process whereby the subject and her audience are both actively engaged as authors of the (re)presented self has become nearly axiomatic in postmodern understandings of subjectivity; ultimately, “Kristin Sweetland” is being constructed, as much as she is constructing herself.⁶⁵

Analogous to releasing a recording, or performing music in a public space, the creation of a website, promotional or otherwise, is an expression of identity—at once self-mediated, in that decisions are made as to what type of content to make available to the viewer, and mediated by the technologies used to realise the presentation. Both of these mediations are contained within and subject to the social framework (or structure) of Internet communications. For the independent artists here, who are in control of the content they include on their websites, the choices made in determining this content, in addition to creating and representing online identity, also indicate self-awareness and the knowledge that the identities they craft online are constructed and mediated. Referencing Donna Haraway, Lourdes Arizpe suggests that “Self awareness on the part of cyborgs will be a key factor in shaping the way in which virtual communities will evolve. Developing...community is *already* a statement of self-awareness which leads to identity.”⁶⁶ To which I would add, the decision to represent one’s “self” online, if not initially an act of self-awareness since it is a conscious decision, certainly promotes self-awareness as one contends with how she can use limited textual, visual, and aural media to present a virtual version of herself. And the use of

⁶⁵ Two canonical examples of this thought are Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. S. Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

⁶⁶ Lourdes Arizpe, “(Preface) Freedom to Create: Women’s Agenda for Cyberspace,” in *Women@Internet: Creating New Cultures in Cyberspace*, ed. Wendy Harcourt (New York: Zed Books, 1999), xii. (emphasis added).

these limited tools of self-presentation parallel the limited ways in which people represent themselves offline, where visual cues in the form of physical gestures and aural cues such as tone of voice are employed to represent an always elusive “self.” In a sense, “self” is the object of translation (in which, as with any translation, “meaning” becomes elusive) as it moves between the off- and online worlds. Of course, Haraway’s thesis is that the cyborg resists the idea of organic unity and a singular self, and thus cannot achieve a unified “self-awareness.”⁶⁷ Thus, I suggest then that the “self” who appears online is in dialogue with the “self” in the real world—that is to say, neither is quite the accurate representation of the other and thus there is a certain interplay between the two. And rightly so, as no person can be represented, online or off, by their words, images, or sounds as these phenomena are at once an expression of and constituent of their “self.” Therefore, I think that it is possible to see the dialectic of on- and offline selves as foregrounding unstable subjectivity because the presentation of different and mediated versions of selves online are, in their very nature, incomplete.

Smith and Sweetland use particular codes in attempts to visually signify themselves; in a sense, these codes are aspects of their “web-performance” of identity. While both women feature many images of themselves in performance, singing and playing their instruments, they also employ other design aesthetics. Smith’s site opens with an introductory page that features streaming audio of her song “I Can’t Do Math” (*Lost With Directions*, 2004). The visitor clicks a stylised compass rose in order to access the main site where content is displayed on a muted green background bordered top and bottom by a subdued floral pattern. Smith’s is a minimalist design aesthetic with each section featuring the same layout on the same background and using the same rustic font, only the hue of each page is different. Sweetland’s site is quite different in that there is no audio sample, and instead the opening page features a collage of her playing a hollow-bodied electric guitar (with a Skull and Crossbones on her strap), a picture of a road sign indicating the direction toward “Sweetland,” on a background of a digitally manipulated image of her playing acoustic guitar. Her site’s primary colour scheme features bright neon pinks, greens, and yellows, which are more suggestive of an urban, 1980s, technologically informed aesthetic than they are of the folk music genre. Also, there are dramatic “mouseover effects” that reveal themselves when the mouse is moved over the text of each of the navigation links, presented in a font that evokes handwriting; these mouseovers reveal graphics based on manipulated images of the same electric guitar she is playing in the image on the opening page. These are in stark contrast to the mouseovers on Smith’s site, which are subdued, merely making the text glow beneath the mouse’s resting point. I suggest that viewers of these two websites would find it more difficult to establish Sweetland’s musical genre than Smith’s and that this speaks to the different ways in which each constructs her online identity. Smith’s site is focussed on a simple design aesthetic and presents a much narrower version

⁶⁷ See Haraway.

of her identity by focussing on her professional life. In contrast, Sweetland's site presents a much more fractured and less "folksy" design, and she similarly presents multiple aspects of both her personal and musical lives. The opening image of her site is thus quite appropriate; we do need direction to Sweetland.

In their diversity, many women artists are exploiting one of the most lauded aspects of the World Wide Web: the increased agency to (re)create oneself in the online environment. This is a significant break with a male-dominated society that has historically sought to define women, from a male perspective, on behalf of and for women (and for men), often in essentialist terms that strive towards a universal stable (and often assumed male) subjectivity. Indeed, Sweetland's employment of the phrase "artistic fashion" in discussing self-representation reveals just how closely tied her performance of music is to her performance of identity in the process of promoting herself online. That is, for her, the musical performance, and the mode in which she promotes this are both artistic endeavours. Gesturing once again toward her particular conception of authenticity, Sweetland suggests that there is an added creative benefit to having control over her own image: "I also love to have the opportunity to work with photography and graphic design in order to present myself wholly and completely from my artistic centre."⁶⁸

Both Sweetland's and Smith's websites share a similar navigational template that is common among almost all artist websites. Each includes sections for their upcoming appearances, press materials, and opportunities for the user to download samples of their music. Both also have sections in which they share biographical information, pictures, visual art, and running diaries of their experiences. I will focus on the latter group of sections because each woman uses them in markedly different ways, providing two distinct representations of identity. I suggest that one can understand musicians as embodying a particular sense of fluid identity; that is, the process of their identity construction operates on the continuum: person–musician. Artists often argue that these terms of the continuum are one and the same; that their "self" as a person includes their "self" as a musician and vice versa. Indeed this is a narrative of authenticity that is not unique to the singer/songwriter tradition but which nonetheless plays a major part in how this music is constructed in the popular imagination: singer/songwriters speak from *personal* experience, their music *is* their self. However, musicians' Web presences curiously do much to further the perception of a strict subjective duality. Purely promotional Web spaces often only indicate one facet of the "self"—the musical one. Yet websites that diverge from the purely promotional by including what we perceive to be accurate representations of the musician's personal life can provide for the dissolution of the line between "person" and "musician" by offering what is perceived as an integrated whole. Indeed, both Smith and Sweetland's websites present their musical and personal selves in their biographies, diaries, and images, yet each does so in a different way. As Charles

⁶⁸ Kristin Sweetland. Email interview. January 17, 2006.

Cheung suggested, “for people with uncertain identities, or with a more free and fluid sense of self, this flexible creative process [of creating a web identity] has a totally different meaning—experimentation and exploration of different identities.”⁶⁹

Biographies

A common feature of the biographies of many independent artists who manage their own websites is that they are written by the artist themselves in the third person. There are two likely motivations for such a practice. From my own experience, writing a bio in this fashion is meant to suggest that, although it is rarely the case, a non-invested third party is commenting on the artist’s success. It is a simple yet often effective way of aligning one’s own narrative to those of “successful artists” who are *actually* written about by others; the authority of a third-party’s judgment appears as a palpable index of any artist’s credibility and success. The second reason for writing in the third person is a practical one: if needed, any actual third party, such as a magazine or another website can easily “cut and paste” the prose on the website and integrate it with their own prose. In this way, the artist who wrote their own bio is doing the third-party media outlet a favour, diminishing their workload, saving them the effort of writing their own prose, or even contacting the artist for an interview.

Artist biographies are also the place where visitors to the website go to find out who the artist is (or, who the artist thinks she is). When I am introduced to a new artist, especially an artist who is relatively unknown, I often consult their biography section before I consider their music. The bio section is the most obvious place where an independent artist can textually represent their identity. There are many ways in which biographical information is presented online—from in-depth first-person narratives, to the more official/objective third-person description of an artist’s achievements. Also, there are often detailed third-person life stories, meant to straddle the boundary between an “official” press-style bio and a more personal narrative.

Meaghan Smith’s bio focuses primarily on her identity as a professional musician. Written in the third person, and focussing mostly on quotations from Halifax area newspapers, it is less of a life narrative than a statement of her current achievements and mimics, to a certain extent, the biographies of many successful mainstream artists whose biographies often highlight the most recent album or concert tour. Smith’s bio opens

⁶⁹ Charles Cheung, “Identity Construction and Self-presentation on Personal Homepages: Emancipatory Potentials and Reality Constraints,” in *Web.studies*, ed. David Gauntlett and Ross Horsley (London: Arnold, Oxford University Press, 2004), 60.

Combining influences from your favourite singer-songwriter standards with impeccable pop sensibilities, Meaghan Smith has the uncanny knack of weaving the kind of musical spell that will leave you wanting more. Impressing critics and audiences alike [...]⁷⁰

In contrast, Sweetland's bio is much longer, and though also written in the third person, guides us, in narrative/interview style, through her journey to the present:

Kristin was born in London, Ontario, Canada and raised in a musical family deeply rooted in the old-time folk tradition. Her Grandpa Sweetland played bluegrass banjo and sang in a barbershop quartet for over 40 years [...] After some years of seriously rocking out, at seventeen Kristin's interests turned back to her roots. She picked up her dad's acoustic guitar and began writing folk songs. "In high school I'd write little tunes for every occasion and play them everywhere—at assemblies, pep rallies, parties, in the classroom and even on the morning announcements...It was great practice for what I do now."⁷¹

Sweetland's bio also touches on non-musical aspects of her life:

Not just a consummate musician and performer, Kristin Sweetland is a true Renaissance woman. Trained in interdisciplinary fine arts at university she takes charge of all her own art direction, photography, graphic design and website design. "I do all things musical, visual and technological, with just a wee bit of atom-splitting magic," she says.

Her bio concludes with a philosophical reflection of life as a touring professional musician:

The common theme that ties all the songs together is navigation—navigation through time, space, trouble and trial. Whether that trial be a wicked snowstorm that leaves you stranded on the Trans-Canada highway or a tragic sojourn through the innermost of storms.⁷²

These contrasting approaches to (auto)biography present the visitor with two distinct artist identities. Smith advances a characterisation of a professional whose website is geared mainly toward furthering opportunities for her as a musician. In Sweetland's case users gain information about her life outside of music and, consequently, the impression that the website is much more than a

⁷⁰ *Biography*. <http://www.meaghansmith.com/bio.html>. Accessed January 2007.

⁷¹ *Biography*. <http://www.kristinsweetland.com/biophage.htm>. Accessed January 2007.

⁷² *Ibid*. Accessed January 2007.

purely promotional vehicle. The differences indicated in these women's autobiographical approaches are reflected in other sections throughout their websites.

Photographs

In their photographs and images sections, there is a contrast in the ways each of these artists chooses to utilise her visual appearance. As I have suggested, the control that artists have over their image presentation when managing their own websites is one of the primary means by which women can subvert the problematic politics of image in the music industry. Both Smith and Sweetland demonstrate a keen awareness of these politics and acknowledge that having control over what images they put online is a positive aspect of independent web promotion. Commenting on social pressures concerning the problematic representation of physical appearance that is endemic in the entertainment business, Sweetland says

I have definitely had pressure to present the physical appearance thing in certain ways (from outside sources.) I try to disregard these suggestions and follow my own intuition about such things as everybody and their brother has their own personal opinion about everything. I love putting up pictures, graphic designing and the artistic aspect of it all. I think it's really important for making what I do stand out. In terms of the marketing/promo aspect I also recognize that the "image" thing is indeed crucial... sometimes annoyingly, but it's true.⁷³

I find it particularly powerful that Sweetland has exploited the opportunity to choose how she is represented visually by re-imagining what kind of images she wishes to present, as opposed to choosing *not* to emphasise her appearance, which, as she indicates when she locates image as "crucial," would not be in the best interests of her career. In contrast, Smith's images, like her bio, are principally concerned with her activities as a musician. In most of the nineteen pictures featured, she is seen holding her guitar or in performance (including a performance at her wedding!). There are two "press photos" (i.e., high-resolution posed shots), one of her playing guitar in subdued lighting, and another of her from the shoulders up, in side profile. The photographs that do not show her in performance are taken from the "Concert for Asia," a benefit for the victims of the 2004 South-Asian tsunami benefit concert held in Halifax in 2005 and show her with other area musicians of varying prominence. These photos serve the useful purpose of situating her, at least in the eyes of the viewer, as an Canadian

⁷³ Kristin Sweetland. Email interview. January 17, 2006.

East Coast music insider and as someone who is not only creating her own success, but also as someone who is recognised as a member of the wider East Coast music scene.

Sweetland's pictures section is much larger and features her in a variety of posed and candid shots, both in performance and in "real life." These pictures are divided by section: "Performances," "Press Photos," "Little Kristin," "Artwork," and "Adventures in Sweetland." The most intriguing part of Sweetland's collection of photographs is her ongoing self-portrait series "Adventures in Sweetland." These pictures demonstrate technical facility with double exposure photographic techniques and digital image processing (something that is also demonstrated in the graphic design of the site). Each photo shows her posing in different scenarios, largely in outdoor environments, and often featuring elements of witchcraft and the occult. In addition to their aesthetics, I suggest that these photos work in concert with the overall presentation of her Web identity, one which emphasises other aspects of her creative life as well as her music. In a sense, the self-portrait is a representation of the acknowledgement of self-awareness. These parallel desires to view herself *from* the position of the other and to present *to* the other a mediated representation of how she sees herself in these various posed situations speaks to both the person–musician continuum, to which I referred above, and the dialectic of online identity construction. That is, she is presenting her "self" in scenarios that are a result of her touring life as a musician, but which are not performance photographs, and in placing herself in the position of the viewer acknowledges the constructed-ness of her online self. Additionally, the emphasis on individuality that these self portraits generate as "self" portraits, and the changing geographic locations of the scenarios in which she appears, reinforces Sweetland's role as an independent musician who tours and performs largely as a solo artist. As she does with her biography and diary sections, Sweetland is presenting us with narrative of independence and honesty that relates to her the overall sense of authenticity that we perceive in her work.

Diaries

Women's autobiographical writing occupies a significant place in contemporary feminist historiography of the literature of modernity. Deborah Silverman Bowen suggests one reason is that "through the very acts of re-presenting and representing women as *subjects* and *speaking subjects*, women's autobiographies resist external authoritative versions of themselves even as they allow their authors access to self-representation, to authorship, to authority and to agency."⁷⁴ Autobiographical writing takes on a particular significance when

⁷⁴ Deborah Silverman Bowen, "Towards an e-Critique Feminine: Woolf, DuPlessis, Cixous, and the Emerging Discursive Tradition in Women's Online Diaries" (PhD Dissertation, University of South Florida, 2004), 81-82.

enacted on the World Wide Web. Bowen argues that women’s diaries online offer not only the possibility to subvert through content but also, through the non-linearity of the Web experience, challenge notions of structure (social or literary) *tout court*.⁷⁵ Indeed, as we experience Smith and Sweetland’s diaries, even though they are “time-stamped” (indicating when they were posted), these entries are not obligated to narrate specific moments in time. As Aviva Rosenstein suggested in 2000, before the contemporary “blog craze” hit its stride, “hypermedia qualities of the home page can support linear, chronological narratives, but [...] they also lend themselves to a more episodic, situated and associational organization of materials that may be quite diffuse thematically and even spatially.”⁷⁶

In fact, reading Smith and Sweetland’s online diaries as larger indicators of identity and community reveals that the specifics of each entry are less bound by a traditional narrative chronology and are more thematically centred; in each women’s diary we see the development of common themes of community, adventure, desire, and accomplishment. This resonates with Haraway’s emphasis on strategies of “affinity” and her insistence on the appropriation of writing itself as a subversive tool. Writing, according to Haraway, “is about the power to survive not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other,” that is, the act of writing is an essential component for marginalised groups who seek to subvert the dominant order.⁷⁷ “Affinity” celebrates diversity, especially amongst women, as a positive and effective way of challenging notions of stable identity. Furthermore, affinity as a strategy promotes the coming together of disparate groups in a way that does not require “forced consensus” but can nonetheless promote a certain cohesiveness or sense of belonging and support.⁷⁸ For Smith and Sweetland these affinities are expressed virtually through the presence of both links to other artists and also through the appearance of friends and fellow musicians in the stories they tell via their diary entries. The act of telling their stories then is in and of itself an act which challenges the traditional lack of agency that women have in guiding their music careers and crucially does this by appropriating language itself.

As with their respective pictures and biography sections, the personal diaries of Smith and Sweetland indicate two contrasting approaches to sharing their identities with their websites’ visitors. Smith’s diary, featured in the “News” section, opens her site. The diary is written in a sanguine tone, and, in keeping with the rest of her website, emphasises her musical exploits:

⁷⁵ Ibid., 85-86.

⁷⁶ Aviva Wendy Rosenstein, “Self-presentation and Identity on the World Wide Web: An Exploration of Personal Home Pages” (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2000), 153.

⁷⁷ Haraway, 33.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 14-15.

Happy Holidays everyone! I am right into the Christmas spirit and with the help of my friends Rose Cousins, Jill Barber, and the Mainstreet band, look forward to sharing it with you this Friday December 16th. We will be performing a selection of our favorite Christmas songs as well as a few original treats live on CBC Radio One's program, Mainstreet, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm.⁷⁹

Smith's diary also indicates the importance of other musicians in her circle. There is no specific "Links" section (a common feature of most artist websites), and thus Smith's diary also fulfils the function of connecting her virtually with other area artists. Her posts often include a list of the upcoming events and accomplishments of many of her contemporaries, her own influences, and her friends. She also provides links to each of their websites. In a recent entry, lacking any significant news of her own, Smith takes the opportunity to promote her friends and influences by indicating their activities and providing links to their websites:

Things are starting to slow down... and speed up at the same time. I don't have much lined up in the way of shows for the next few months, but please believe me when I say I have a few things on the burner. Hopefully I'll be back with a bang. In the mean time, check out my sisters in music here on the East Coast, Rose Cousins and Jill Barber. Both whom have done beautiful, inspiring amazing albums. And as a tribute to you Rose, I'm going to tell everyone what's in my player.

Well...Rose Cousins - can't get enough!

a sneak peek of Jill Barber's new one - Um...AMAZING.

Shawn Colvin - These Four Walls - breaks my heart.⁸⁰

The presence of these hyperlinks—the defining feature of the World Wide Web—suggests an important way of signalling involvement in a community. Stuart Moulthrop indicates: "In the case of hypertext, what you see is only a small part of what you conceptually get. The text is not all *there* in a literal sense, and yet what is not visible or present matters very much."⁸¹ Smith's personal and professional bonds within the network of musicians that make up the Canadian Maritime music community are represented here through the presence of these links. Furthermore, these links are a powerful indicator of how she sees herself in relation to other more "successful" artists; they present a snapshot of her

⁷⁹ Meghan Smith. "December 11, 2005." *meaghansmith.com* (2005). Available from <http://www.meaghansmith.com/news.html>; Accessed January 2007.

⁸⁰ Meghan Smith. "September 25, 2006." *meaghansmith.com* (2005). Available from <http://www.meaghansmith.com/news.html>; Accessed January 2007.

⁸¹ Stuart Moulthrop, "Error 404: Doubting the Web," in *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. Andrew Herman and Thomas Swiss (New York: Routledge, 2000), 262.

influences and colleagues, giving the visitor an understanding of how Smith might fit within a particular array of artists.

In contrast, Sweetland's diary entries, which she prefers to call her "On the Road Archives" (featured in her "News" section), function more as a chronicle of her experiences as a touring musician. Her diary, now archived by year, begins in 2001. Here Sweetland, in keeping with her holistic approach, reveals much about her personal life outside of her musical endeavours. We discover that she has a penchant for the Honey Mead of a particular Southern US bar, that she and her dog travel in a van named after Country music legend Maybelle Carter, and that she revels in bucolic landscapes, particularly those of the South-eastern United States where she often visits her best friend Jenny. Sweetland's entries are also mostly optimistic in tone, celebrating the freedom of life on the road and often emphasising the positive aspects of whatever adversity she experiences, such as this winter storm episode from a 2003 trip to Virginia:

Had a seriously out of control festival of snow this week and we got snowed in UP TO OUR EYEBALLS. Took us days to shovel ourselves out (well Jenny did most of the shovelling, while I baked us biscuits [sic] and honey apple bread on the woodstove) And Jenny made a wicked Snow Witch with the carrot nose and the big pointy hat and how sad, today she melted and her head fell off. We got to play Little House on the Frozen Prairie and I got to be Ma of the cooking and cleaning while Jenny was Pa of the shoveling [sic] out of the carriages. We were totally stuck in the beautiful nowheres with no way out for days... Ahhhhhhhhh.⁸²

Sweetland's diary entries also indicate her involvement in all facets of her career, not only the musical aspects, but also those of promotion, that demonstrates the importance of and willingness to learn and exploit contemporary Internet technologies in aid of her musical endeavours:

Been running around Toronto all week with me head cut off trying to get my album graphics etc... into the manufacturers on time. (It should be ready by July 10th- fingers crossed...) Then I packed wildly and madly for 24 hours straight trying to get ready to hop in my little van and drive to BC tomorrow. whew! must stop to breathe---on top of that I've trying so desperately to fix up the website so that it is lovely and presentable... I'm not such an excellent computer whiz webmaster but between me and my wonderful mother (who I would be SO very lost without...) I think we got it figured out pretty good...⁸³

⁸² Kristin Sweetland. "February 20, 2003." *kristinsweetland.com* (2003). Available from <http://www.kristinsweetland.com/onroad2003.htm>; Accessed January 2007.

⁸³ Kristin Sweetland. "June 23, 2003." *kristinsweetland.com* (2003). Available from <http://www.kristinsweetland.com/onroad2003.htm>; Accessed January 2007.

In indicating her desire to involve herself in the creation of her website, Sweetland is participating in a contemporary movement characterised by women demonstrating agency in the utilisation of modern technologies. Indeed, participation in new technologies has been identified by many feminist communications scholars as not only desirable but *necessary* in order to ensure that women are not further-marginalised in a world that has shifted towards a “knowledge” or “information” society.⁸⁴ In fact, the use of Internet technology is having a profound effect on how women are able to undo some of the historical effects of socio-cultural marginalisation by challenging long-held gendered beliefs about women’s agency in their creative careers. Sweetland, by exhibiting agency in her representation, is also challenging the notion that the technological (or “behind the scenes”) mechanisms for realising her career goals are the exclusive domain of male web-programmers and graphic artists.

CONCLUSION

The Internet has become a key medium through which independent musicians can promote themselves to a much wider audience than has been historically possible. For independent women musicians who use the Internet, a distinct political challenge is mounted against the patriarchal authority of the established music industry. There is much more at stake for women musicians online than simply getting their music out to a wider audience and profiting from this opportunity. For many women, the development of affinity groups is a key way of negotiating the problematic gender politics in the world of professional music making. *GoGirls* and *Little Red Hen* represent two ways in which communication among women can have positive impact on how women are perceived, and how they perceive themselves, within the music industry. *Little Red Hen* shows how the statement of a common bond of music and friendship online can also manifest in the “real world” as many of the members of this collective provide assistance to each other while touring. The online *GoGirls* forum provides a space in which members can access useful technical and business advice and also discuss the less tangible aspects of life as an independent professional musician. This communication becomes in itself a political act as it represents women musicians being able to communicate amongst their peers in the same way that early women telephone users were able to compensate for a lack of public sphere participation by communicating between domestic spheres. The importance of this is cannot be readily dismissed as “just talk.” Women, long excluded from the technical and business aspects of the music industry are seen in the *GoGirls* forum to be

⁸⁴ See Arizpe, Shade, Annabelle Sreberny, “Feminist Internationalism: Imagining and building global civil society,” in *Electronic Empires: Global Media and Local Resistance*, ed. Daya Kishan Thussu (London: Arnold, 1998).

engaging with these areas in a productive way, in effect “working around” gender biases in the industry that have historically barred their participation.

For independent women musicians who use websites to promote themselves, there are also some intriguing ways in which they contend with the politics of identity, a politics that is often at the heart of gendered systems of power. Meaghan Smith and Kristin Sweetland present two contrasting negotiations of the online “self.” Smith presents us with images of her performing and participating in events with musical peers and in doing so emphasises her professional life over her personal, belying any notion that music is “just a hobby” for her. The design aesthetics of her site reinforce her participation in the singer/songwriter genre through particular visual codes. The overall professional thrust of her site works in tension with her musical output, which is often characterised by personal reflections on self confidence and ability. In contrast, Sweetland presents us with a sprawling representation of her “self” as an artistic person *tout court*. By offering glimpses into her personal life through her diary writing and combining this with a continuing series of self portraits, we perceive an artist who “lives what she writes” thus promoting an understanding of what she views as the authentic. In both cases, we are presented with women who are using tools of communication often associated with their male peers—computer technology, and writing itself—to promote and create their online selves.

What is clear here is that women musicians who use the Internet in these ways are mounting a significant challenge to paradigms of authority in the music industry and also to common perceptions that audiences have regarding women’s participation in their own success. For women artists, control and independence are of vital importance in circumventing and challenging sexism the framework of the music industry. The ability to control her own content—the representation of her “self” online—changes the way she and her audience view the relationship(s) between her image and her music. The implicit autonomy of an independent artist promoting herself online also shifts the perception of the achievements of women artists towards self-determination, and away from the historical understanding of these achievements as the result of her association with male “superiors.” Crucially, as both Smith’s and Sweetland’s websites demonstrate, there is also an expression of importance of community and an emphasis on locating their “independence” within the context of the wider spheres of both women musicians, and musicians more generally. This reinforces the dialectic of their identity construction: references to community, friends, and colleagues clearly form a major part of their diary entries and for the audience, indicates that though these artists’ careers are self-directed they are nonetheless influenced by others.

Independent women artists, simply by choosing to promote themselves online, are directly challenging and reshaping the traditional gender biases of the music industry. Drawing on a history that values networking and communication as a means of achieving success, women artists are exploiting the potential of the Internet and, in doing so further challenge the centralised power structure of the

entertainment industry, a structure that has become normalised as the *only* way for *anyone* in the creative arts to achieve success. Additionally, these challenges to the normative power of the industry prompt further questions regarding the commoditisation of music and musicians. Artists who use the Internet as their primary promotional space blur the lines between “professional” and “amateur.” As we increasingly see artists actively declaring the value of community and networking, our notion of how the popular music enterprise could function will begin to change. Our acceptance of a compartmentalised and centralised creative space—one which separates art and artists by genre, label affiliation, and gender—will become less and less absolute.

Two

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE P2P AND SOCIAL DISCIPLINE AT OINK.ME.UK

Despite the widespread perception that filesharing is underpinned by greed and manifested in widespread “theft,” a spirit of community actually appears to be at the ethical core of the file sharing phenomenon. In response to the music industry’s battle with filesharing, *Rolling Stone* magazine stated the following in a full page advertisement in the *New York Times* in October, 2002:

Because of you [the industry], millions of kids will stop wasting time listening to new music and seeking out new bands. No more spreading the word to complete strangers about your artists. No more harmful exposure to thousands of bands via Internet radio either. With any luck they won’t talk about music at all.¹

With its obviously polemical statement, *Rolling Stone* personalised the practice of filesharing, and linked communication among listeners to the success of musical artists. This statement indicates that music fans are invested in the process of seeking out new artists and sharing their findings with others, a practice which, though not unique to filesharing, is part of the ethic that underpins many filesharing communities. A similar valorisation of community was evident in a recent exchange between the representatives of the Dave Matthews Band and the

¹ Reprinted in Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Anarchist in the Library: How the Clash Between Freedom and Control is Hacking the Real World and Crashing the System* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 46.

website *etree.org*. The family of *etree* websites promotes the sharing of live concerts in digital form through an Internet protocol called BitTorrent. *etree* officially allows only the sharing of performance recordings by “taper friendly artists,” i.e. those artists who permit their concerts to be recorded and freely distributed among fans. Certain areas of the *etree* websites require free registration and offer users advanced features, such as the ability to post lists of music for sharing and the opportunity to access *etree*’s ever-expanding searchable database of live recordings. It was the registration-only areas that piqued the curiosity of the Matthews representatives who inquired via a letter to *etree*’s administrators, “Do [the registration only areas] require the necessary fan interaction prior to such trades to satisfy the requirements of the [band’s official taping] Statement[?]?”²

The band’s taping statement indicates the centrality of community and collectivity in their rationale for allowing recordings to be made and distributed:

In addition to helping fans recreate the live experience, we hope tape trading will foster greater interaction within the fan community. Any method of trading that does not involve personal fan interaction defeats the spirit of this goal of the taping policy and is not authorized. In particular, posting audio or video files on web sites for streaming to or downloading by the public, is not authorized.³

It is not so much the legality of compliance between *etree* and the band but rather the similar emphasis that both parties place on community and interaction that is of interest here. The Dave Matthews Band is one of many bands and artists who promote the trading of their live recordings. This trading has, in recent years, become largely an online practice. Websites like *etree* are explicit about their desire to “support the discussion and trading of the highest quality recordings.” Furthermore

Etree.org is a community of music fans that freely trade and distribute the music of bands that allow the audio taping of their live performances. As a community, *etree.org* condemns anyone that sells or attempts to sell the music available via *etree.org*.⁴

Though the concerns raised by the band’s representatives were with what goes on “behind closed doors” at the *etree* sites, it is evident here that both *etree*’s and the Dave Matthews Band’s statements embody the spirit of interactivity, non-profit sharing, and dialogue.

² *etree.org Community Bittorrent Tracker*. <http://bt.etree.org>. Accessed December 2005.

³ *Dave Matthews Band*. <http://www.dmband.com>. Accessed December 2005.

⁴ *etree.org*. <http://etree.org>. Accessed December 2005.

Rolling Stone magazine’s statement and the Dave Matthews Band/*etree* exchange are only a small part of the intense public debate that has developed concerning the future of freely available online digital content. They show that the debate’s central issues involve competing versions of how music (and indeed other cultural works) should be understood: as either a profitable commodity to be disseminated with certain protections (such as the collection of royalties, licensing fees, and copyright) or as a freely traded cultural product to be shared without restriction. I seek to demonstrate in this chapter that underpinning the latter is not necessarily “free for all” unregulated sharing, but, rather, the sometimes strict regulation of community and sharing ethics that often stand in stark contrast to capitalist ideology. Despite their differences though, these two “sides” of the debate are, I suggest, involved in a dialectic process with the music industry that points towards changes in how cultural products such as music will circulate in the future. I further argue that filesharing’s ethical stance suggests that there is more to this debate than the strictly economic challenges that are emphasised by industry groups such as the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

Since early in 2000, the widespread ability to share music online in compressed audio formats via peer-to-peer (P2P) networks has caused much frustration for the recording industry; however, for music lovers this ability has often been liberating and indeed a source of elation. As method77 indicated at *BeatKing*, a popular “all purpose” online music community that features blogs, discussion forums, music news, lyrics database, tour dates, and interviews,

Oh how I love free music downloading. How I love finding those tracks I used to have on cassettes ...Oh how great it is to finally have you all back!

I remember searching for a cassette [sic] or LP in stores only to find out it was sold out and will be in after a month again. I remember begging friends to lend me stuff. I remeber [sic] giving music for a week and never have it back. I remember breaking records and paying for them again. I remember having to drive to Athens to buy stuff that was released only in big stores. I remember paying for music!!!

No More!

Let’s all cheer for FREE FILESHARING!⁵

method77’s comment points to many of the reasons that filesharing has become so popular: the easy acquisition of music, the opportunity to find old recordings that may be unavailable on CD, and of course, the financial cost of consuming music. These are important factors in understanding the filesharing phenomenon. Yet, since the RIAA won a lawsuit in 2001 that resulted in the shutting down of

⁵ method77. “Oh, How I Love Filesharing.” *Beat King* January 30 (2005). Available from <http://www.beatking.com/forums/index.php?s=edcc0227e9d6248e6c27c326ad7d33de&showtopic=10740&view=findpost&p=67820>; Accessed July 2007.

Napster, one of the earliest mass filesharing applications, the debate over copyright, control, and profit in relation to “illegal” filesharing practices has dominated the discourse concerning the relationship between music and the Internet and is obscuring other areas of inquiry. While reports of lawsuits, countersuits, freedom of speech and copyright “battles” have populated the headlines of major media, very little has been said about the people who are actually posing these challenges to the music industry by sharing music with little regard for profit, their own, the industry’s, or the artists.’⁶

Common perceptions of filesharing characterise the practice as a threat to the capitalist (infra)structure of the music industry and intellectual property laws because it depends upon the digital transfer of music files, which undermines industry profits from the sale of physical media (such as compact discs) and trespasses upon the rights of composers and publishers to profit from the use of their music. Though economic considerations are an important aspect of any interrogation of filesharing effects, I examine how discipline and regulation in online filesharing communities reveal some of the ethical underpinnings of the practice of filesharing. To this end, I focus on the website *OiNK’s Pink Palace*, one of several members-only filesharing sites that have developed partially in response to the demise of Napster, the widespread and increasing use of broadband (high-speed) network connections, and the development of the BitTorrent filesharing protocol.⁷ Broadband networks allow for much faster data transfer than dial-up networks and thus are much more efficient for downloading large files. In contrast to Napster, or even Kazaa or Limewire, which were/are ideal for downloading single tracks, the BitTorrent protocol is ideal for sharing large files and thus, at *OiNK*, and at other BitTorrent-related sites, complete albums are the preferred way for filesharers to obtain music. I focus on *OiNK* for two reasons. The first is because the practices at *OiNK* indicate a group that

⁶ Lawrence Lessig, the Stanford law professor, wrote on the wider implications of freely accessible cultural works and did so using historical examples that emphasised the contributions of individuals, though his contemporary analyses were much more monolithic. See Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004). Siva Vaidyanathan similarly tackled the big issues. See Vaidhyathan. It is interesting how issues surrounding filesharing are almost uniformly cast in militaristic or violent terms such as “battle,” “threat,” or “fight” with the implication that at some point there will be a “winner” and a “loser.” Examples from popular media include John Schwartz. “File Sharing Pits Copyright Against Free Speech.” *The New York Times* November 3 (2003). Available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/03/business/media/03secure.html?ex=1383282000&en=cc51ac44d5666e54&ei=5007&partner=USERLAND>; Accessed July 2007., and “File-sharing battle hits U.S. Supreme Court.” *cbc.ca* March 29 (2005). Available from <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/story/2005/03/29/USfilesharing050329.html>; Accessed July 2007.

⁷ *OiNK*. <http://www.oink.me.uk>. As *OiNK* is a members-only website, any references in footnotes to full URLs would be pointless as it is unlikely the reader will have an *OiNK* membership and be able to access the site. Therefore, references to text from the *OiNK* website and discussion forums will not be cited in the footnotes. *OiNK* URLs that are accessible to the public will be noted.

values community, sharing, and cooperation underpinned by a strong anti-profit stance. The second reason is very much a result of the first: within the filesharing community *OiNK* is renowned for having one of the largest and most diverse collections of music, eBooks, and software.

This chapter takes as its primary focus an examination of *OiNK*'s requirement that its members achieve and maintain specific "share ratios" (that is, they must give a certain amount of what they take), which is supported and facilitated by the site's use of BitTorrent technology (which I explain below), in order to maintain their membership and gain access to other features within the website. I read this practice through Foucault's notion of productive power, in which mechanisms of regulation and discipline are understood to have effects beyond those of simply proscribing the actions of the subjects of power. Within the paradigm of productive power I apply Michel de Certeau's concept of "*La Perruque*," in which the development of a "gift economy" is understood as subversive, to argue that the *OiNK* community's strong stance against profiting from music downloaded through *OiNK*, and the notion of sharing as "currency," contradict understandings of filesharing as strictly an economic challenge to the music and motion picture industries. Filesharing's subversiveness is found in the challenge it brings to the capitalist ideological underpinnings of the music industry. By presenting an alternative to the traditional music industry model of hierarchical "for profit" distribution, the practice of file sharing has brought to the public consciousness considerations not only of how we relate to cultural products like music, but also how we understand the way in which these products circulate within culture.

I further examine the *OiNK* community's disciplinary and regulatory practices in the case of a member who sold *OiNK* invitations, which are coveted in the filesharing community. Extending Foucault's notion of productive power, and situated in respect to Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer*, in which he theorises exile as punishment, I discuss how debates over the appropriate punishment for "the invite seller," which took place in the *OiNK* forum, reveal that the membership struggles in disciplining transgressions of its ethical stance against monetary profit that cross the virtual/"real" boundary. This discursive event further shows that the *OiNK* membership's values are grounded in the spirit of sharing and communality and, though the community demonstrates a keen awareness of its "(il)legality" in the eyes of the RIAA and others, it rejects the understanding of its activities as thievery.⁸

⁸ A Pew Internet & American Life Project study from 2000 (during the height of the Napster craze), in which it was found that 78% of downloaders surveyed did not view their activities as "stealing," supports this idea. See Amanda Lenhart and Susannah Fox, *Downloading Free Music: Internet music lovers don't think it's stealing* (Washington: The Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2000). There is little recent data to suggest that this figure has changed, though it is possible that since the lawsuits against Napster were successful, Internet users may now feel differently about their actions. Yet, Steve Jones and Amanda Lenhart suggest that a case could be made that the widespread publicity of Napster and the interest in free music could have driven

It is these very music fans who are beginning to question and/or reject traditional models of recorded music consumption through their participation in music filesharing.⁹ And although these individuals are in fact the primary force driving the music industry's concerns over unfettered access to recorded music, this "battle," as it is often cast in the popular press, is a one of monolithic behemoths: "The Music Industry" versus "Piracy."¹⁰ "The Industry" is either cast as a saviour for artists everywhere or as a capitalist-opportunist evil (while curiously being labelled "anti-consumer"), and the discourse almost exclusively focuses on how filesharing can support or subvert these views.¹¹ Individuals are largely ignored as agents of change and, when they are not ignored, they are typically cast as a homogenous group of criminals trying to get "something for nothing."

Though the practice *is* often aimed at simply acquiring free music, filesharing can carry deeper significance. For some, filesharing is a political activity that overtly challenges the mainstream music industry and global capital and consumption more generally. Thus, I envision filesharing with a view to de Certeau's emphasis on how the "everyday" practices of individuals can pose significant challenges to the hegemony of the global capitalism. Indeed, the terrain traversed between personal, individual sharing practices and their attendant socio-cultural implications reveals some crucial points about the filesharing process. Though the process can be more or less anonymous and fleeting—a user logs in, takes what he or she wants, and then logs out—there are ways in which

people to use the Internet. See Steve Jones and Amanda Lenhart, "Music Downloading and Listening: Findings from the Pew Internet and American Life Project," *Popular Music and Society* 27, no. 2 (2004): 190.

⁹ Most studies suggest that downloaders still purchase music. For example Lenhart and Fox. In this study 69% of respondents indicated that "least on occasion they end up purchasing music they have downloaded," while 21% said that "most of the time" they purchased music they downloaded. Also, surveys can often be skewed for a variety of reasons: respondents may exaggerate the frequency or amount of music they buy out of a perceived moral/ethical obligation (they don't want to admit it). Also, the Pew study is from 2000, in the height of the Napster craze, now that music downloading has become much more widespread, and some would argue "acceptable," these statistics have likely changed. Finally, in personal conversations with avid downloaders it not uncommon for people to say "I haven't bought a CD in *years*."

¹⁰ For example, Matei Ripeanu *et al.* discuss "gift economies" in terms of BitTorrent filesharing and do not include any commentary or analysis of how participants view themselves as filesharers, and do not sufficiently locate the practice in terms of its human element. See "Gifting Technologies: A BitTorrent Case Study" *First Monday* 11, no. 11 (2006). Available from http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_11/ripeanu/index.html; Accessed February 2007.

¹¹ See Gary Kemble. "Cory Doctorow on DRM: 'a fight we can't lose'." *Articulate* (2006). Available from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/arts/articulate/200604/s1616706.htm>; Accessed March 2007. and "Music fans not the enemy: artists' coalition." *cbc.ca* May 1 (2006). Available from <http://www.cbc.ca/story/arts/national/2006/05/01/copyright-music-download.html>; Accessed December 2006. Evidence of how this debate is cast is summed up in this 2003 *New York Times* article headline Schwartz. Accessed See also "How To Not Get Sued for File Sharing (And Other Ideas To Avoid Being Treated Like a Criminal)." *Electronic Frontier Foundation* (2006). Available from <http://www.eff.org/IP/P2P/?f=howto-notgetsued.html>; Accessed July 2007.

the practice becomes more involved, such as the opportunity to communicate with other filesharers through online forums like those found at *OiNK*.

Indeed, the presence of forums within the filesharing community marks the practice as a social one. Discussions at *OiNK* range from addressing the site's rules and regulations to sharing personal stories about favourite artists or albums, to non-filesharing-related topics such as pictures of members' messy computer desks and requests for advice on personal issues. For example, one member asked for advice on his upcoming trip to London, England, "I hope some of you, can give some tips, like the cheapest restaurants, places to sleep (how I can I contact them from here) [sic], places to visit (pubs, clubs, monuments) and other kind of tips that should be given to anyone that visits London. Thanks for your time." His request had elicited nearly thirty responses at the time of writing. Another member announced "I just got dumped," and asked the membership: "I would like some help with getting over the girl. So if you have a couple of solutions that might do the trick, please let me know." Responses were mixed, ranging from "I'm here to hold at night" to "oh no, not another one"; however, most do not bear repeating. The larger effect of potentially millions of filesharers acting *socially* suggests that there is indeed something out there called a filesharing "community." Its emerging ethics, etiquettes, protocols, and virtual gathering spaces threaten not only the music industry's economic paradigm, but also the material and social structures established by this paradigm (i.e. the relationships that exists between a record company and their artists, or their consumers).

THE BITTORRENT PROTOCOL

In order to fully comprehend how *OiNK* can impose rules regulating sharing ratios, it is necessary to know, at least superficially, how the BitTorrent filesharing protocol works. Moreover, as will become clear, the technology itself is designed in such a way as to promote *sharing*, as opposed to simply *downloading* from another user, as the preferred way to obtaining files at the highest possible speeds. Bram Cohen, an American software engineer with no relationship to *OiNK*, developed the BitTorrent filesharing protocol in the early 2000s. It is this protocol that members must use in order to access the music tracked by *OiNK*. BitTorrent is "open source" software, meaning that the code for how the protocol functions is freely available to anyone wishing to improve upon existing BitTorrent "clients," those pieces of freely available software used to connect to other BitTorrent filesharers. BitTorrent traffic makes up a significant amount of *all* Internet traffic, though accurate statistics are hard to establish, and BitTorrent, Inc., the company owned by Cohen, has recently entered into business relationships with Warner Bros. and other entertainment companies, enabling some of their products to be sold electronically using the

BitTorrent protocol.¹² BitTorrent shares files using “seeders” and “leechers.” Seeders are users who “announce” to a “tracker,” like *OiNK*, that they have a file they wish to share. The announcement is made by uploading a small file to the tracker, known as a “.torrent” (“dot-torrent” or “torrent”) file. This file provides necessary information about which users have copies of the file available to share and also information about the file’s contents (MP3s, video, other audio formats, software, etc.). In the case of music, the torrent file would contain data on track titles and durations, their file type, their individual size, and the size of the entire collection of tracks.¹³

If one is interested in downloading a particular collection of music, he or she must first download the .torrent file to their computer. As *OiNK* is a “private tracker,” one must be a member in order to access the torrent file. Then, using one of the freely available BitTorrent clients, such as µTorrent, Azureus, or BitTornado, the user opens the .torrent file, thus announcing their presence to the tracker and indicating that they are interested in downloading the file. This person is now a leecher, which simply means that they are downloading the contents of the file. Crucially, when there are only two participants in a “torrent” (the terminology used for the collection of seeders and leechers downloading and uploading a particular file), i.e., when there is only one seeder and one leecher, the leecher is downloading the entire file from one source, the seeder.

Using the same procedure outlined above, an unlimited number of “peers” (those who are involved in uploading and downloading the file) can participate. When this happens, peers are sending and retrieving small parts (chunks) of the file to and from each seeder and leecher. That is to say, as a leecher downloads more chunks of the file, they are also able to share this data with other leechers who have not yet received these particular chunks. Furthermore, BitTorrent prioritises which peer it sends data to: if a peer demonstrates that it is capable of and is actually sharing data with other peers, then other peers will first share data with that peer, and not with those that are incapable of sharing. Since, theoretically, an unlimited number of other users can join the torrent, BitTorrent is especially useful for sharing large files, such as television programmes, movies, large software “suites” (collections of software and computer applications), and complete music albums. Most BitTorrent clients can support multiple downloads, so users can download from many separate torrents simultaneously.

This all happens at the level of software, and the user rarely intervenes in the process except to begin or end their participation in the torrent and to set limits on how fast they upload or download data. The relative ability of a peer’s

¹² On BitTorrent statistics see “BitTorrent.” *Wikipedia*. Available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bittorrent>; Accessed February 2007. See also “Warner Bros. to Sell Films via BitTorrent: First Major Studio Embraces Same Peer-to-Peer Tech Used for Illegal Trading.” *msnbc.com* May 9 (2006). Available from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12694081/>; Accessed February 2007., and *BitTorrent*. <http://www.bittorrent.com/>. Accessed February 2007.

¹³ Music files at *OiNK* are shared in a variety of formats including MP3s of varying bitrates, “lossless” audio files such as FLAC, and also the Apple standard, AAC.

capacity to share is known as “connectability” (or “cleverness,” in *OiNK* parlance). The inability to share can be a result of the circumstances of the users’ Internet connection if, for example, it is a shared connection or it is blocked by a personal or institutional firewall or antivirus programme.¹⁴ There are ways in which users can modify settings on their computer and modem in order to make themselves more connectable (or “clever”), and these tips are shared freely in the *OiNK* discussion forums and other filesharing forums. Once a leecher has completed downloading the entirety of a file, they automatically become a seeder until they terminate their participation in the torrent. When there are many seeders, and many leechers, peers are able to download data from many different sources, downloading different chunks of the file at the same time, and thus (theoretically), downloading becomes faster for everyone in the torrent. When a user closes their BitTorrent client while seeding or leeching, they are no longer part of the torrent. The BitTorrent filesharing scenario dictates that in order for a file to be available to share, there must always be at least one seeder in the group. Often, when a lone seeder disconnects before a leecher has downloaded the entire file, the entire torrent will eventually become “stuck,” each leecher with the exact same percentage of the entire file, none complete. This is a common cause of frustration among many BitTorrent users and can only be resolved if someone with the entire file rejoins the torrent.

At *OiNK*, the catalogue of music available to the membership is thus dynamic and dependent on the active participation of the membership and their ongoing commitment to seed music. Thus, the preferred scenario for maintaining the size and diversity of the music selection is to actively increase the membership and to encourage members to constantly seed. One method of encouraging this behaviour is by imposing share ratios and providing incentives for the membership to maintain them. Interestingly, the BitTorrent protocol itself actually encourages this, since once a user has successfully downloaded a file, and provided they do not remove themselves from the torrent, they automatically become a seeder. Thus, at *OiNK*, users often download a file and then “leave them seeding” in the hopes that new leechers will download data from them, thus improving their share ratio. It is by maintaining a positive “share-ratio,” and by having uploaded a requisite amount of data, that members earn invitations to the site, which they can then pass on to their friends and acquaintances in order to increase membership. The site administrators establish both the share ratio and data threshold, which are discussed in detail below.

¹⁴ Some institutions, such as university halls of residence, and also some ISPs, “throttle” Internet traffic when it can be identified as BitTorrent traffic. As a result, BitTorrent users have come up with creative ways of thwarting this practice. Some clients allow the data to be encrypted so as to be unrecognisable as BitTorrent traffic and there are also ways in which those who are using blocked institutional connections can access proxy networks that allow the traffic to get through to its destination.

OiNK

In contrast to well-known and freely available P2P filesharing applications like Napster, Kazaa, or Limewire, *OiNK* is a website that hosts a database of shared files that allows users to use the BitTorrent filesharing protocol to access a large and varied catalogue of software, eBooks, and music. *OiNK* is tracker, which means that it does not host music files, but, rather, acts as a centralised distribution point for information that enables interested users to connect to others who are themselves sharing files. By design, the site can only be accessed by members; membership is only available via invitation. *OiNK* members “earn” “invites” only through demonstrating exceptional sharing habits; that is, invites are allotted to those who can give (share) an acceptable/adequate percentage of what they take away (download). These invites are to be used at the members’ own discretion and may be traded or given to friends. *OiNK*’s administrators reserve the right to revoke a membership if it becomes evident that a user is not complying with the site’s well-defined “share ratio” requirements. Such internal disciplining habits have emerged within and come to pervade a community that does not seek economic gain through their activities and indeed emphasises both an anti-profit stance and an ethics that is rooted in sharing and cooperation. For *OiNK* users, there is more at stake than simply gaining “something for nothing.”¹⁵

OiNK’s servers are located in the Netherlands, and they operate under a United Kingdom Uniform Resource Locator (URL); the community currently boasts over 100,000 members from around the world. The site, started in 2004, was initially an open-registration site (i.e. no invitations required, only free registration) and, according to its founder and primary administrator, who goes by the online alias “*OiNK*,” it was founded in order to facilitate the sharing of music between online friends. As the site’s popularity grew, and greater stress was placed on the *OiNK* servers, the site administrators decided that membership to the site would be granted by invitation only. The site is non-commercial, there is no advertising, although users can donate money in aid of operational costs.

While *OiNK* also caters to those seeking software for various operating platforms, eBooks, and learning videos, the main focus of the community is the sharing of copyrighted music files. *OiNK*’s music catalogue is extremely diverse, and complete albums are the only music files that can be shared; there are no single songs available for download, unless they were originally commercially released as such. While contemporary mainstream and “indie” popular music dominate the various “Top 10” lists, the “classical,” jazz, and country music sections each boast well over 2000 recordings at any one time. The lists are divided into sections for “most active” torrents uploaded over the last day and

¹⁵ See David Hales and Simon Patarin. “How To Cheat BitTorrent and Why Nobody Does.” *The University of Bologna Department of Computer Science Research Technical Reports* April 1 (2005). Available from <http://www.cs.unibo.it/pub/TR/UBLCS/ABSTRACTS/2005.bib?ncstr1.cabernet//BOLOGNA-UBLCS-2005-12>; Accessed December 2006.

week, most “snatched” (downloaded) of all time, most data transferred, and best and worst seeded torrents.¹⁶ These lists present an intriguing mix of relatively unknown or underground artists, and more established mainstream artists. Sunset Rubdown, an indie band from Montreal and Every Time I Die from Buffalo appear alongside new releases from Ben Harper, Morcheeba, and Broken Social Scene’s Emily Haines.¹⁷ The dominance of indie, alternative, electronic, and hardcore artists in these lists also suggests that *OiNK*’s primary user base is young white men. This is unsurprising given that this is the largest and most economically privileged group of Internet users and the group most likely to have access to the more expensive broadband connections that are preferred for sharing large files.¹⁸

In the case of “classical” music, the recordings that are available are often the complete recorded works of canonical composers. Among the most “snatched” classical recordings are *The Essential Mozart* (1990), which has been downloaded over two thousand times, and the contemporary British composer Max Richter’s *Songs From Before* (2006), which has been downloaded over one thousand times. It is unsurprising given *OiNK*’s demographic that string quartet “tributes” to contemporary rock and pop acts are also among the most downloaded “classical” recordings, for example *The String Quartet Tribute to Death Cab For Cutie* (2006) and *The String Quartet Tribute to The Arcade Fire’s Funeral* (2007), both originally released by Vitamin Records in an ongoing series of such tributes. The “Top 40” focus of many physical music retailers has traditionally made it difficult to find non-mainstream musics, like “classical” and jazz, or regional musics. Moreover, specialty record stores that cater to fans of these musics are often located in major cities and thus *OiNK* is an attractive place for those who may not have access to these stores.

REGULATION: INSPIRING AN ETHIC OF SHARING

The *OiNK* regulatory paradigm is centralised, largely automatic and is facilitated by software-level equations, built into the site’s design, that calculate

¹⁶ For the week of July 23-29, 2007 the most active torrent was an audio book of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the seventh and final instalment of the hugely successful Harry Potter series, which was released in print form July 21, 2007. It had been snatched 1,243 times, and transferred almost a *terabyte* of data as of 12.24am July 28. *OiNK* is not just a music site!

¹⁷ For the week of July 23-29, 2007.

¹⁸ See John B. Horrigan. “Home Broadband Adoption 2006: Home broadband adoption is going mainstream and that means user-generated content is coming from all kinds of Internet users.” *Pew Internet & American Life Project* May 28 (2006). Available from http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Broadband_trends2006.pdf; Accessed June 2007. The statistics presented in this report are for the United States only. Also, in an April 2004 *OiNK* poll, 53% of 60,446 respondents indicated that they had undergraduate degrees, further reinforcing a connection between economic privilege, education, and access to filesharing technologies.

share ratios and delete and promote user accounts as applicable. Through the use of “screen-names” moderators and administrators are anonymous, as are the members themselves. This system is juxtaposed with the decentralised character of the BitTorrent protocol and the disparate geographic locales of the membership and moderators. *OiNK* members voluntarily submit to this partially panoptic model of regulation in order reap the benefits of membership, namely sharing music and other files. This structure’s panopticism is only partial, since only certain elements of regulation are centralised while others are dispersed. While “all seeing” moderators and administrators are responsible for any punitive actions, the maintenance of discipline within the community is shared by both the software and the membership. Foucault suggests that in a panoptic system discipline is maintained not through total surveillance but by the fact that those in the system are never sure if they are actually being watched.¹⁹ As a result, the discipline of panopticism becomes internalised, and the prisoners, patients, students, etc. begin to behave as intended. At *OiNK*, however, the membership can be *assured* that they are being monitored by software that will automatically catch and act upon certain infractions. Nonetheless, the desired effect is achieved—members internalise and reproduce the “proper” behaviours expected of them by policing themselves and each other to ensure that the rules are followed. For example, when a user fails to maintain a specified share ratio, they are automatically put on “ratio watch,” a state that other *OiNK* members can see via graphical indicators on the user’s profile; upon reaching the proscribed share ratio again, they are automatically released. *OiNK* users do not want to be on ratio watch, and strategies for avoiding this state are often discussed in the forums.

In other cases, and working very much in consort with *OiNK*’s regulatory procedures, members are encouraged to monitor and report users whom they suspect of breaking rules that individual administrators have difficulty tracking or that the automated software cannot enforce. For example, “transcoding” (posting torrents that contain files that have been made to appear as having a better sound quality than they actually do) is harshly discouraged through a system of warnings. The membership regard transcoding as deceitful; it can only be discovered if a member downloads the files and, upon establishing that transcoding has occurred, subsequently reports the infraction. The membership is motivated to report infractions, both through the desire to have only good quality recordings on the site and also out of a desire to uphold the site’s rules. They have internalised an ethic of surveillance from the knowledge that they themselves are constantly being monitored by the administrators and also that, should they act against the rules, they risk at all times being reported by another member. In this sense, the ultimate result of both a fully panoptic system and a partial one like *OiNK* is the same: the internalisation of particular behaviours

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

brought about by the knowledge that they can be observed at all times. Members are also active in the numerous forum threads and chat rooms on the site, consistently posting on “rules-related” topics, either warning the membership of transgressions or providing information on how to avoid some of the real-world “legal” traps one may encounter as a member of the site.²⁰

This structure of power is expressed in clear terms in the site’s “Rules” section. It aims less at punishing transgressions than at imposing an order intended to foster a respectful, communal environment in which members are unobstructed from obtaining a large amount of good quality music files.²¹ Rules are subdivided into sections that address general uploading, music-, book-, and application-specific uploading, as well as rules for forum etiquette (which I will discuss later in terms of their ethical underpinnings). Some of the regulations defined in the “Rules” section are:

Do not sell our invites. The invites were given to you to invite your friends or people you think that can contribute. If you are found selling invites, you’ll lose your account.

You are entirely responsible if someone you invite attempts to cheat their ratio. We have a zero-tolerance policy with cheaters, and an impressive reputation for catching them. If you invite a cheater, you will lose your ability to invite again in future.

Music uploaded here must not be freely available on the web (from official sources such as record label or band websites). If you could just download from the web, so can everyone else. Uploads can be from other torrent sites but you take responsibility for determining that the music is not transcoded.

This is a torrent site which promotes sharing amongst the community. If you are not willing to give back to the community what you take from it, this site is not for you. In other words, we expect you to have an acceptable share ratio.²²

²⁰ These legal discussion range from noting which countries are more “filesharing friendly” to strategies for what to do if a law enforcement agency attempts to seize your music collection. For the most part there is a lot of hyperbole and misunderstanding of how copyright laws work. It is well beyond the scope of this chapter to address this issue.

²¹ The amount that *OiNK* users download varies widely. Some of the site’s moderators are listed as having downloaded almost 300 GB (this could mean thousands of albums, ebooks, and software).

²² This clause means that music shared at *OiNK* should not be that which is easily available for free from officially sanctioned sources such as artist or record label websites. It shifts the focus of the group back to freely obtaining music that would otherwise have to be purchased.

These four excerpts from the much longer statement of the site's rules are a reasonable representation of the site's principle concerns. The first of these indicates that the site is not oriented toward profit, but it also indicates, by prioritising invitations for "friends," that the site is a place of community and is not exclusively oriented toward the utilitarian desire of gaining free music. The second rule reinforces the first, and places responsibility on community members for keeping the site "clean" and free of those who do not follow to the site's rules. This statement also clearly sets the "tone" of OiNK's approach to discipline by emphasising its "zero tolerance" approach to infractions. The third rule is particularly interesting. Here the focus shifts back to the *raison d'être* of the *OiNK* website, obtaining free music. There is an air of elitism here: *OiNK* is renowned for having a diverse and inexhaustible selection of music, and part of this renown is due to the availability obscure and specialised recordings, and the availability of new releases, sometimes weeks before they are available in retail outlets. *OiNK* members use the site to get recordings they couldn't otherwise get for free; there is no need to use *OiNK* if the music is available elsewhere without having to engage with ratio requirements or other such rules, and thus there is no need to upload this freely available music to the *OiNK* membership. The final example brings the focus back to the community, and states explicitly that a member's *OiNK* relationship is one of give and take.

The general success of widespread adherence to *OiNK*'s regulatory structure marks power as a productive force, power that is "not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have it'" but rather something that "invests [the membership], is transmitted by them and through them."²³ This productivity is manifest in the consistent sound quality of the files being shared through *OiNK* and the ever-increasing variety of music (and applications, books, etc.) made available there, a quality that contrasts with most "public trackers" and casual filesharing applications, such as Limewire or Kazaa. In the "Request a Feature" section of the forums, we see the relationship between power and productivity strengthened by the membership's participation in suggesting new additions and ideas for the *OiNK* site, though they do so with the express injunction that, before making a suggestion, the members "consider how useful [their suggestion] actually is." These suggestions often become the subject of rigorous debate among the membership and moderators, and are occasionally implemented as new rules.

The *OiNK* power structure is driven less by the administrators' aim to *maintain* power than by the site's goal of providing quality downloads. This aim exists in tandem with an ideology that is expressly anti-commercial, pro-freedom of choice (at least in maintaining the diversity of music available for download), that prizes knowledge among the site's members (knowledge of the rules of the community to be sure, but certainly other types of technical filesharing knowledge), and that is egalitarian (i.e., "share and share alike" and "do unto

²³ Foucault, 27.

others as you would have done to you”). In the *OiNK* forums, many users express sentiments similar to the following, which was offered in response to a query about minimum sound quality requirements:

There’s more here than just free music and apps, there’s a community, a society with a set of rules. Not to get all “Lord of the Flies” on you, but once exceptions and exemptions start being made, the whole structure starts to break down.

This statement emphasises the common notion amongst *OiNK* members that they are involved in the community as much for its well-defined ideals and practices concerning trading/sharing as they are for the material benefits of their participation. Furthermore, this egalitarian ethic of sharing, and the particular understanding of community is enshrined in the *OiNK* “Rules” section, among which the following are requested of the *OiNK* membership:

No asking for money for any reason whatsoever.
 No flaming, be pleasant and polite. Don’t use offensive language, and don’t be confrontational for the sake of confrontation.
 Be patient with newcomers. Once you have become an *OiNK* expert, it is easy to forget that you started out as a newbie too.
 Don’t point out or attack other members’ share ratios. A higher ratio does not make you better than someone else.

Here we see that the egalitarianism that undergirds *OiNK*’s rules pertaining to sharing files also influences how members should behave towards each another while interacting in the forums. This is a proscriptive list of rules that is designed to keep the *OiNK* forums free of some of the negative elements described above, elements that characterise many publicly accessible online discussion forums. Flaming (unnecessary negative comments designed to spark conflict) and offensive language do occasionally occur but, seemingly less frequently in the *OiNK* forum than in other forums. This is an intriguing juxtaposition of the egalitarian ethic of sharing and the non-democratic enforcement of this ethic. These rules have a powerful effect on both the material and social benefits for the community by creating a space in which large amounts of quality music is shared in a largely pleasant and respectful environment. As I discuss in the following section, the requirement of members to reach and maintain specified share ratios makes the selection of music at *OiNK* one of the most diverse and sizeable online.

THE SHARE RATIO

The filesharing ratio requirement is one of the unique characteristics of members-only sites like *OiNK*, and it is also the most significant material

expression of the development of the ethical system shared by many *OiNK* members. Through the BitTorrent protocol, it is possible to track how much data a user uploads—and thus shares—and how much he or she downloads. The share ratio is based on the relationship between these two figures. As discussed above, the BitTorrent protocol at the level of its design is configured to “reward” the act of sharing data; that is, a BitTorrent client who is seeding data will prioritise giving data to those clients that demonstrate they, too, are sharing data.²⁴ *OiNK* administrators are adamant that members maintain specific share ratios and send warnings to those not abiding by the rules; following non-compliance after multiple warnings, the ultimate penalty is having one’s account deleted. *OiNK*’s tracking software is configured to automatically adjust a member status based on their share ratio. (fig. 1)

Figure 1. *OiNK* Ratio Requirements

Level	Download Amount	Minimum Required Ratio	Initial Grace Period
0	Less than 5GB	None	None
1	5.00 GB - 25.00 GB	0.25	14 days
2	25.00 GB - 50.00 GB	0.3	None
3	50.00 GB - 75.00 GB	0.35	None
4	75.00 GB - 100.00 GB	0.4	None
5	100.00 GB - 125.00 GB	0.45	None
6	125.00 GB or more	0.5	None

The following information is from the *OiNK*’s FAQ section on ratio requirements:

What happens if I’m below the required ratio?

We take a snapshot of your uploaded and downloaded totals. You are then automatically given 14 days to upload enough to fix your ratio. (This has nothing to do with the grace period for level 1, they just both happen to be 14 days.) There are three outcomes, two of which are bad for you.

- You upload enough additional data within the two weeks and you’re automatically removed from ratio watch.
- Your time expires with insufficient upload and your account is automatically disabled.
- You download 10GB more than you had when you went on ratio watch and your account is permanently disabled.

Can’t I just donate some money and forget about this ratio stuff?

No. Donations can’t buy upload or ratio credit here and never have. Everyone is in the same position and has to maintain his/her ratio.

²⁴ See “BitTorrent.” *Wikipedia*.

In addition to low share ratios, accounts can be disabled if they become inactive, if a member “cheats” by using a BitTorrent client that enables the falsification of upload/download statistics, and as I shall discuss later, if a member is found to be selling *OiNK* invites. These disciplinary strategies encourage the membership to continuously (and freely) share music as opposed to simply downloading, a strategy that has been described by Bruno Frey and Reto Jegen in their work on crowd theory as an “extrinsic motivation.”²⁵ They render sharing itself into a currency for earning invites and accessing certain sections of the site, such as advanced search capabilities, the “top 10” lists, and the option to publicly request and fill requests for certain files.²⁶ These sections are only open to those members with the status of “PowerUser+” (meaning they have uploaded at least 10GB, have a ratio of at least 1.05, and have been a member for at least 2 weeks). As the FAQ above indicate, *monetary* currency is not “legal tender” in *OiNK*’s ratio system. Coupling this with the practice of rewarding users who meet specific sharing targets—not with access to *more* music but rather with more advanced ways to interact with the music that is available—suggests that “there is some commitment to the popular culture form [in this case music] that transcends monetary value, but draws instead more strongly from notions of fan attachments in our shared investments in a participatory culture.”²⁷

OiNK community members largely embrace the ratio requirements. Site administrators often conduct polls among the membership that address various aspects of the site’s regulations, content, design, and opinions on contemporary filesharing news. In one poll conducted in November, 2006, members were asked, “How do you feel about the ratio requirements we impose?”; significantly, 66% of the 31,277 respondents felt that the requirements were “fair,” while only 26% believed that they were “too strict.” Interestingly, 8% weighed in with the third option, which was that the requirements were “too lenient.” In a March, 2007 poll, 69% of 37,650 respondents indicate that they have “created a .torrent file,” meaning these members have most likely actively uploaded new content to

²⁵ Bruno Frey and Reto Jegen, “Motivation Crowding Theory: A Survey of Empirical Evidence,” *Journal of Economic Surveys* 5, no. 5 (2001).

²⁶ At the time of writing there are nearly two thousand requests for Radiohead’ eagerly anticipated seventh album. The user who uploads this torrent first will announce to the requesters that the music is now available, and as a result, will be the first to seed the files, guaranteeing an increased share ratio. Those who requested the album will be among the first in the whole *OiNK* community to download it, and as it grows in popularity they too will benefit by being amongst the first group of seeders. Not to mention, thousands of people will have the new Radiohead!

²⁷ Henry Jenkins, “Quentin Tarantino’s Star Wars? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture,” in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003). qtd. in Ian Condry, “Cultures of Music Piracy: An Ethnographic Comparison of the US and Japan,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 3 (2004): 358.

the site, rather than simply continuing to share existing content.²⁸ These statistics suggest, as Matei Ripeanu *et al.* have argued, that the extrinsic motivation of ratio requirements has increased members' "intrinsic motivations" to share.²⁹ The incentive to share created by ratio requirements encourages the adoption of an ethical imperative to share among the membership; their desire to share stems from a sense of contribution to the community and the common catalogue of music, not simply satisfying the rules of the site.

Due to its large and diverse selection of files, the filesharing community ranks *OiNK* among the top BitTorrent music trackers. The ratio strategy is the topic of much discussion on the *OiNK* forums, and on other filesharing forums, with users consistently seeking better ways to increase and maintain their *OiNK* ratios. Common "complaints" about *OiNK*'s requirements revolve around a putative impossibility to maintain a decent ratio because of the amount of music that is already tracked by *OiNK*. Most avid *OiNK* users agree that the most effective way to achieve and maintain a good share ratio is to seed music that is new to *OiNK*. The "key" for many is patience and leaving music files to seed for long periods of time.³⁰ In response to the question: "is that site [*OiNK*] really that good?" one contributor on the discussion forum *filesharingtalk.com* assessed *OiNK*'s ratio strategy in the following manner:

yup. best there is [...] patience is the key. not speed! You must expect to leave stuff you take seeding and just forget it [...] takes absolutely no effort to get a good ratio there, actually, because you just don't have to think about it at all. This is also the reason that they have a 100k torrents seeded at any given time. f***ing brilliant. [censored by the poster in original]³¹

Since the site tracks one of the widest varieties of freely available music online, it is quite difficult to upload music that isn't already seeding, and uploading duplicate torrents is strictly forbidden.³² This requirement inspires

²⁸ Not everyone at *OiNK* uploads new content. Many simply download existing .torrent files and maintain their share ratios by becoming seeders on these torrents. It is reasonable to assume that the 69% who created .torrent files introduced new content to the *OiNK* catalogue.

²⁹ Ripeanu *et al.*

³⁰ "Who rules the *OiNK* 'empire'?" *filesharingtalk.com* (2007). Available from <http://filesharingtalk.com/vb3/bittorrent/t-who-rules-OiNK-empire-154212>; Accessed February 2007.

³¹ janine. "Re: Who rules the *OiNK* 'empire'?" *filesharingtalk.com* February 12 (2007). Available from <http://filesharingtalk.com/vb3/p-who-rules-OiNK-empire-post1737614/postcount28>; Accessed February 2007..

³² Meaning that if, for example, there is already a torrent for Led Zeppelin IV, MP3 with a bitrate of 256kpbs, no one is allowed to upload that same music at that same bitrate. Users *are* allowed to upload the same music provided that it is in a different format or improves upon an existing bitrate. So, Led Zeppelin IV, AAC, FLAC, or higher quality MP3 would be acceptable while an identical or lower quality MP3 would not.

many creative approaches to uploading. Another contributor at *filesharingtalk.com* suggests the local library as a potential source for obscure music to be uploaded onto the site.³³ This explains in part why there is an excellent selection of non-mainstream musics such as jazz and “classical” on the site, since public libraries often have much better selections of these musics than typical music retailers. Here there is yet another interesting juxtaposition of a “real world” system of trading that is at base non-profit; public libraries rely on public funds in order to operate a service by which any member can have largely unfettered use of cultural products, paying for them only indirectly.³⁴ Since *OiNK*’s punishment/reward system is based on participation, the constant sharing of music becomes a necessity for members to remain in good standing and still download what they want; this system also has the productive effect of providing *OiNK*’s membership with an increasingly varied catalogue of music from which to download. The productive aspects of the ratio-requirement also extend to sound quality. Though the site has a strict 192kbps bitrate minimum (a reasonable MP3 approximation of CD-quality audio), members are allowed to seed duplicate recordings if and only if they are of a markedly better sound quality. Recordings with higher sound quality have larger file sizes, and thus the seeder can increase the amount of data shared (thus improving their ratio) while those who download the higher quality files benefit from better sounding recordings. The sound quality provision thus has the added productive effect of providing the membership with various sound quality options, from low file-size MP3s to large file-size, full CD-quality audio.

TOWARDS ALTERNATIVES: GIFT ECONOMY TO VOLUNTARY LICENSING

OiNK’s share ratio has particular resonance when considered in the context of a “gift economy.” Gift economies exist in numerous forms, including pre-industrial societies, familial relationships, and works of charity. Online gift economies exist in the open-source software movement, in which users of freely available software are encouraged to modify and add to the design of the software, and in the numerous “free” cultural products available on websites such as YouTube, deviantART, or even MySpace. Gift economies stand apart from market economies in that direct compensation for goods or services is not expected or required. Lewis Hyde suggests that gift economies are characterised by “the obligation to give, the obligation to accept, and the obligation to

³³ Arff. “Re: Who rules the OiNK ‘empire’?” *filesharingtalk.com* February 13 (2007). Available from <http://filesharingtalk.com/vb3/p-who-rules-oink-empire-post1737960/postcount29>; Accessed February 2007.

³⁴ Is it possible here that we might draw an analogy between the municipal property taxes that are often the source of public libraries’ funding and the cost of a broadband Internet connection? Both create the conditions whereby users can have unfettered access to collections of music and books.

reciprocate.”³⁵ This particular set of obligations is embedded in the *OiNK* community’s ethical system, though I suggest that the “obligation to accept” manifests more as an “assumption of acceptance” inspiring members to share music in hope that their offering is something the community will value; and with musical tastes at *OiNK* being diverse as they are, it usually is. The *OiNK* gift economy differs in other respects too. A gift economy is typically in tension with market economies because it is not a “planned” economy; that is, there is no proscribed manner or form that the expected reciprocation must have as there is in an economy where commodities are equated with the abstract value of money. But, the *OiNK* paradigm very much proscribes the obligations to give and to reciprocate through the imposition of the ratio requirements, and it further delimits the form of reciprocation by dictating the attributes of the reciprocal “gift”; for example its format (MP3, AAC, FLAC, etc.), its quality (bitrate), or its type (music, ebook, or software application). Despite these differences, the gift economy paradigm is, to a certain extent, a primary influence on the organisation of the flow of data between the members at *OiNK*, though it is reconfigured in an abstract and group-oriented fashion. That is, the “gift” itself is given to the entire community; members expect that in doing so they have contributed something of value to someone else, and they reasonably expect that something of value will be available for them to download in return. At no point are the *OiNK* gift-givers and -receivers subject to interpersonal obligations to give or receive, their only allegiance is to the community.

The *OiNK* gift economy carries with it many of the same subversive characteristics of the gift economy that develops in Michel de Certeau’s theorisation of “*La Perruque*.” “*La Perruque*” refers to the practice of peasants or workers using resources that belong to their employers in order to achieve or produce something for themselves and/or others, and doing so outside of the official requirements of their job. For de Certeau, the “gift” is a generosity “for which one expects a return”, and this provides underpinning for “the return of a socio-political ethics into an economic system, [a system that is] an interplay of voluntary allowances that counts on reciprocity and organizes a social network articulated by the ‘obligation to give’.”³⁶ For example, a skilled carpenter may—on “company time” and using company resources—construct a table for a co-worker; this co-worker will likely be expected to reciprocate with a service in kind, though the timing and type of service is not proscribed. According to de Certeau, this is an act of transgression and it works against the “for profit” economy, which characterises the employee/employer relationship in market capitalism. Thus,

³⁵ Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (London: Vintage, 1983), xv.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-7.

the politics of the ‘gift’ also becomes a diversionary tactic. In the same way, the loss that was voluntary in a gift economy is transformed into a transgression in a profit economy: it appears as an excess (a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or crime (an attack on property).³⁷

Filesharing, though not a direct analogue of *La Perruque*, certainly demonstrates that a non-profit, sharing-based practice, driven by an ethical code that emphasises sharing and community, offers similar challenges to the global music industry. Filesharers use a resource that is integral to global capitalism in all its forms (the computer, or, communications technology more generally) to achieve a goal unrelated to monetary profit, and in so doing, they are regarded as excessive, wasteful, a challenge to the music industry, and criminal.

While the ideology that influences *OiNK*’s regulatory paradigm and the gradual adoption of this ideology on the part of the membership have obvious productive effects within the community, I suggest that they are also having a profound impact outside the community. This is evident in the popular reporting on filesharing where technology websites consistently feature articles that address music piracy, the threat to the established mainstream music and film industries, or the latest technological developments in Digital Rights Management (DRM) and attempts to thwart it.³⁸ Clearly, the economic implications of filesharing exist within the public consciousness, but I suggest that the ethic of filesharing that is pervasive within *OiNK* and other filesharing communities, is also gaining prominence. In early 2007, Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, Inc., made a public statement regarding the restrictive practices of DRM schemes, like the one used

³⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 27.

³⁸ Successful attempts to strip digital audio and video of DRM are usually released as freely available software applications or “patches” for existing software. For example, in the summer of 2006 DRM on Microsoft’s audio format, “.wma,” used by many online retailers could be cracked by anyone using software called FairUse4WM. See Jeremy Reimer. “Windows Media DRM cracked.” *ars technica* August 28 (2006). Available from <http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20060828-7607.html>; Accessed July 2007. The encryption used on DVDs that made them impossible to copy was cracked by the anti-DRM folk hero Jon Lech Johansen (a.k.a. “DVD Jon”) in 2002 when he released DeCSS. See “DeCSS.” *Wikipedia*. Available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DeCSS>; Accessed July 2007. He has also cracked the DRM that prevented free usage of music purchased through Apple’s iTunes Music Store. See “Jon Lech Johansen.” *Wikipedia*. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jon_Johansen; Accessed July 2007. Most recently he has been involved in cracking proprietary aspects of Apple’s new iPhone. See Jon Lech Johansen. “iPhone Independence Day.” [*nanocr.eu*] July 3 (2007). Available from <http://nanocr.eu/2007/07/03/iphone-without-att/>; Accessed July 2007. Cracks of DRM technologies are also often addressed by the “victim” of the crack by offering updates to their software which “crack the crack,” as it were. Cracking DRM is largely a game of cat and mouse played between hackers and media retailers.

by his company's iTunes Music Store.³⁹ In the statement, which is rife with statistics on music sales and estimates of how many illegally downloaded songs circulate on iPods (i.e. songs not purchased from the iTunes Music Store), Jobs suggested that the music industry stop restrictive practices requiring that purchased MP3s be technologically "locked" into playing on certain devices. He emphasised that this practice is "anti-consumer," the subtext suggesting that Jobs shared the same desire for open access to music that many filesharers espouse. Jobs's rhetoric is indeed utopian, a strategy not uncharacteristic of Apple, Inc.'s marketing style, which often promotes its products as "liberating" in their ease of use:

Imagine a world where every online store sells DRM-free music encoded in open licensable formats. In such a world, any player can play music purchased from any store, and any store can sell music which is playable on all players.⁴⁰

I introduce this statement not to question this particular "captain of industry's" motivations (one can assume this appeal is as much a marketing ploy as a genuine expression of Jobs's personal politics) or even to question the validity of the statistics or positive or negative attributes of DRM as an effective deterrent to filesharing. Rather, this statement reveals that filesharing, though often demonised in the mainstream media, has in fact been instrumental in creating widespread public debate about our relationship to cultural products, their method of circulation, and the ideologies that influence and justify these processes.

It is within this very public debate between the mainstream music industry and filesharers that the conditions are created for re-imagining how music can circulate within culture. Each side of this debate suggests the other as its nemesis. As we have seen, filesharers are often cast as criminals, while the music industry is cast as a Goliath figure that does not have the interests of its customers at heart. One plausible "solution" to the friction between filesharing and the music industry's desire to retain profit has been suggested by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), a non-profit advocacy group that is concerned with issues of free speech and privacy in the context of modern Internet communications. In "A Better Way Forward: Voluntary Collective Licensing of Music Filesharing, Let The Music Play White Paper," the EFF authors open with a position statement that recognises the pitfalls of the filesharing debate for the industry, filesharers, and artists:

The current battles surrounding peer-to-peer file sharing are a losing proposition for everyone. The record labels continue to face lackluster

³⁹ Steve Jobs. "Thoughts on Music." (2007). Available from <http://www.apple.com/hotnews/thoughtsonmusic/>; Accessed February 2007.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

sales, while the tens of millions of American file sharers—American music fans—are made to feel like criminals. Every day the collateral damage mounts—privacy at risk, innovation stymied, economic growth suppressed, and a few unlucky individuals singled out for legal action by the recording industry. And the litigation campaign against music fans has not put a penny into the pockets of artists.

We need a better way forward.⁴¹ (see Appendix Four for the full text of the proposal)

The EFF proposes “Voluntary Collective Licensing,” a system that would allow filesharers to legitimise their practices by paying a licensing fee to an industry-run non-profit collecting agency. Upon paying the fee the music fan would be free to use whichever filesharing software he or she chooses, without the threat of becoming a target of one of the RIAA or MPAA’s many lawsuits. The collected money would then be divided amongst the various artists and rights holders through a transparent process similar to that of already existing royalty agencies such as the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and the Society of Composers, Authors, and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN). This process, according to the EFF, would involve “sampling,” a method whereby which P2P networks could be monitored to reveal what people are sharing without identifying who is doing the sharing. In this way, a reasonable cross-section of what music is shared could be achieved, and the digital licensing monies could be distributed with reasonable fairness.

I am not, at this point, interested in interrogating whether the EFF’s proposal would be effective in solving the ideological tension between filesharing and the music industry. Rather, I think that the fact that groups such as the EFF, and others, such as the Future of Music Coalition and Downhill Battle (similarly oriented groups with an explicit focus on music), are actively engaged in seeking out alternatives to the existing mainstream music industry suggests that the activities of filesharers, despite causing upheaval in the established music industry, can also be a positive and productive force. Filesharers and the music industry are engaged in a dialectic relationship; the ideological rift that exists between these two sides creates the conditions for a much more widespread change in how we view the position of cultural works within society. The EFF’s proposal, with its focus on transparency, standardisation of fees, and concern for the well being of artists suggests but one way in which we might begin to acknowledge music (and other cultural work) as fundamentally different from other commodities, and, more importantly, begin to treat it as such as it circulates.

⁴¹ "A Better Way Forward: Voluntary Collective Licensing of Music File Sharing, 'Let the Music Play' White Paper." *eff.org* (2004). Available from http://www.eff.org/share/collective_lic_wp.php; Accessed February 2006.

THE VIRTUAL TO THE REAL, OR, HOW TO OFFEND THE *OiNK* COMMUNITY

In early February, 2007, *OiNK* members discovered that one of their own was selling invites to the site via the popular online auction website *eBay*. The selling or trading of invitations to private tracker sites is common in the filesharing community; a “black market” of sorts has developed that is usually characterised by a one-to-one transaction and is often facilitated through forums related to filesharing. For *OiNK*, however, selling invites is in direct violation of one its primary rules, which is displayed on its main login page (even before entering the site!) and is viewable by members and non-members alike:

The sale of invites to this site is strictly forbidden and results in both the inviter and invitee losing their accounts. If you come across an auction from someone claiming to have permission to sell invitations to this site, it’s a lie. Do not believe positive feedback ratings; if you buy an invite, we will know about it and you will lose your account.⁴²

Participants in the *OiNK* forums very quickly disseminated information about the sale, and members of the community just as quickly mobilised in order to find out as much information about the seller as possible. Over the course of a few days, forum participants contributed information that they had gleaned from publicly accessible Internet resources, using as their starting point only the seller’s *OiNK* user name and email information provided on his *eBay* auctions. Eventually, a “profile” of the seller emerged that included a picture, information pertaining to his age, ethnicity, locale (complete with MapQuest directions to his house), education, and his online profiles on websites such as MySpace, Craigslist, and other filesharing communities. Due in part to the offender’s use of his father’s *eBay* account to sell the invitations, members also retrieved information about his family, including a picture of his father. This information was briefly made available via a publicly accessible webpage, which the administrators ultimately took down for reasons that they did not fully explain, but which appear to be influenced by the membership’s forum discussion. At one point midway through the discussion, the site’s principle administrator and founder, “OiNK,” offered the following concerning publicly sharing the seller’s information: “Feel free to post it anywhere.”

My purpose here is not to examine the methodology that *OiNK* members employed to learn this information, nor the particulars of what they found. Rather, what emerged in the forum discussions was a heated debate regarding how to effectively punish this young man for his transgression of the *OiNK* community’s well-articulated rules. In examining *OiNK*’s regulatory structure there are clearly two types of infractions. The first, as discussed earlier, is of a technical nature: cheating, ratio requirements, duplicate uploads, transcodes, etc.

⁴² *OiNK*. <http://www.oink.me.uk>. Accessed February 2007

are all “caught” using either automated software (in the case of ratios and cheating) or general membership surveillance (in the case of reporting transcodes and duplicates). These are infractions that materially impact the site’s aim to provide a high-quality, diverse selection of music and other digital media. The second, as I shall show, is an “ideological crime”; an infraction that offends or directly interferes with the community’s implicit (and explicit) ideological goals as expressed in the rules which the site moderators set forth. Of these infractions, profiting from any aspect of the site constitutes the “cardinal sin” against and within the *OiNK* community. Interestingly, the sale of invites would likely benefit *OiNK*’s goal of expanding the membership in order to provide more music; yet, there is an ethical assumption that if someone is willing to sell or buy invitations they would be less likely to share. Crucially, the punishments for both types of transgressions directly affects the offending party’s ability to operate (or to continue to operate) within the community by restricting their ability to participate via downloading and/or inviting friends or through the outright banning of the member and disabling of their account. These punishments also reveal the limits to which the site administrator can go before their own power over the membership dissolves. Unable to cross the boundary between the virtuality of the *OiNK* community and the “real world,” where *OiNK* lacks legal recourse in a system (of intellectual property laws) where its goals are regarded as illegal, the ultimate punishment for breaking *OiNK*’s rules is, and can only be, virtual exile.

What emerged in the forum discussions concerning the offender is that his infraction offended the ideological sensibilities of the *OiNK* administrators and those of the community members who participated in the forum discussion about the invite seller. Many comments stressed that the community’s goals are primarily anti-profit and emphasise the strong commitment to an ethic of sharing, such as the following two suggestions:

fuck em. the community comes first and people shouldnt [sic] be making money from this place. just like if a member was flogging stuff at a market of music downloaded from here. would you be so sympathetic then? share files, invite other peoples but dont [sic] cash in on what goes on here.

he sold something that costs nothing. It’s a scam. The people who bought those invites got ripped off. Even if you don’t give a shit about OINK...you have to acknowledge that making 300+ bucks selling free invitations to BT sites is just the slightest bit shitty. And let’s not forget that anybody who inadvertently passed an invite along to this joker most likely wound up banned from OiNK. So they got fucked, too. And, finally, bear in mind that this site is maintained by people who donate their time freely (I’m guessing). The people who built this site and keep it running see very little (if any) financial reward for

what is (judging by these forums) thankless work. And now some little punk is earnng [sic] his meth money off of their effort—and the harder they work to make this site great, the more money this kid stands to make scamming other teenagers out of their \$39. I think I can understand why OiNK might be a little ticked off by that.

Upon discovery of his actions (and account details), the seller's *OiNK* account was disabled almost immediately. But for some who contributed to the information gathering process and the ensuing discussion surrounding the seller's punishment, the response did not match the infraction. Many contributors advocated a form of discipline that stretched beyond *OiNK*'s virtual world to cross over the virtual/real boundary into "real" life. Their suggested punishments ranged from practical jokes to corporeal punishment, some of the more interesting options included:

someone should ring 15 pizza companies top [sic] deliver to his front door for pay on delivery - someone from NY of course. Now that'd be amusing. [sic]

I wonder if anyone would put pepperoni in the shape of a piggy with the word "OiNK" spelled out in green peppers if you paid 'em enough?

do you think we could get him in trouble at school. That would be fun.

people are very upset. if you're caught selling invites again then honestly there's no telling what one of our more excitable members...might do to you.

i think it would be interesting to find his school and notify them as to his illegal exploits

how about creating a blog or something similar, using an anonymous proxy for security perhaps, and tell as much of the story as is possible
My plan is to call him or his dad this weekend, and...I can record the convo on the computer. if it's any good, I'll post the audio file

I suggest we pool all our money, take the whole community on a trip...line up, and kick this guy in the nuts, one person after another [sic].

These comments, though largely tongue-in-cheek and posted in the heat of debate in the forum, nonetheless indicate some interesting intersections of technology, commodity culture, and violence. The first two comments suggest that certain members of the *OiNK* community are not as anti-capitalist as they seem, they

would be willing to part with the money they have saved from purchasing CDs in order to pay for several pizzas to be delivered! The notion that perhaps the invite seller's school should be notified is a strange one indeed. If the "illegal" activities alluded to are the invite seller's participation in a filesharing community (downloading copyrighted music), what exactly could the principal do about this? If the illegal activity is the selling of *OiNK* invites, then, again, what would contacting the school accomplish? The suggestion to create a blog is one of the more interesting ideas circulated on the forum. Here we see the continued use of Internet technologies to engage in punishment, essentially via character assassination (or so the poster would hope). An assumption is made that the public (those outside the *OiNK* forum) would share the same horror upon reading about the invite seller's actions. I find this interesting because many people, I suggest, would react with ambivalence and likely identify the slight hypocrisy of the community's stance on this matter: "Well, it is an *illegal* site, after all—what's so wrong with trying to profit off of it?" or "Isn't this just a taste of their own medicine? Now the filesharers are getting ripped off!" Indeed, reactions of this sort were common in personal conversations I have had about the research for this chapter. The final comment takes punishment out of the technological realm and places it squarely in the realm of the corporeal. While it is unlikely that this actually happened to the invite seller (though there is no way to truly know), there were other comments that echoed this sentiment. I think that in addition to perhaps causing other members to think twice about offending the ideological orientation of the community, comments of this ilk are, though hyperbolic, good indicators of just how deeply offended certain members of the community were.

The discussion also provoked dissent among some members, who believed that simply banning him and disabling the accounts of those who purchased invites from him was sufficient punishment. They were concerned that the desire to cross from virtual punishment into real world punishment was going "too far" and becoming a form of revenge. A vociferous debate concerned the ethics of publicly posting the seller's personal information, particularly his family's information, and whether the administrators were going too far. Many countered that such measures merely constituted the centralising of information that was already publicly available. Their responses, in combination with the community's general attitude towards the seller's actions, indicate that simply disabling his account and banning him from the site was inadequate punishment in light of an infraction that offended the community's central values. Those who contributed to the discussion struggled to establish what precise form it was that punishment should have taken, but what exactly constituted a fitting punishment remained unclear. I suggest this is because *OiNK*'s disciplinary strategies cannot negotiate the boundary between the virtual and the real. The discussion at *OiNK* indicates the complexity of the relationship between its ideological framework and that of the capitalist "real world": more than one contributor perceived a disconnect between *OiNK*'s disciplinary campaign against someone who had broken its virtual "laws" and the "real world" illegality of some of the site's actual practices.

There was also concern over how the seller's actions might carry adverse legal implications for the community. One contributor at *filesharingtalk.com* shifts the question of legality from inside the *OiNK* paradigm, and situates the website within the legal framework of (presumably) the United States of America:

This is taking it too far because it's putting *OiNK* at way high risk of the kid calling the police about people harrassing him [sic]. Then the police take a look at the webpage on *OiNK* with his details, go wtf? and start investigating. Next thing you know, they're trying to "infiltrate" private filesharing sites in some insane "investigation" which they will be ridiculously proud of. Then one day we'll be watching TV and there'll be some documentary with some idiot cop bragging about how they infiltrated all these "underground websites" with people plotting to harrass [sic] some 16 year old kid from the Bronx who was selling on ebay. Anyways, the police and any media coverage would have about zero sympathy for the filesharing sites, whereas nobody would really pick on a 16 year old kid. So at the end of the day, it is dumb as hell to go after this kid like this.⁴³

This was not the only reference to the confusion over the legal threat to *OiNK*, should it have come under scrutiny from authorities like the RIAA or the FBI. Some members suggested that neither of these bodies has any jurisdiction over *OiNK* given its UK/Netherlands connections while others suggested that they were sure that the RIAA and FBI probably already knew about *OiNK* and that, they suspected, there already existed members of *OiNK* who work for either organisation. The discussion at *OiNK* touched upon these legal concerns numerous times, questioning the usefulness of the site administrators contacting *eBay* directly (which apparently was not actually done), the legality of their public exposure of the invite seller, and whether or not he or his father could sue the site for harassment. Most of the contributors offered less-than-expert legal opinions, and the topics were abandoned. Regardless of legal expertise among the *OiNK* membership, however, it is clear that the complexities of how the seller should have been punished, and the various factors that would have affected any "real world" intervention played a crucial role in the discussions. While there were reports throughout the discussion of members having made verbal or virtual contact with the seller and it was referenced at *filesharingtalk.com* that the seller had been physically accosted, it is unclear whether any of the threats of "real"-world retribution were actually carried out.

For the *OiNK* community "the invite seller" exists as the extreme ethical and ideological opposite of "OiNK," the site's founder. Where "OiNK"

⁴³ euitwa. "Re: oink invites seller." *filesharingtalk.com* February 2 (2007). Available from <http://filesharingtalk.com/vb3/p-oink-invites-seller-post1710641/postcount88>; Accessed February 2007.

represents the collective ideological principles of the community, and has ultimate say over who participates and what happens within the boundaries of the *OiNK* virtual world, the seller is ideologically opposed to and is engaged in activities that threaten both the ideology and material existence of the site. Drawing upon the theories of Giorgio Agamben, “*OiNK*” is the sovereign (he who decides who lives), the seller is *homo sacer*. *Homo sacer* (sacred man) is an ancient Roman conceptualisation of an individual who commits a crime and as punishment is stripped of his ability to contribute to and operate within political or social life; bereft of a voice, *homo sacer* is left powerless, with only a “bare life,” mere existence. *Homo sacer* is not to be ritually sacrificed (officially executed), but punishment will not be exacted on any citizen who murders him. Agamben suggested that *homo sacer* is at once *subject* to the law, yet robbed of his existence *within* the law; in other words, the very law that condemns the community member is the law under which he or she ceases to exist; *homo sacer*, then, is an Other for a lawful society.⁴⁴

In the same way, the invite seller (whether this specific seller, or the idea of an “invite seller” more generally) is a necessary Other that, along with the extrinsic motivations of the ratio requirements, reinforces the ideology of the community. Ultimately, both the banning of the seller and the public exposure of his personal information were initially aimed at curbing the sale of invites, which was seen to be detrimental to the ethical spirit of the community. Yet, resulting from the desire to defend the ideology of the site, these disciplinary strategies became concerned with actual punishment in an attempt to right a wrong that could not, in fact, be righted. The punishment for ideological offences to the *OiNK* community is banishment; as an example of the consequences for such a transgression, the exile, the *homo sacer*, remains known to the community through the continued existence of his “story” on the *OiNK* forums. In this way, the invite seller is subject to *OiNK*’s laws, but is robbed of his ability to continue to participate in the community; rather than disappearing entirely from *OiNK*’s virtual world—though his virtual participatory life is effectively over in that community—he lives on: the traces of his “life” the subject of ridicule, the embodiment of a warning.

CONCLUSION

The actions undertaken by the *OiNK* community in their “witch hunt” for the invite seller also parallel how the filesharing community is generally portrayed and understood in the popular imagination. While the concept of the “invite seller” exists to warn the *OiNK* community against breaking the selling rule, “filesharers,” as a concept, functions symbolically within the legal systems

⁴⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

of many Western countries in order to warn people against the “theft” that filesharing represents in the eyes of those invested in profiting from the sale of music. This warning is manifest in the lawsuits brought by the RIAA, many of which fail but nonetheless are evidence of the power of that group in forming the social imagination and discourse surrounding filesharing, if not policy itself. In terms of regulation and discipline, then, the filesharing community effectively needs the seller and the RIAA and copyright defenders need the filesharers in order to clearly delineate the ethical and ideological boundaries of their respective communities.

danah boyd argues that online phenomena often mirror and magnify existing offline social behaviours.⁴⁵ Taking this line of thought further, there already exists a social desire to share; the ethical “guidelines” for this type of behaviour are already in existence and are magnified in their presence online. As seen in de Certeau, among others, gift economies are already a significant part of offline social relations and indeed have a certain ethical and ideological underpinning as evidenced in the practice of *La Perruque*. Employees at record stores routinely have the opportunity to duplicate advanced copies of new album releases, and are regularly given “play copies” that they can keep when the promotional period of a new release is finished. One can also think here of the constant “recycling” of cultural products that cease to act as pure profit commodities for their manufacturers and producers; there is an “aftermarket” for musical works that is assumed and encouraged in the form of used CD stores, though here an intermediary vendor actually *does* profit from the sale of a used item with no recompense to the creator of the work.⁴⁶ Even public libraries or community centres, though constantly threatened by municipal budget cuts, in principle support the notion of the almost unrestricted circulation of cultural products. Though neither of these examples is a direct analogue to the practice of filesharing—in both cases the original recording was likely purchased new, as opposed to MP3s that often stem from freely obtained advance copies or master recordings obtained prior to manufacturing—they nonetheless foreground practices that indicate a desire for greater and easier access to music outside of the realm of profit; in a sense, an “institutionalised” (file)sharing ethic is nothing new.

I am also tempted here to follow Jacques Attali’s thinking and suggest that in the arc of History, phenomena related to music’s production/consumption cycle are once again prophesising a shift in the economic and social organisation of

⁴⁵ See danah boyd. “Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What?” *The Knowledge Tree* (2007). Available from http://kt.flexiblelearning.net.au/tkt2007/?page_id=28; Accessed May 2007. See also danah boyd. “cyberbullying.” *apopenia* April 7 (2007). Available from <http://www.zephorias.org/thoughts/archives/2007/04/07/cyberbullying.html>; Accessed April 2007.

⁴⁶ See Will Straw. “Exhausted Commodities: The Material Culture of Music.” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 25, no. 1 (2000). Available from <http://www.cjc-online.ca/viewarticle.php?id=571&layout=html>; Accessed March 2006.

culture more generally.⁴⁷ Consider that we have already seen a groundswell in the desire for much more open access to cultural works. TV networks are beginning to webcast sporting events and popular primetime television programmes, the long maligned DRM “lock” that existed on products from Apple’s iTunes store has been lifted from some of its catalogue, and successful filmmakers are beginning to come forward and suggest that they simply “don’t care” if people download their movies, so long as they don’t seek profit. Amongst the *OiNK* community members the sole purpose is to *freely* trade music and not to profit from it; this is similarly extended to site invitations, which are not to be sold either. This isn’t much different from the practice of sharing CDs amongst friends with the aim of making cassette or digital copies—although the quantity of “friends” is much larger, the relationships much more anonymous, and the circulating CD begins as the private property of one of the group. Internet filesharing itself poses its most significant challenge to capitalist hegemony in music not only because it robs profits from record companies or opportunities from artists (indeed there are many reports to the contrary), but rather precisely because the ethical underpinnings for a sharing community already exist and have been magnified by a technology that allows these ethics to come through with much more widespread intensity. The magnification of these sharing practices makes them seem such new and threatening phenomena.

But of course, it *is* threatening. It is threatening because, for those who have web access, there is an opportunity to communicate across great geographic distance. People are realising that their own sharing ethic is not solely restricted to their small physical communities but rather is something that is shared around the world. Widespread communications among those with views that oppose the dominant order have always represented a threat to that order, and that order has always reacted with incredulity and often violence upon the dissenters. In a way then, the casting of filesharers as “evil” in the popular media, coupled with the near ubiquitous use of militaristic language such as “battle,” “threat,” “fight,” and “defend,” can be construed as a form of symbolic violence: should you download music “illegally,” they say, you will be dealt with in a violent manner that befits your “crime.”⁴⁸ Of course, those who do participate in filesharing know that what

⁴⁷ Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ This was illustrated in a 2004 Canadian television commercial for Puretracks.com, an online music provider that requires payment for each download and claims: “Using Puretracks™, music fans can access songs from all the major labels and a wide variety of leading independents, covering all popular music genres.” In the roughly thirty-second television spot, a teenage boy is somewhat suspiciously at work on his desktop computer. From seemingly out of nowhere a windowless van screeches to a halt outside of the boy’s home, out of which comes a group of people clothed in what can only be described as nuclear fallout protective suits. This group of hermetically sealed individuals proceed to invade the home, enter the boy’s room and, using an oversized pair of kitchen tongs, extract the hapless youth from his comfortable home, and lock him in the back of the van parked outside, lights flashing. All the while smoke and confusion

they are doing is not “wrong” in a moral sense, yet they remain keenly aware of the tenuous legal status of their activities. This is a dialectic process that points towards a more open way for cultural products to circulate, and a more transparent way for those who are responsible for creating these products to be compensated.

Technology itself is not the only facet of the filesharing “revolution” worth examining and, in fact, is part of a system of interrelated social, cultural, technological, and economic phenomena that is comprised of people’s seemingly insatiable appetite for music, a culture that is increasingly reliant on computer technology as an essential part of daily life, the rapid pace at which consumer-driven technology is introduced to the marketplace, and the tension that exists between the various industries with economic ties to each of these phenomena. Were filesharing simply a matter of technology (faster connections speeds, better audio compression technologies), then there would be less controversy over its effects on the economics of two of the world’s largest consumer driven industries—the entertainment and technology industries.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Internet-based sharing technologies have developed alongside an increasing popular interest in social networked communication more generally.⁵⁰ As evidenced in the discussion forums at *OiNK*, filesharing is also a *social* activity in which the sharers communicate among themselves. Thus, the emphasis placed on the “file” part of file sharing, can cloud other significant aspects of this debate. If the “sharing” part of the term is emphasised then it becomes clear that this debate is characterised by a friction over who controls how music is circulated.

For over a century the interests of capital have played a major part in determining what music is made available to the public; where and when it was sold, and for how much. These practices have been at once responsible for creating a widespread network of retail outlets that brought music to geographically disparate locations while at the same time being instrumental in

reign—it looks like newsreel footage of street protests. The message here is obvious: If you download illegally, kids, we’re gonna’ come and get you!

⁴⁹ 1) Perhaps, given the increasing convergence and economic interdependence of the two industries, these can now be considered one in the same. 2) A particular irony has always struck me: the filesharing “battle” is at base an ethical one. If it was purely about “profit” then there would be no issue, as the very same technology giants are often financially tied to companies that own the major record labels. Simply, the same companies that sell CD burners, modems, Ethernet cables, and personal computers also hold stake in, or are invested in by, the same companies who are asking us not to burn CDs or share music online!

⁵⁰ For example instant messaging (IM) technologies such as Yahoo! Messenger or MSN/Windows Live Messenger initially allowed people to “chat” via text in real time. More recently IM software facilitates real-time voice and video conversations. This is all possible at no cost to the end user. Furthermore, Internet users flock to dating websites, such as Lavalife, and also to social networking sites like Facebook, a place where members communicate among groups of “friends” using a variety of media. See *Facebook*. <http://www.facebook.com>. Accessed August 2007, *Lavalife*. <http://www.lavalife.com>. Accessed August 2007, *Windows Live Messenger*. <http://get.live.com/messenger/>. Accessed August 2007, *Yahoo! Messenger*. <http://messenger.yahoo.com/webmessengerpromo.php>. Accessed August 2007.

the geographic marginalisation of certain musics, such as the emphasis on “Top 40” music in suburban “white” mall culture or the greater availability of niche musics like jazz or the various “world musics” in larger urban centres. Of course, while this has often been fuelled by what retail determined were favourable areas of profit, and ostensibly addressed the musical needs of a given community there has been the concomitant effect of restricting what music is available to listeners. At a community like *OiNK* then, the diversity of music available allows access to those who otherwise would not be able to experience different styles of music, different artists, or the “back catalogues” of certain artists. Indeed, as the *Rolling Stone* quote at the beginning of this chapter indicates, the practice of sharing is being recognised by the entertainment industry as subversive and threatening to their hegemony and it is the free flow of cultural products, and the ideologies that influence this flow, not simply the monies involved, that are contested by each side of this debate.

THREE

ONLINE CITIZEN MEDIA AND POPULAR MUSIC DISCOURSE LOLLAPALOOZA 2006

In December 2006 *Time* magazine's US edition named "You" as their Person of the Year. Citing the plethora of user-generated content websites and services, such as *MySpace* and *YouTube*, that have gained widespread popularity on the World Wide Web since the early 2000s, *Time* situates the contemporary Web as that which focuses on the individual Web user, and offers that

The new Web is a very different thing. It's a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter. Silicon Valley consultants call it Web 2.0, as if it were a new version of some old software. But it's really a revolution.¹

A major contributor to this "revolution" of individualised and individually-created online content has been the increased participation of Internet users in publishing their own thoughts and ideas via blogs and other online avenues for individual writing, collectively and commonly known as "citizen media." In its 2006 "State of the Blogosphere Report" the blog search engine *Technorati* estimated that it tracks more than 57 million blogs, and that over 100,000 new blogs are created every day. Furthermore, *Technorati* identifies blogging as a global phenomenon,

¹ Lev Grossman. "Time's Person of the Year." *Time* December 13 (2006). Available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html>; Accessed January 2007.

with blogging taking place in many languages as well as the dominant English and Japanese.²

danah boyd, a social media researcher at the University of California-Berkeley, notes that “blog is not a self-descriptive term and, as a consequence, blogs, bloggers and blogging are being conceptualized in conflicting and unclear ways by both press and academics.”³ Furthermore, she suggests

There appear to be four primary conceptual paradigms that frame blogging: 1) journalism; 2) diarying or journaling; 3) note passing; 4) fieldbook note taking. Everyone is trying to make sense of blogging by stuffing it into one of these paradigms, but in fact, it is a new practice that transcends all four while drawing on aspects from all of them.⁴

Indeed, part of blogging’s transcendent nature is its existence, according to boyd, as both a practice *and* a medium.⁵ There is a similarity, then, between this conception of blogging and Foucault’s *écriture*, which acknowledges “writing” as both an “act” and an “entity.”⁶ That is, we can locate blogging concomitantly as an “entity” in which we find the expression of thoughts and ideas and also as an “act” engaged in by the person whose thoughts and ideas are expressed. This is a useful idea and one that allows us to engage with blogging both on the level of content (*what* are these people saying?) and as a social phenomenon that impacts our understanding of the both methods and media through which discourse around a given topic can develop (*how* are they saying it?). Yet, with the recent proliferation of and attention to the blogging phenomenon, can we consider blogging only in terms of how the writers themselves relate to and create the content that they offer? Are there external influences that problematise the widespread assumption that all user-generated content is necessarily in the service of a free and open online discourse? These questions deserves attention so that we can understand how citizen media, influences, and is influenced by, wider offline (and online) social phenomena. In this chapter, I examine popular music blogging and citizen media as situated within competing paradigms of authority and legitimacy as they are traditionally expressed through popular magazines and newspapers, corporate interests, and academia. For the purposes of this chapter I

² Dave Sifry. “State of the Blogosphere, October, 2006.” *Technorati* Nov. 6 (2006). Available from <http://technorati.com/weblog/2006/11/161.html>; Accessed December 2006.

³ danah boyd. “A Blogger’s Blog: Exploring the Definition of a Medium.” *Reconstruction* 6, no. 4 (2006). Available from <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/064/boyd.shtml>; Accessed December 2006.

⁴ danah boyd. “The New Blogocracy.” *Salon.com* July 28 (2004). Available from http://dir.salon.com/story/tech/feature/2004/07/28/demoblog/index_np.html; Accessed July 2006.

⁵ boyd. “A Blogger’s Blog: Exploring the Definition of a Medium.”

⁶ See Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

am examining blogs and avenues for citizen media that are, or aspire to be, read by a wide audience. That is, I am not looking at blogs of a more diaristic style.

The vast universe of blogs, known as the blogosphere, is a complicated space in which exist the varied thoughts, opinions, and ideas of *millions* of people. As such, it is perhaps impossible to provide universal definitions of what constitutes “blogging.” Indeed, it is equally as difficult to categorise and itemise aspects of blogging culture based on the types of blogs and their content, though certain loose blog “genres” do exist (e.g., MP3, political, personal, corporate, academic, etc.). In keeping with the individuality of the practice of blogging and citizen media, I offer not a taxonomy of music blog “types” but rather a snapshot of some of the online discourse from the weekend of the Lollapalooza festival in Chicago, Illinois, August 4-6, 2006.

Lollapalooza is a useful case study because of its history as an iconoclastic music festival that initially featured non-mainstream music, which stands in sharp contrast to its modern incarnation as a festival that features a much broader range of music that includes successful mainstream performers. I discuss the involvement of AT&T, the event’s presenting sponsor, and how it deployed its Project D.U. (Digital Universe) blogging initiative as part of a converged marketing campaign that included, in addition to a visible AT&T presence at the main event, a sprawling website that linked to specific blogs and a webcast of the event. Despite claims made by AT&T, the “official” Lollapalooza blogs, *Stereogum*, *Chromewaves*, and *Scenestars*, did not fulfill AT&T’s rhetoric, which emphasised the “expertise” of its bloggers. This failure is indicative of the difficulties faced in the broad process (in which producers and consumers of information both play a part) of negotiating a general shift in authority from the symbolic/economic capital that undergird the legitimacy of traditional media corporations to the social/cultural capital characteristic of user-generated online content.

Further, I look to online articles about Lollapalooza from *Rolling Stone*, the *New York Times*, and the online “jam band” information portal *JamBase* and examine the paradigms of authority that legitimate each source. *Rolling Stone* and the *New York Times* are both useful sources on Lollapalooza; however, both publications’ online articles are written in a similar fashion to those of the official Project D.U. blogs. Despite the differences between them—*Rolling Stone* is generally more concerned with popular culture than the *New York Times*—the similarity in writing styles indicate a similar difficulty as faced by the Project D.U. endeavour. That is, there is a seeming inability (or unwillingness) on the part of traditional media to fully exploit the fewer restrictions on publication frequency and word limits that are afforded by, and characteristic of, online writing. The *JamBase* article discussed here presents a compromise between criticisms levelled at the overly-subjective tone of blogs and the existence of writing standards in traditional media. Through a minimal set of guidelines, *JamBase* is able to exploit the timeliness and linkability of the Web while allowing users who do not have the traditional authority of journalists or

academics to contribute to popular music discourse. I argue throughout this chapter that citizen media, such as blogs and sites like *JamBase*, challenge the authority of traditional media by placing a greater emphasis on social and cultural capital. Yet, this challenge is not necessarily *inherent* to these media, as demonstrated by the corporate relationship between AT&T and the blogs they used to promote Lollapalooza.

I conclude this chapter by presenting two “extremes” of the authority paradigms discussed in this chapter. My intention here is not necessarily to judge the usefulness of each resource, but rather to examine and contrast the practices involved in their publication. The *Grove Online* and *Wikipedia* encyclopædias are useful indicators of the wider significance that citizen media has had for the production and circulation of knowledge. *Grove Online* lacks any significant reference to Lollapalooza and the website offers little in the way of interactivity for its visitors. It also has expensive access fees that prohibit certain people from using the source unless they have purchased an individual access membership or are associated with an institution that has purchased an institutional membership.⁷ The *Grove Online* is researched extensively and written by those with considerable investment in knowledge economies—that is, those who have spent many years training in officially sanctioned institutions of music knowledge—and those who lack this specialised training may not contribute to the source. This paradigm, in both the printed and online versions of the *Grove* provides the opportunity for scholars to present well-considered information that perhaps is not best served by the rapid updating and constant alteration characteristic of *Wikipedia* articles. Changes in the *Grove* are often in the form major rewrites that address scholarly developments related to research in a given topic area, as opposed to attempts to capture recent commentary or critique. Indeed, this built in time for reflection allows authors to approach crafting their articles with a great deal of care and consideration and is without the “pressure” associated with the more rapid pace of online writing.

In contrast, *Wikipedia* is user-dependent, based on an open-source model in which any user is free to add or edit articles at any time and which is overseen through a hierarchy of “user access levels” that grant varying degrees of power and responsibility to members of the community. These access levels are largely achieved through debate amongst the community and, depending on the level, can give users the ability to edit blocked pages, revert changes made by those with lesser access, promote or demote users, and in some cases be involved in the development of the entire *Wikipedia* project.⁸ *Wikipedia* comes under scrutiny by defenders of the role of experts in disseminating knowledge because it is said to have too much unreliable content, which is in fact the case with the poorly written

⁷ Of course, in our current system, there are many costs, administrative and otherwise, that are associated with creating and maintaining such a resource, even online. These costs inform the fees that are required for accessing the *Grove Online*.

⁸ See “Wikipedia:User access levels.” *Wikipedia*. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:User_access_levels; Accessed September 2007.

and badly researched Lollapalooza article.⁹ The focus on *Wikipedia's* (in)accuracy deflects attention from, but is nonetheless informed by, the significant ideological rift that exists between old-media's symbolic and economic authority and citizen media's emphasis on social and cultural capitals. *Wikipedia's* detractors, in suggesting that its open source contribution *model* is responsible for its inaccuracies, are in part defending traditional media's reliance on expertise. Thus, the wider importance of examining shifting authority paradigms in the modern media environment is that they fundamentally impact the ways in which knowledge and information circulate, and what influences how we collectively understand what counts as knowledge more generally.

SHIFTING CAPITALS

Departing from the set of “capitals” that govern social relations, according to Pierre Bourdieu, I argue that the relationship between emergent user-generated content and dominant traditional print media is characterised by competing versions of authority in which the symbolic and economic capital of traditional media are challenged by a shift in emphasis towards cultural and social capital in user-generated content.¹⁰ Contemporary readers' perceptions of the veracity of claims made by major newspapers and magazines is based in part on those publications' symbolic prestige and the economic power of their distribution. Consider that of the top ten most circulated American newspapers, publicly traded corporations publish all but three, and the remaining seven represent a combined circulation of over ten-million readers. Within this latter group are some of the most powerful newspapers in the United States (and those with considerable symbolic capital, too), among them: *The New York Times* (#3), *The Chicago Tribune* (#5), and *The Washington Post* (#6).¹¹ *Rolling Stone* is an example of a publication with symbolic capital that for some has far outrun its legitimacy, but which nonetheless allows the publication to maintain a certain level of authority

⁹ For example, former *Encyclopædia Britannica* editor in chief Robert McHenry concluded a 2004 article with the following: “The user who visits Wikipedia to learn about some subject, to confirm some matter of fact, is rather in the position of a visitor to a public restroom. It may be obviously dirty, so that he knows to exercise great care, or it may seem fairly clean, so that he may be lulled into a false sense of security. What he certainly does not know is who has used the facilities before him.” See Robert McHenry. “The Faith-based Encyclopedia.” *TCS Daily* November 15 (2004). Available from <http://www.techcentralstation.com/111504A.html>; Accessed June 2007.

¹⁰ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). Though this chapter focuses primarily on the relationship that citizen media has to traditional print media, I think that some of the ideas expressed here relate well to the broader relationship between interactive web-based media and traditional broadcast media of all types.

¹¹ “Top 200 Newspapers by Largest Reported Circulation.” *Audit Bureau of Circulations* March 31 (2007). Available from <http://www.accessabc.com/products/top200.htm>; Accessed July 2007. *USA Today* tops this list with over 2.5 million readers, while *The New York Times* is third with 1.5 million.

within the popular music sphere.¹² Combined, the symbolic and economic capitals of large, mainstream traditional media have contributed to their evolution into, as Weber would have it, “traditional authorities.”¹³

Citizen media challenges traditional authority through greater emphasis on fluid authoritative positions that are relative to how user-generated content is perceived online. For example, one way in which authority is determined in the blogosphere is through blog search engines such as *Technorati*, a website that rates blogs’ authority based on its social capital by tracking the number of times that blog is linked to from other online sources. This signals a break from the “right” to be listened to of traditional media and a move towards a more fluid authority that is largely dependent on the assumption that if more people link to a certain blog, then that blog must present something of importance.¹⁴ The social capital that is demonstrated through these linkages is intimately bound to the cultural capital possessed by those who are adept at using Internet technologies. Michael Emmison and John Frow indicated in their study of information technologies and cultural capital that

A familiarity with, and a positive disposition towards the use of, the burgeoning technologies of the information age can be seen as an additional form of cultural capital bestowing advantage on those [who] possess them and the means of appropriating their full potential.”¹⁵

Indeed, many of the individuals and groups who are active in the creation of citizen media demonstrate advanced understanding of the timeliness and linkability of web content as a means through which to express themselves or disseminate knowledge. And it is through a failure to understand the importance of these factors, and the importance of social capital in establishing authority

¹² For example, Michael Simmons at the *Huffington Post* took aim at what he saw as a decline in Rolling Stone’s journalistic integrity, since to him they seemed more concerned with “airbrushed cover portraits of movie stars and Britney Spears, puerile reviews of puerile music and the cute, precious, pampered, overpaid, board-roomed and groomed product that pass as humans.” See Michael Simmons. “An Open Letter to Jann Wenner.” *The Huffington Post* October 18 (2006). Available from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-simmons/an-open-letter-to-jann-we_b_32016.html; Accessed July 2007.

¹³ See the introduction and Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

¹⁴ Search engines wield ultimate authority online. Consider that “google” has morphed, in its brief history from a noun to a verb. The *Technorati* authority paradigm is in a circular relationship with its search results or “subjects”: *Technorati* becomes the authoritative blog search tool because it returns “good” results. “Good” results are possible at *Technorati* because of its search algorithms and the effective way it has marketed itself as the “place to be” if you want your blog to be read (the *Technorati* database is largely built from users “submitting” their blogs). Of course, *Technorati* is only the place to be because it has a certain amount of authority amongst bloggers.

¹⁵ Michael Emmison and John Frow. “Information Technology as Cultural Capital.” *Australian Universities Review* 41, no. 1 (1998): 41–45. Available from <http://eprints.infodiv.unimelb.edu.au/archive/00002655/>; Accessed July 2007.

online, that I suggest marks unsuccessful attempts at integrating these concepts with old-media authority paradigms.

Of course, Bourdieu's capitals are not mutually exclusive. This is especially true when considering the intersections between online user-generated content and traditional media outlets where these amorphous boundaries are traversed. This creates a complicated and dynamic space in which readers' perceptions of authority and the means through which authority is established are both important factors. For example, *Google* purchased *YouTube* in October 2006, and is currently negotiating how to maintain the site's popularity, which was largely based on the freedom of expression granted to *YouTube* users (a social capital), while concomitantly adhering to a corporate agenda that concedes the right of copyright holders to restrict the way in which their property is used on the site (economic capital). Furthermore, *Google* and *YouTube* are establishing relationships with traditional broadcast media networks like the BBC and NBC (symbolic and economic capitals).¹⁶ AT&T similarly negotiates the fluid boundaries of citizen media through its involvement with bloggers of Project D.U., which is at base a marketing endeavour designed to exploit a popular trend in the service of greater corporate profit.¹⁷

In late capitalism, multinational corporations, with large amounts of economic capital, are often imbued with greater symbolic capital than governments. As the contemporary battle over copyright indicates, economic capital is tied closely to property ownership. Foucault suggested that the link between property and authority, and the legal codification thereof, foregrounds the "forceful imperative" of transgression in writing and literature.¹⁸ Foucault suggests that as the products of authorship become accepted into the "social order of property" (authorship is now asserted legally via copyright lawsuits and cease and desist letters), writers "compensate" for this status by reviving a "systematic practice of transgression."¹⁹ Building on Foucault, I suggest that part of the transgressive potential of online citizen media is that it moves away from the paradigm of material property upon which the authority of traditional media institution is based. Bloggers are "restoring the danger of writing" by rejecting the materiality of property in a time when ownership of media sources is

¹⁶ See "Google buys YouTube for \$1.65 billion US." *cbc.ca* October 10 (2006). Available from <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/story/2006/10/09/youtube-cbs-music.html>; Accessed October 2006., Jane Martinson. "Google faces copyright fight over YouTube." *Guardian Unlimited* October 13 (2006). Available from <http://business.guardian.co.uk/story/0,,1921154,00.html>; Accessed October 2006., Greg Sandoval. "NBC strikes deal with YouTube." *CNET News* June 27 (2006). Available from http://news.com.com/NBC+strikes+deal+with+YouTube/2100-1025_3-6088617.html; Accessed July 2006., Tim Weber. "BBC strikes Google-YouTube deal." *BBC News* March 2 (2007). Available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6411017.stm>; Accessed March 2007.

¹⁷ Though the Project D.U. site wasn't directly selling anything, I think it is appropriate to make the leap between AT&T's marketing practices and their desire for profit.

¹⁸ Foucault, 124.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 124-25.

consolidating under fewer and fewer multinational corporations.²⁰ Blogging/online citizen media, with its virtuality and dynamic topical nature, poses a significant challenge to a paradigm of authority that has traditionally rested on the ownership of printing presses and distribution channels for newspapers and magazines. Traditional sources of knowledge and critique—newspapers and scholarly publications—have some difficulty reconciling their publishing and editorial practices, which are entrenched in an understanding of power based on property, with the new paradigm of online publishing. Here, the attention paid to word limits, advertising considerations, subscription fees, in addition to what we could consider “proprietary knowledge” (i.e. content that is created exclusively “in house” and does not link to other World Wide Web sources), all become crucial markers of old- versus new-media approaches. This is most obvious in my concluding discussion of the *Grove Online* and the wider implications of citizen media.

It is crucial to make the distinction between authority and popularity. Because of their association with the official Lollapalooza website the Project D.U. blogs would have been the most popular or widely read blogs on the Lollapalooza weekend. But, for *Technorati*, authority is not a product of readership, it is a product of links; these links do not readily correlate with actual readers. Furthermore, *Technorati*'s authority paradigm is partly related to the idea of “persistence”—online writing persists because, unless it is erased from a server, it remains available to be read.²¹ Yet this persistence belies the topical nature of blogging: it is the content of *individual* posts that is most often linked to by other online sources. Thus, in order for a blog to gain a reputation as having “a lot of authority,” individual posts must be linked to *widely* and in order for these posts to persist, they must be linked to *consistently* over time by other online sources.

In much the same way that the initial popularity (and eventual economic and symbolic authority) of the print versions of *Rolling Stone*, the *New York Times*, or the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was due, in part, to the widespread perception of “credible” and popular content, so it is for blogs considered authoritative by *Technorati*. But, in contrast to the persistence of blog posts, large paper publications wield economic power that can be used for distribution, which can in turn create favourable conditions for maintaining the perception of authority. For example, a national newspaper can afford to distribute its publication widely, perhaps even in areas where it is not well-read. Additionally, large publications can afford to advertise through different media.

²⁰ Ibid., 124.

²¹ danah boyd discusses persistence as one of the four properties of online social networks. Among the others: searchability, replicability (the text is copyable), and invisible audiences (one never knows who is reading). Though outside the scope of this chapter, these are important factors to be considered when engaging with how authority becomes established online. See danah boyd. “Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What?” *The Knowledge Tree* (2007). Available from http://kt.flexiblelearning.net.au/tkt2007/?page_id=28; Accessed May 2007.

This economic power can make a publication appear to be more widely read than it actually is, and in the cotemporary media climate, the perception of size is often equated with the perception of authority. For blogs, though, the playing field is levelled, in theory, because all blogs can freely access the same limitless distribution network of the World Wide Web. However, as the association of blogs with AT&T indicates, those blogs that are concerned with reaching an ever-expanding audience can achieve this through the symbolic power of a corporate relationship. Crucially, the appeal to the symbolic power of a large old-media corporation does not automatically guarantee a correlative increase in credibility.

It is likely for several reasons that anyone wishing to find information on Lollapalooza 2006 will turn to Internet resources. Two important reasons are: 1) The younger demographic to which Lollapalooza caters is the most Internet savvy; and 2) the 2006 incarnation of the event is “too new” to have appeared in more traditional print resources.²² I consulted three blog search engines and three online outlets of traditional media sources using the search terms “Lollapalooza” and “Chicago” together. I chose these resources because they are all easily accessible and well-known resources for Internet users who wish to find information using a service with more specificity than a standard Google search. I include *canada.com* here because Lollapalooza is not only an American event; the festival toured Canada in its early incarnations, and the proximity of Chicago to many Canadian cities made it possible for many Canadians to attend. Further, *canada.com* is an umbrella website owned by the CanWest Global Communications Group. It includes the online versions of many major Canadian newspapers.²³ These newspapers do not have their “own” sites *per se* as all of their homepages are part of *canada.com*. The search results returned were as follows:

Blog Search Engines:

Technorati.com: 6,569 references

Google Blog Search: 6,857 references

Blogger.com: 6,862 references

Traditional media, online outlets:

Canada.com: 26 references.

Rollingstone.com: 4 references, one of which was a photo gallery. The rest are two-paragraph artist-centred articles.

²² At the time of research (December 2006), this was true. Admittedly though, with the passage of time this statement will become less true; undoubtedly, Lollapalooza 2006 will appear in printed books.

²³ These are *The National Post*, *Victoria Times Colonist*, *The Province* (Vancouver), *Vancouver Sun*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Calgary Herald*, *Regina Leader-Post*, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, *Windsor Star*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *The Gazette* (Montreal) *Canada.com*. <http://www.canada.com>. Accessed December 2006.

Newyorktimes.com: 55 results, many of which are concert event listings. Free registration is required to enter some areas of the site and view the archives. Some archives require payment to view.

Even this cursory look at the Internet-searchable discourse about Lollapalooza 2006 suggests that citizen media is the primary media that creates this discursive formation. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed content analysis of every single blog post that mentions Lollapalooza; to be sure, many of the blog search results will be duplicate posts—simple links between posts or one-time mentions of the words “Lollapalooza” or “Chicago.” This may at first seem to be a reasonable criticism of relying on blog aggregators like *Technorati* for finding reliable information. There is no easy way to assess exactly how in depth the results are without reading them, and most of the search results will be comprised of passing mentions of the topic. It could thus be argued that it is better to consult reputable traditional media outlets, to which we bring our *a priori* assumption that since these sources pay writers in a manner that positively correlates with their trustworthiness and expertise, then the writers’ articles will be interesting and factually accurate. In this logic then, these articles will likely to be of a higher quality than those which are found in the blogosphere, where an economic relationship between the author, their expertise, and the medium for the distribution of their work is not, at present, as readily perceived (or assumed). Put more directly: *One good story from a reputable magazine is worth a thousand bad blog posts*. Yet, in the case of the *New York Times* results, with the exception of John Pareles’s daily blog-style reportage from the event, many of the items were simply concert listings, and in the case of *Rolling Stone*, though they were distinct articles, none went much further in scope than the type of anecdotal commentary offered by the Project D.U. blogs discussed below.²⁴ Also, it is not so much that these traditional resources deemed Lollapalooza unworthy of coverage, since many newspapers and magazines featured articles on the festival, but rather that online, where there is the potential for greater individualised content, many of the references from *canada.com* pointed to repeat stories that were shared amongst the CanWest newspapers and TV channels. Furthermore, unlike their print versions, where longer publication frequencies can “build in” time for reflection before writing, many of these online versions aspire to adopt those same “cutting edge” aspects of online writing—the potential for rapid updating and unlimited article length. Ultimately though, these sources appear to struggle to reconcile their existing practices with emerging online practices.

²⁴ John Pareles. “John Pareles at the 2006 Lollapalooza Music Festival.” *The New York Times* Aug. 4-7, 2006. Available from <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/arts/music/loollapalooza2006-journal.html?8dp>; Accessed December 2006.

PROJECT D.U.

In October of 2004, the telecommunications giant SBC, under their AT&T banner, launched a network of blogs entitled Project D.U. (Digital Universe).²⁵ The network was part of a vigorous marketing campaign developed in part by Tracy-Locke, one of the world's largest advertising companies. The campaign was inspired by the emerging trend in "Web 2.0 applications," which were/are purported to give Internet users greater agency in sharing opinions, disseminating creative works, and forming social networks.²⁶ Under the slogan "Your World, delivered" (with variations such as "Blogging, delivered," "Connections, delivered"), AT&T asserted that the company was on the leading edge of delivering interactive, user driven Web content; one of the major focuses of the campaign's strategy was the increasing popularity of blogs among Internet users.

The Project D.U. website featured links to some twenty-eight blogs that were categorised by theme, including sports, music, "entertainment" (separate from music), and technology. These blogs, and the bloggers who write them, were advertised on the site as being among the "best" on the World Wide Web from whom to gain insight into their various subjects; indeed, "hipness" and expertise are revealed as crucial aspects of the Project D.U. blogs:

Get connected with our experts. We've got the ultimate bloggers doing what they do best: Keeping us on top of the latest news in Entertainment, Music, Sports, Technology and any other topic everyone is talking about. These bloggers have got their fingers on the pulse and it's [sic] not coming off.²⁷

For the marketing minds at AT&T, the most important feature of blogs is the ability to track and comment on current events; this commentary is at its best when it comes from the pens (or keyboards) of "experts." As I wrote in the introduction, Anthony Giddens suggested that "expert systems" are often trusted

²⁵ *Project D.U.* <http://www.projectdu.com>. Accessed December 2006.

²⁶ Tim O'Reilly. "What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software." *O'Reilly* September 20 (2005). Available from <http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html>; Accessed January 2007.

²⁷ *Project D.U.* Accessed December 2006. Though most likely a simple grammatical mistake, AT&T's misuse of the singular in their rhetoric actually reinforces many of the ideas expressed in this chapter. AT&T misunderstands the dispersed and individual nature of blogging by suggesting that there is one collective blogger "finger," thus homogenising blogging and the blogosphere. Furthermore, is there really only a singular "pulse" upon which the collective Project D.U. finger lies? Surely, with the breadth of topics, cultures, and languages represented in the blogosphere, there is much more that this largely middle-class, North American, English-speaking finger is able to cover!

to make sense out of a complicated world.²⁸ AT&T's rhetoric supports the notion that the bloggers of Project D.U. are there to make your world simpler and more comprehensible in the same way that AT&T, the stalwart American brand, has always done. In this way, the Project D.U. bloggers act as the "representatives" that Giddens wrote about, but they serve a dual representative role. They are at once acting as experts in their own fields and acting as personalising representatives for AT&T, effectively "making sense" of what AT&T can do for its customers and ultimately making the company seem less overwhelming.²⁹

The Project D.U. website, the main Lollapalooza Website, and the individual blog websites can further be understood as "access points," places, Giddens suggested, that are characterised by "tension between lay scepticism and professional expertise."³⁰ It is at these access points where representatives do their work, and ultimately where trust is formed. I suggest that the failure of the Project D.U. blogs to live up to the standards set by AT&T's rhetoric reinforces Giddens's observation that an unfortunate experience at an access point to expertise can often result in a person abandoning one expert for another. This unfortunate experience, in terms of the *Technorati* authority paradigm discussed below, ultimately shows that despite claims to the contrary, the Project D.U. blogs are not considered authoritative in the blogosphere. There is an added facet to our understanding of this purported "expert system" of bloggers. AT&T's rhetoric comes from an ideology that expresses deeply held socio-economic beliefs concerning professionalism and the false equation of remuneration with expertise. AT&T then is straddling the porous boundary between old- and new-media authority paradigms, at once attempting to retain (and exploit) the symbolic and economic capitals of their brand while attempting to gain legitimacy in (and exploit) the sphere of the cultural and social capitals of the blogosphere.

This is not to suggest that bloggers cannot be "experts." In fact, it is the tendency to equate expertise with financial compensation of any kind through paid positions as "experts" that prevents us from thinking so. This equation also motivates companies like AT&T to capitalise on citizen media because it is "cutting-edge." They attempt to legitimise citizen media by attaching to it old-media paradigms of economic capital expressed in the direct compensation for the bloggers and the increased revenue (for both AT&T and the bloggers) that is the expected result of the advertisements on each blog. Indeed, the same could be suggested of the Project D.U. bloggers who are at once attempting to legitimise

²⁸ See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

²⁹ AT&T is one of the pioneers of the personal marketing campaign. As far back as the 1908, they crafted a marketing campaign designed to combat the perception of the corporation as too big and impersonal. Up until the 1930s AT&T's campaigns cast them as a "friend and neighbour" and would feature employees of the company prominently in their promotional materials. See Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2004), 17-18.

³⁰ Giddens, 91.

themselves for a wide readership based on the symbolic capital of their associations with a major corporation while attempting to retain the contemporary “cutting edge” nature of their medium.

It is all but impossible to arrive at a conclusive version of the economic relationships between Project D.U. bloggers and AT&T. AT&T benefits from access to the readership of these blogs and their RSS feeds; the bloggers benefit from some form of payment (though a dollar amount is hard to find) and also the potential exposure to a wider audience through the centralised Project D.U. website.³¹ This increased traffic to each blog in turn would offer greater revenue potential for the bloggers through advertising already featured on their individual blogs.³² Clearly, each of the Project D.U. bloggers discussed here is aiming for a wide readership. Each of the Lollapalooza bloggers acknowledges, by way of thank-you messages in their posts from the Lollapalooza weekend that they had access to photography areas, were provided Internet connections on-site in the “press tent,” and that their costs were partially if not wholly covered by AT&T.

In 2005, the *Fortune* magazine columnist David Kirkpatrick probed the use of blogs in corporate culture and marketing strategies. He suggests that blogs are becoming powerful media tools, and that their “democratic” potential as gigantic word-of-mouth enablers has been at once both a boon and a bane to business. He makes it clear that the influence of blogging is not to be ignored:

Blogs are just the latest tool that makes it harder for corporations and other institutions to control and dictate their message. An amateur media is springing up, and the smart are adapting.³³

He cites examples such as the Kryptonite lock company, which had to pay out an estimated \$10-million in replacement locks after the blogosphere was flooded with links to video and text posts that explained how one could pick their locks using only a ballpoint pen. He also shows how corporate culture has latched on to blogging as a potential marketing device. Mazda automotive created a false blog for one of its campaigns designed to appeal to “Generation Y” demographics, but the fickle blogosphere quickly sensed an exploitation of the medium when the

³¹ RSS is automated subscription software that operates like an email client, allowing users to aggregate blog content without necessarily having to navigate to each of the blogs they frequent. This potentially increases the number of readers for a given blog.

³² Advertising on a blog is commonplace. Using a service like Google AdSense, a blogger can create advertising space on their blog from which they can benefit financially via their readership visiting the sites that are advertised, though for most bloggers this revenue is very little. See *Google AdSense*. https://www.google.com/adsense/login/en_US/. Accessed May 2007, and “AdSense.” *Wikipedia*. Available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AdSense>; Accessed May 2007.

³³ David Kirkpatrick. “Why There’s No Escaping the Blog.” *Fortune* January 10 (2005). Available from http://www.csulb.edu/~mwolfin/No_Escaping_Blogs.doc; Accessed December 2006.

videos featured on the blog appeared too well-produced to be legitimate.³⁴ While Kirkpatrick's article focuses on the importance of understanding blogging for businesses, it does indicate two characteristic aspects of blogging culture. There is a widespread ethic of do-it-yourself; after all, blogging itself is largely a product of individual self-publishing. Also, judging from the reaction of the blogosphere to the fakery of the Mazda campaign, there is also a strong ethical relationship between blogging and independence and honesty: bloggers' associations must be revealed in order for them to be perceived as legitimate within the blogosphere.

Indeed, AT&T faced a certain amount of backlash when some in the blogosphere reacted with incredulity to the perceived combination of arrogance and ignorance of the "Your World, Delivered" campaign. Bloggers posted pictures of the billboards AT&T used to advance their claims of "delivering" blogging and questioned the effectiveness of using an "outdated" medium to advertise blogging, something considered to be so "cutting edge." Leigh Householder writes on her blog *advergirl*: "What is more antithetical to actually delivering blogging than delivering the message that you deliver blogging on a billboard?"³⁵ Still other bloggers experimented with the site-specific search function available on AT&T's homepage with which they could search the company's webspace. They quickly discovered that the AT&T search engine returned zero results when one searched "blogging." "SethyG" on *American Copywriter* writes

I combed that site over and never found one mention of blogging on there [...] My guess is that AT&T is piggybacking on the whole blog phenomenon and have nothing to show for it [...] I wasn't fooled, for too long (that is), but that doesn't mean other unknowing customers won't be sold hook, line and sinker. If it's about getting someones [sic] foot in the door, then I suppose they've done the job. But if it's about really giving the customer a service, then I think they've missed the boat on this one.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Leigh Householder. "'Blogging Delivered,' Return to Sender." *Advergirl* January 30 (2006). Available from http://leighhouse.typepad.com/advergirl/the_worst/index.html; Accessed December 2006.. See also Kevin Behringer. "Some People Just Don't Get It." *Copied Originality* April 11 (2006). Available from <http://copiedoriginality.blogspot.com/2006/04/some-people-just-dont-get-it.html>; Accessed October 2006., "AT&T Claims to Deliver Blogging in Ad Campaign." *Bloggers Blog* January 28 (2006). Available from <http://www.bloggersblog.com/cgi-bin/bloggersblog.pl?blog=128062>; Accessed October 2006., and Heather Green. "AT&T and 'Blogging Delivered'." *Business Week* March 25 (2006). Available from http://www.businessweek.com/the_thread/blogspotting/archives/2006/03/_my_boyfriend_t.html; Accessed October 2006.

³⁶ SethyG. "AT&T Delivers What?" *American Copywriter* January 18 (2006). Available from http://americancopywriter.typepad.com/blog/2006/01/att_delivers_wh.html; Accessed December 2006.

There are many more examples of statements like this to be found online. What they indicate is a certain amount of mistrust of the corporate agenda and the perception that AT&T is hijacking the blogosphere, acting, in a sense, against the democratic and grassroots spirit of blogging. Furthermore, SethyG points out a very crucial indication of AT&T's deep misunderstanding of the blogosphere (and indeed, this may well be *part of* the marketing strategy) when s/he suggests that customers might be “fooled” by AT&T's claims. No one company can “deliver” blogging as they would a newspaper because blogging is a dispersed medium where the act of writing or reading a blog is dependent first on the writers/readers decision to participate. Yet, since AT&T has the symbolic legitimacy associated with their brand, and given that the Project D.U. website centralises particular blog content, the casual user might assume that this is how authority functions in the blogosphere.

TECHNORATI AND AUTHORITY

In order to find “non-official” blogs concerned with the Lollapalooza festival that I might contrast with the Project D.U. blogs, I conducted a search using *Technorati*, widely acknowledged by bloggers as one of the most extensive and sophisticated citizen media search tools available. *Technorati* acts as a filtering website that allows users to search content from the “live web,” which is, according to *Technorati*, “the dynamic and always-updating portion of the Web [which is] increasingly referred to as ‘citizen media’.”³⁷ In contrast to AT&T's Project D.U., which restricts its content to that of a few select blogs, and remunerates those who are featured, the *Technorati* paradigm ostensibly allows users to search the entire World Wide Web for blog content. *Technorati*'s search results rank blogs based on “authority.” Whereas the perception of the authority of Project D.U. blogs is dependent on their position within a hierarchical association with a brand (the same *a priori* equation functioning here as it does in our understanding of traditional media), *Technorati*'s rankings, and thus the authority of the blogs that appear in search results, are based entirely on the number of blogs that link to the blog in question. Essentially, this means that if many of bloggers link to a particular blog post often, or if the blog in question is included in a links section or blogroll of another blog, then the blog will have more authority than others; it is *Technorati*'s position that “each time an individual links to a blog, it's a tiny testimony to the value of that site.”³⁸ In the site's FAQ section is the following explanation of their authority paradigm:

³⁷ *Technorati*. <http://www.technorati.com>. Accessed January 2007.

³⁸ *Ibid*. Accessed January 2007.

Technorati Authority is the number of blogs linking to a website in the last six months. The higher the number, the more Technorati Authority the blog has.

It is important to note that we measure the number of blogs, rather than the number of links. So, if a blog links to your blog many times, it still only count [sic] as +1 toward your authority. Of course, new links mean the +1 will last another 180 days.

Technorati Rank is calculated based on how far you are from the top. The blog with the highest [sic] Technorati Authority is the #1 ranked blog. The smaller your Technorati Rank, the closer you are to the top.

Since at the lower end of the scale many blogs will have the same Technorati Authority, they will share the same Technorati Rank.

The Technorati Top 100 shows the most popular 100 blogs based on Technorati Authority. The #1 ranked blog is the blog with the most other distinct blogs linking to it in the last 6 months. If your blog's rank is, say 305,316, this indicates that there are 305,315 blog ranks separating your blog from the #1 position.

The best way to increase your Technorati Authority is to write things that are interesting to other bloggers so they'll link to you. Linking to source material when you blog is also a great way to engage in conversation and help others find what you find interesting.³⁹

The first blog found on *Technorati* “with any authority” that explicitly discusses Lollapalooza as an event is *Indiesurfer*, which features a post that discusses the band The Raconteurs, sometimes characterised as a “side-project” of White Stripes member Jack White, and offers a link to a site where each song that they performed in their set at Lollapalooza 2006 can be downloaded.⁴⁰ Because of the timing of the search (December 2006) I discounted all “best of 2006” style results, links to blogs where the bloggers had listed their favourite albums or concert events, both of which populated the upper rankings of the *Technorati* search at that time but were ultimately unconcerned with discussing Lollapalooza. Though posted many months after the event took place, *Indiesurfer* contrasted with the Project D.U. blogs, which did not link to downloadable full performances, with only *Chromewaves* linking to single track downloads of

³⁹ “What is Authority?” *Technorati*. Available from <http://support.technorati.com/faq/topic/71>; Accessed August 2007.

⁴⁰ Ziggy. “The Raconteurs - Live @ Lollapalooza 2006.” *Indiesurfer* December 8 (2006). Available from <http://indiesurfer.blogspot.com/2006/12/raconteurs-live-lollapalooza-2006.html>; Accessed December 2006.

previously released songs (i.e. not “live” from the event).⁴¹ Crucially, none of the Project D.U. blogs ranked high in *Technorati*’s “a lot of authority” category in searches pertaining to Lollapalooza, contradicting, at least in terms of the *Technorati* ranking scheme, the claims made by AT&T that their blogs represent the work of “experts.”

LOLLAPALOOZA, “DELIVERED” TO YOU BY...

In August of 2006, Chicago’s Grant Park hosted the three-day Lollapalooza Festival. Featuring over 100 acts, the festival combined established popular music superstars, such as Kanye West, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and The Flaming Lips, along with up-and-coming and “indie” music favourites like Broken Social Scene, Ryan Adams, and Iron & Wine, among many others. Lollapalooza had begun in 1991, the brainchild of Jane’s Addiction frontman Perry Farrell, in an effort to showcase new “alternative” artists who were emerging in the early 1990s. It was a fringe festival in marked contrast to the massive world tours of established rock acts like the Rolling Stones and the Who and the elaborate stadium presentations of artists such as Madonna and U2. The original incarnation of Lollapalooza toured festival grounds throughout the US and Canada and often featured “side-stages” of popular local acts in addition to the big names of the early-1990s “grunge” and alternative scenes. At most of the tour stops there were also information booths for many left and progressive political organisations concerned with abortion rights, gun control, Rock the Vote, and Greenpeace, among others.⁴² At base, the early Lollapalooza tours were perceived as risky and iconoclastic, presented as a much “hipper” alternative to the “corporate” rock embodied by so many of the mainstream artists of the day.

Lollapalooza 2006 was a much different affair: it was a non-touring, three-day concert event situated in Chicago, a central North American location. It was also the second iteration of the festival under Capital Sports and Entertainment, who had bought the Lollapalooza brand from Perry Farrell in 2005.⁴³ While the music was diverse—well over 100 acts played over the weekend—the corporate presence was notable and, along with the presenting

⁴¹ It seems unlikely that the decision not to link to MP3s was a concession made in order to avoid entanglement in confusing US copyright laws. Much of the content linked to was video footage of Lollapalooza performances and could also be construed as breaking copyright laws by filming and publicly displaying performances of artists under contract to various record companies. Rather, it is more likely that a concession was made because the iTunes music store, another corporate presence at Lollapalooza, was already selling a Lollapalooza 2006 mix featuring tracks from the albums of every performer on the schedule. Furthermore, after the event, iTunes began selling many songs from the actual performances of artists at Lollapalooza 2006.

⁴² Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin’ Out: Popular Music in the USA*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005), 419-420.

⁴³ See Rachel Surwit. “Lollapalooza History.” Available from <http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/loollapalooza/2006/history.jsp>; Accessed July 2007.

sponsor AT&T, included Bud Light beer, Gibson Guitars, and Virgin Megastore. As the primary sponsor of the event, AT&T provided links to Project D.U. blogs from the main Lollapalooza 2006 website. Users could then navigate to daily postings by the bloggers who were at the festival and were to be posting “live” updates on what they were seeing. Three Project D.U. blogs were linked from the main website: *Scenestars*, *Chromewaves*, and *Stereogum*. All were/are music-centred blogs, and each has a history of posts that pre-date their involvement with Project D.U. The scope of the blogs is commonly limited to the celebration of contemporary “indie” artists—reflecting stereotypes of authenticity associated with traditional “rock” journalism; or celebrity gossip—playing very much into traditional notions of superficiality associated with “pop” journalism. These blogs are “safe” choices in that none has a history of engaging with controversial issues. Moreover, they are all written by bloggers with former or existing ties to mainstream media industries, with each having worked for major music broadcasters or mainstream print publications.

Stereogum, written by Scott Lapatine and Amrit Singh, offers few written posts and instead leans heavily on links to *YouTube* for video content of the festival performances. *Stereogum* is a well-known music blog; it ranked #7 on Entertainment Weekly’s “25 Best Music Sites” in 2006, and attracted investment capital from a former VH1 executive and a former MTV executive.⁴⁴ Rachel Hurley, a former writer for Spin magazine who has also worked in various capacities at VH1, MTV, Disney, and ESPN, writes *Scenestars*. Hurley also maintains a personal blog called *Rachelandthecity* in which she chronicles her experiences with Memphis, Tennessee, nightlife.⁴⁵ *Scenestars*’s Lollapalooza coverage is similar to *Stereogum*’s in its liberal use of video links and limited music commentary. It does, however, have some creative features such as “Dumb Girl Shoes @ Lollapalooza,” which showcases numerous photos of impractical footwear as worn by concertgoers, and the equally comical “Overheard @ Lollapalooza,” a list of questionable and absurd statements overheard at the concert and presented out of context on the blog.⁴⁶ *Chromewaves*, which I focus

⁴⁴ *Stereogum* is one of the most mainstream music blogs. As of August 2007, it ranks among the top 100 overall in terms of Technorati’s authority rankings—an achievement that may be related to the blogs’ association with mainstream media such as AT&T and the investment from Jason Hirschhorn, formerly of MTV, and Bob Pittman, formerly of AOL and VH1. See Michael Endelman. “The 25 Best Music Websites.” *Entertainment Weekly* May 18 (2006). Available from http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,1195793_2,00.html; Accessed July 2007, Peter Lauria. “MTV Guru Hirschhorn Takes Stake In Stereogum.” *New York Post* October 29 (2006). Available from

http://www.nypost.com/seven/10292006/business/mtv_guru_hirschhorn_takes_stake_in_stereogum_business_.htm; Accessed July 2007.

⁴⁵ See “Rachel Hurley.” Available from <http://www.blogger.com/profile/2058064>; Accessed December 2006.

⁴⁶ Rachel Hurley. “Overheard at Lollapalooza.” *Scenestars* August 8 (2006). Available from <http://scenestars.net/2006/08/overheard-lollapalooza.php>; Accessed December 2006., and Rachel Hurley. “Dumb Girl Shoes @ Lollapalooza.” *Scenestars* August 9 (2006). Available from <http://scenestars.net/2006/08/dumb-girl-shoes-lollapalooza.php>; Accessed December 2006.

on in more detail below, began in 2002, and is written by Frank from Toronto. Frank tells his visitors in the “About” section of his blog: “I have a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Waterloo which sits in my room at my parents’ house and gathers dust. I currently work as a web developer at a major Canadian newspaper.”⁴⁷ I focus on *Chromewaves* because the posts there use more text when describing Lollapalooza than the other two Project D.U. blogs do, and also because, according to the information on the blog, Frank seems to be less of an music industry “insider” than Hurley or Lapatine.

It is likely that AT&T’s corporate agenda would only support investing in blogs that do not engage with controversy, and which despite the revolutionary potential of blogging as a medium, nonetheless support the status quo in their actual content. Indeed, concern over controversial material is very much at the forefront for marketing executives who craft online strategies. As Brian Steinberg of the *Wall Street Journal* writes, bloggers “can generate debate and controversy, and aren’t bound by traditional media rules.”⁴⁸ Steinberg quotes one media buyer as expressing reservations over the use of blogging as a marketing tool and suggesting that there are “more lucrative” avenues that do not have the potential to create controversy. Yet, one of Tracy-Locke’s (the marketing group responsible for the Project D.U. campaign) directors indicates that though the potential for controversy is high, there are potential benefits of utilising citizen media avenues for marketing, but only, perhaps, for the brave: “To make this homogenized is to make this boring, and kill the very nature of the concept...this isn’t for every company.”⁴⁹ These conflicting opinions on the use of online citizen media as a promotional device underscore the difficulties that traditional businesses have when confronting the challenges of online promotion. Further, they also acknowledge that the producers of blogs and other online citizen media are autonomous and unpredictable in a way that traditional advertising sources are not—that is, a television ad, no matter how risqué, will nonetheless remain a largely predictable entity while a blog(ger) always has the potential to subvert the corporate agenda unless they (and the blog) are fully in the employ and service of the company, something that was not the case with the bloggers of Project D.U.

Lollapalooza was also webcast through AT&T’s “Blue Room” website. The scope of this type of converged media activity—a live concert, up-to-the-minute blog reports, and a simultaneous webcast—certainly borrows from the large-scale concert broadcasts characteristic of the popular media environment of the last twenty-five years.⁵⁰ The webcast mimics the one-to-many information

⁴⁷ Frank. “About.” *Chromewaves*. Available from <http://www.chromewaves.net/about.php>; Accessed December 2006. It is interesting to note that Frank’s “day job” is at the intersection of new- and old-media.

⁴⁸ Brian Steinberg, “SBC Attempts to Craft a Hip Image,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 12 2004.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ This was most recently evident in the broadcast of the worldwide “Live Earth” concerts in July of 2007 where a record was set for the most Internet streaming requests for the video webcast of

flow of broadcast technologies, but contrasts with the interactivity and hypertextuality of blogs. Essentially link-based media, blogs rely on their connections to other web spaces to give them authority in the online sense (see the discussion of *Technorati*). Yet, AT&T's online strategy grafts a broadcast mentality onto blogging by centralising the blog content on the main Lollapalooza site and "fixing" web surfers' Lollapalooza blog experiences, linking to only the three "official" blogs. Of course, the reality is that any Internet user could simply use other Web resources to find information on the concert; yet, as the AT&T sponsored Lollapalooza website is a guaranteed "first hit" when searching the Web for "Lollapalooza," users' web experiences are likely to begin with that website. It is likely that AT&T wanted visitors to perceive that a) the three Project D.U. blogs had built-in symbolic capital by virtue of their association with the official festival website; and b) any other blogs will likely not have been as thorough, given the fact that the Project D.U. blogs were endorsed by the main sponsor there would be the expectation that the bloggers would capitalise on their privileged access. By stripping blogs of their one-among-many quality and singling them out through the rhetoric of "expertise," and by investing the blogs with the power associated with the symbolic capital of a corporate brand, AT&T effectively subsumes the blogs into a traditional hierarchical media model, one where the media channel is afforded its legitimacy through its association with an umbrella "parent" organisation and not necessarily through the earned cultural capital of those doing the writing or the social capital of their blogs more generally.

Or so it would seem. The content found on each of the Project D.U. blogs is not significantly different from the plethora of other high-traffic blogs—there is nothing that overtly suggests "corporate blog," and the only real indication that there was a relationship with AT&T was a small "Project D.U. (brought to you by AT&T)" graphic among many other eye-catching advertisements on each blog's sidebar that linked back to the main Project D.U. site. The coverage of Lollapalooza offered by these three blogs is anything but in-depth or critical. The bloggers refrain from in-depth critique of the performances, an established characteristic of their posts long before their involvement with AT&T, Project D.U. or Lollapalooza 2006. Save for a few gripes about sound quality, the posts from that weekend are largely concerned with how the Lollapalooza artists are situated within the popular music spectrum (i.e. who is "indie," who is "mainstream") or recounting the concert-going experience through a variety of media.

the event. See "Live Earth Sets Internet Streaming Record: MSN." *cbc.ca* (2007). Available from <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/media/story/2007/07/09/liveearth-streaming.html>; Accessed July 2007.

CHROME WAVES

At *Chromewaves*, the posts from the Lollapalooza weekend were organised around short blurbs of approximately 150 words that focus on a selection of Lollapalooza artists and are accompanied by an MP3 link, a link to the artists' website (or, more often than not, their *MySpace*), and often a link to a video clip. The MP3 links are not to recordings of the performances at Lollapalooza but to previously available tracks. *Chromewaves*'s anecdotal style does not lend itself to the penetrating insight into the festival's performances and events promised by the AT&T marketing campaign; indeed, the dismissive tone of the following post on Kanye West's performance is typical of most of the *Chromewaves* posts:

A year and a half ago, I said I had no idea who Kanye West was. Now, I know that a) he's from Chicago, b) he headlined day 2 of Lollapalooza and c) he doesn't think that George Bush cares about black people. The crowd was apeshit for him but after being hustled out of the photo pit with the rest of the camera brigade, I couldn't bring myself to fight my way back into the crowd to see the rest of the show, and just listened from in back. He had an orchestra with him. Sounded nice.⁵¹

The final sentence indicates either that the author is dismissing West's involvement with an orchestra, or, despite Project D.U.'s rhetoric of "expertise," that the author simply fails to offer analysis more penetrating than simply describing the sound of the music as "nice." Although Project D.U. bloggers are allegedly up-to-the minute modern hipsters, "Frank" at *Chromewaves* has either only recently got his finger "on the pulse" or has actually let it slip off and has no compunctions about admitting his lack of knowledge and expertise when it comes to one of Lollapalooza's marquee performers. Of course, this is in keeping with *Chromewaves*' general trend towards covering "indie" rock, which Frank explicitly states in the "About" section is one of his primary interests (alongside comic books and pop culture).⁵² A dismissive or slightly ironic tone is predominant throughout the blog, whether or not he is commenting on music outside of his own tastes or expertise. Frank is not the "intrepid reporter" that Project D.U. seems to value in their promotional material, indeed, he simply did not bother to "fight" to get back to the stage so he might get a better view or perhaps better photographs for his blog.

With regards to Kanye West's performance, Frank's dismissive tone is characteristic of the much wider issue of racial diversity at Lollapalooza (or lack

⁵¹ Frank. "Lollapalooza Day Two." *Chromewaves* August 6 (2006). Available from <http://www.chromewaves.net/index.php?itemid=2299>; Accessed December 2006.

⁵² Frank. "About." Accessed

thereof). Historically, with its focus on “alternative” rock genres, the festival has largely catered to white middle class youth; when African American hip-hop has been featured in the past, it has not been central to Lollapalooza’s line-up of performers. The issue of diversity at Lollapalooza 2006 was addressed in the *Chicago Sun Times* where it was noted:

Among the most noteworthy performances at Lollapalooza 2006 were the biggest hometown shows ever performed by the two most successful rappers Chicago has produced—Common and Kanye West [...] Unfortunately, the crowd of about 50,000 that watched West perform was almost exclusively white, and hardly a mirror image of his hometown or his fan base.⁵³

Rarely in any of the Project D.U. blogs do the bloggers touch on current events or contemporary politics. By doing so, they reproduce a culture concerned more with the celebrity status of the artists than with musicians’ potential as political voices. Indeed, Kanye West’s controversial statement surrounding the Bush administration’s response to hurricane Katrina was a powerful political statement, and as such was widely reported on in both the mainstream media and the blogosphere. By the time of the 2006 Lollapalooza festival it had been over a year since West had made his statement and he had largely remained silent on the issue. It is no surprise then that for the rapidly changing blogosphere, West’s statement was in fact “old news.” Nonetheless, Frank does bring it up and in doing so creates an opening through which to address a critical issue in contemporary American race politics and yet he maintained his characteristic “indie” emotional distance by opting only to sarcastically reference West’s statement.

In the same post, and with the same dismissive and slightly sarcastic tone, Frank offers his take on the corporate environment of Lollapalooza:

[Built to Spill] were (surprisingly) the first band I’d heard to make a point about the corporate sponsorship of the festival, telling the crowd that Budweiser didn’t actually care about them. Which is unfair. Budweiser is a big company. Surely SOMEONE there is a Built To Spill fan.⁵⁴

Here, with an obvious opportunity to exploit the powerful individuality of a blog and engage with another crucial aspect of the modern popular music climate, Frank leaves us with no further thoughts on the matter; in fact, his post is more

⁵³ Jim DeRogatis. “No Audience Diversity Despite Common and Kanye Shows.” *The Chicago Sun Times* August 13 (2006). Available from http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4155/is_20060813/ai_n16637538; Accessed December 2006.

⁵⁴ Frank. “Lollapalooza Day Two.” Accessed

apologetic to corporate sponsorship than it is critical. In a similar vein, *New York Times* popular music critic John Pareles, in his response to Built To Spill's comments on the corporate sponsorship of Lollapalooza was less apologetic than resigned to the "necessity" of corporate sponsorship of the contemporary festival circuit:

They were complaining about a *fait accompli*. A handful of big-time musicians still tour without corporate tie-ins, but even those diehards end up working in arenas and theaters that have been branded. And festivals have long since decided that corporate sponsorship makes up for any perceived loss of credibility.⁵⁵

One month later Built to Spill's lead singer Doug Martsch, who was responsible for taking on Budweiser at Lollapalooza, was interviewed by Rod Smith for Minneapolis/St. Paul's *City Pages* where he was explicit about his distaste for corporate sponsorship at music events:

That kind of stuff is depressing [...] that you can't have a show without Budweiser, AT&T, and all the corporations being involved. I just don't understand why people let them put their fingers into everything we do. The worse thing is that people don't give a shit. If you try to discuss it, they think there's something wrong with you, that you're being hysterical or alarmist or something.⁵⁶

Smith takes the opportunity to engage with the issue further, questioning whether the *New York Times*'s popular music critic John Pareles was justified in his comments about the corporatisation of Lollapalooza:

While stopping short at outright accusations, *New York Times* pop music critic John Pareles waxed more than a little supercilious about Martsch's comment [...] Mr. Pareles's smug swipe isn't only slick as dookie: He fails to note (notice?) that neither of the bands he calls out [Built to Spill and the Dresden Dolls] perform at corporate-branded venues or tour behind logos—and not because they're holding out for Halliburton. Sure, Built to Spill are on Warner Bros. But even Time-Warner smells like Devendra Banhart compared to the likes of AT&T.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Pareles.

⁵⁶ Rod Smith. "Modest Martsch." *Citypages.com* September 26 (2006). Available from <http://citypages.com/databank/27/1344/article14688.asp>; Accessed January 2007.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* See also *Devendra Banhart*. <http://www.cripplecrow.com/>. Accessed January 2007, and "Devendra Banhart." *Wikipedia*. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devendra_Banhart; Accessed March 2007. Accessed January 2007. Banhart is an American folk musician who appears to be fiercely independent, spiritual, and charity minded.

To be sure, the post at *Chromewaves* could have addressed the issues of racism and corporate involvement further. Indeed, given the characterisation of bloggers as independent, DIY types, it could almost be *expected* that *at least* the latter issue be dealt with more pointedly. But, at *Chromewaves* there is an overall stylistic sarcasm and lack of depth with most of the short artist-focussed blurbs that comprise each post. It is unsurprising given *Chromewaves*' relationship with AT&T that the blog would support and reinforce dominant ideologies and demonstrate a decidedly apathetic stance on the relationship between music and contemporary social and corporate politics. Of course, neither *CityPages* nor the *New York Times* goes much further in their own assessments of corporate involvement, further reinforcing the point that blogging, while certainly opening up opportunities for more diverse perspectives in a given discursive formation, can nonetheless adopt and thus reinscribe the very same ideologies that guide mainstream corporate media.

JAMBASE

The first blog “with a lot of authority” found on *Technorati* with the search term “Lollapalooza 2006,” and the first which explicitly discusses Lollapalooza as an event (as opposed to part of a “best of 2006” list) is an article from *JamBase.com*.⁵⁸ *JamBase* is concerned with providing up-to-date information on “jam bands” and includes feature articles, photo galleries, event calendars, and the opportunity for *JamBase* community members to create profiles, allowing them to interact virtually with other *JamBase* members; membership is entirely free and not a pre-requisite for viewing the articles on the site. “Jam bands” are commonly understood as those artists who owe a common musical debt to the improvisatory spirit of the Grateful Dead, The Allman Brothers Band, and Santana, among others. Interestingly, the jam band scene was one of the earliest to exploit the possibilities of the World Wide Web when some message boards dedicated to the jam band resurgence in the early 1990s were created. Also, the Internet quickly became one of the primary means by which fans could trade recordings of these bands’ performances, first through contacting each other via message boards or email, and later through sharing music files online.⁵⁹

Though not a blog in the commonly understood sense, the *JamBase* articles section does conform to the of citizen media in that it is comprised of articles submitted by *JamBase* community members. Indeed this is emphasised in the website’s “Staff” page, where along with the key figures in the site’s

⁵⁸ SuperDee. “Coming Home Via Chicago & Lollapalooza.” *JamBase* (2006). Available from <http://www.jambase.com/headsup.asp?storyID=8992>; Accessed December 2006.

⁵⁹ See the introduction of Chapter Two for the Dave Matthews Band’s interaction with the file sharing website *etree.org*.

administration are listed the “Regional Contributors – The Life Force of JamBase”:

There are literally thousands of contributors who help to make *JamBase* a reality. Our contributors are everywhere and everybody; they are working musicians, aspiring writers and simply music fans at large. They come from all over the world and their submissions are truly invaluable to the evolution of *JamBase*.⁶⁰

Similar to the *Grove*, there is an emphasis here on quantity but in contrast *JamBase* indicates that the quality comes directly from the openness of the community as opposed to the symbolic capital of their contributors. A crucial difference between JamBase and blogging is the presence of editorial oversight. *JamBase* explains their editorial criteria for member contributions in their “Article Submission Guidelines and FAQ”:

The topic has general interest among the music lovers who make up our *JamBase* users and readers.
The material is original.
The writing is clear.
The data is valid and checked.
The information is timely, accurate and complete.
The submission has been spell-checked.
The article is well thought-out, analytical and critical.⁶¹

JamBase also defines six distinct types of articles that can be submitted: Show Reviews, Interviews, CD Reviews, Previews, Press Releases/News Items, and Photo Galleries. Indeed, the criteria set forth by *JamBase*’s editors belies the criticisms levied at user-generated media, especially blogs, by the mainstream or established media who often cite the lack of a guiding standards code for creating online journalism. Elizabeth Osder writes

Bloggers are navel-gazers [...] And they’re about as interesting as friends who make you look at their scrap books [...] There’s an overfascination [sic] here with self-expression, with opinion. This is opinion without expertise, without resources, without reporting.⁶²

danah boyd points out that this is a misconception of what bloggers actually do:

⁶⁰ *JamBase*. <http://www.jambase.com>. Accessed December 2006.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Noah Shachtman. “Blogs Make the Headlines.” *Wired* December 23 (2002). Available from <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,56978,00.html>; Accessed January 2007.

The press is constantly comparing blogging to diary writing. The comparison is problematic because it suggests that blogging can be evaluated on those terms. In order to signify the difference between blogging and “real journalism,” it is not that surprising that the *New York Times* drudges up connotations of 13-year-old girls writing about their lives.⁶³

In the case of *JamBase*, though inspired by the idea of a democratic participatory web, there is an attempt at codifying some sort of writing standard for the content on their site. Not surprisingly, the results are often more lengthy, insightful articles, such as the one on Lollapalooza 2006.

The *JamBase* Lollapalooza review features 3000 words of commentary and critique from the *JamBase* community member SuperDee, accompanied by photos by Adam George & Dave Vann. Here we find a diaristic rundown of SuperDee’s experience at the festival divided into four sections. “Hey, That’s New To Me” reveals her favourite surprises of the festival, bands who she had heard little of before attending; “If You’ve Been reading *JamBase*” covers the handful of jam bands at Lollapalooza. Interestingly, much of this coverage is dedicated to unofficial late-night Lollapalooza “aftershows” which took place in many venues throughout Chicago that weekend and featured a greater jam band presence than the main festival. As a major point of contrast, while Frank from *Chromewaves* was unwilling to endure the crowds in order to report on Kanye West, it appears that SuperDee was willing to stay up all night in order to report on the various events that accompanied Lollapalooza! “What Came First? The Buzz or the Band?” addresses some of the overnight successes present at the festival (such as Gnarls Barkley and Wolfmother); “Man That Just Feels Good” recounts the “best of” moments for SuperDee.

Though she doesn’t discuss the sound of the performances as much as she does their visual performance aesthetics, SuperDee does at least attach a certain amount of value to describing her reactions to the sounds she heard, and she uses some creative prose to paint a picture of her personal experiences watching the artists. In discussing Los Angeles-based The Cold War Kids:

Sometimes you have to really look hard to see the true spirit of a band, and sometimes they wear it right out there on their sleeves. Stomping and convulsing around the stage, the sound was raw and real and full of soul. Lead singer Matt Aveiro was commanding and captivating, and the sound of that Gibson played by guitarist Jonnie Russell was luscious. Drummer Nathan Willett was armed only with a stripped-down kit, and bassist Matt Maust looked like he was going to kill

⁶³ boyd. “The New Blogocracy.”

someone half the time as he snarled and thrashed around the stage while pounding out the bass lines.⁶⁴

Furthermore, SuperDee wades, however briefly, though not entirely unexpectedly for someone in the traditionally politically leftist jam band community, into contemporary world politics. Lollapalooza 2006 took place during the Israel-Lebanon conflict of July-August that year, and here in the *JamBase* article we find reference to these events contextualised through one of the performances.

When [Wayne Coyne of the Flaming Lips] leads a sing-along of “The Yeah Yeah Yeah Song,” he is intending not only to stop traffic on Lake Shore Drive but to stop Israel from bombing Lebanon. He claims to understand that, of course, singing songs can’t stop war, but I get the feeling that deep down, he truly believes that it can. What a miracle it would be if all it took was the correct mixture of giant balloons with dancing santas and aliens and confetti and... and... It really makes you think, though, with all your power, what would YOU do?⁶⁵

None of the Project D.U. bloggers touches on this event at all, and save for some references in the comments sections of some of the posts, the commentary on Lollapalooza at *Stereogum*, *Scenestars*, and *Chromewaves* remains isolated from world events taking place outside of the festival.⁶⁶ The *JamBase* article concludes with a set of “Top Three” lists, with content courtesy of some of SuperDee’s friends, which emphasised the performances of artists “never before seen or heard” that have since become her friends’ favourites. SuperDee’s article is, in my opinion, a much more thoughtful engagement with the events of Lollapalooza than any of the posts found at the Project D.U. blogs. It avoids the pitfalls of mere celebrity gossip or “indie” detachment that characterise those blogs. Yet, much like the Project D.U. blogs, I find the article lacking any significant engagement with Lollapalooza as a cultural event.

Significant engagement, for me, means more insightful writing about Lollapalooza in a wider cultural context, even within what appears to be the convention of limiting blog posts to timely descriptions of personal experience. For example in the comments section of the “Lollapalooza Coda” post at *Chromewaves*, Maria wrote a long entry about the police brutality she had witnessed as concert attendees exited Grant Park after the festival’s closing performance by the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

⁶⁴ SuperDee.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ See “Lipsapalooza.” *Stereogum* August 6 (2006). Available from <http://www.stereogum.com/archives/003036.html>; Accessed December 2006.

[...] a crowd of people [had] stopped to see what the commotion was about. It happened to be two people in the fountain playing around and this caught the eye of security. The crowd loved it!

[...] we didn't have enough time to think before the police had arrived ON HORSES to push everyone away. I was being pushed around by a horse's behind as the police officer on top turned the horse around and walked forward into a crowd of thousands of people.

[...] One man said something along the lines of "Watch it man, I'm moving." Meaning, he was walking and the cops did not need to use a heavy horse to push him away. The cops immediately took him down, not one cop, not two cops, but four cops to this one man who did not even use any physical or verbal force to the officers. His female companion tried to help but they blocked her off and all she wanted to say was, "Wait he has a broken arm!" I watched in horror as they grabbed his arm and twisted it behind his back. The grown man screamed. I have never heard a grown man scream in such pain and helplessness before. I tried to help him and they blocked me with a horse. I was crying, I could do nothing, but turn my head and walk away. I hear a police officer on his horse say to another officer, "Look! We've got a live one." I wanted to say, "You asshole, we're all alive!"

[...] I did not see a single fan initiating or participating in a violent act.

[...] This was so minute compared to other events [...] but it really put a marking in my memory. What did the blacks have to go through for all these years? What are they going through now? Other minorities? Women rights? Gays today? I feel like we are being cowards now. We are not giving the respect to the warriors before us, Dr. King, Susan B. Anthony, so many people who have risked their lives for our freedom and now our generation is so quick to say, "It's the law, it's our government so it must be right?" These police officers taking advantage of innocent citizens. I feel so disgusted by the whole scenario, it hurts my stomach to remember it. But something must be done. I don't want to hear that man's scream again. I want every person to be "a live one."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Maria. "Comment on Frank, 'Lollapalooza Coda'." *Chromewaves* August 8 (2006). Available from <http://www.chromewaves.net/index.php?itemid=3301>; Accessed December 2006.

Of course, it appears that the Project D.U. blogger was not there and thus did not cover this event. Though it might be possible to suggest that Frank did not address this issue because of his association with AT&T, but neither did he delete Maria's comment from his blog, which, due to its length, appears on the page equally as a significant as the main post. However, it is common for bloggers to engage with the comments they find on their sites either in the comment thread itself, or as the subject of a new post. Frank did neither. In fact, Maria's comment was one of only two; the other was an indication of jealousy over Frank's description of his AT&T-provided privileges at the festival (i.e. travel expenses, access to photo pits, media tents, etc.). In the same way that Maria complains of apathy in the face of governmental or police abuse of power, her comment, ignored as it was, became subject to the same apathy.

The Project D.U. blogs then, with their limited focus, function more as clearing houses for multimedia from the event. It is crucial to note that this is a service that could have been provided directly from the main Lollapalooza website, where links to *YouTube* could have appeared alongside photographs and downloadable content. In this way, aside from the few entertaining posts mentioned above courtesy of *Scenestars*, the inclusion of blogs to provide this service is in actuality little more than an intermediary step. And, save for the cultural or "indie" credibility associated with blogging, this step added very little to the web experience of Lollapalooza fans. It seems that AT&T's decision to utilise blogs is, as other bloggers had suggested of their "Your World, Delivered" campaign, little more than corporate bandwagon-jumping; an attempt by a pre-Internet corporation to appeal to and profit from the sensibilities of an Internet savvy demographic.⁶⁸

THE GROVE ONLINE AND WIKIPEDIA

The development of online discourse surrounding Lollapalooza 2006 is a useful case study for elucidating the wider implications of the authority paradigms that legitimate both old- and new-media. As the examples in this chapter show, the boundaries between the symbolic/economic capitals of old-media and social/cultural capitals of new-media are fluid and resist simple binaries. Not all citizen media necessarily fully exploits the potential for more open discourse afforded by the foregrounding of social and cultural capitals while not all traditional media necessarily restricts its content in the service of the economic and symbolic capitals that undergird that industry. Indeed, the content of the citizen media and traditional media sources examined in this chapter are more

⁶⁸ As I discuss in the conclusion of this thesis, the Project D.U. initiative no longer exists, and AT&T focus on the popularity of blogs has considerably diminished in the new "Blue Room" website that replaced Project D.U. This suggest that perhaps the AT&T blogging campaign was designed to profit off of the hype surrounding blogs between 2004-2006, but that they have changed their focus.

similar than different, despite the differences in their authority paradigms. In closing, I present a contemporary debate, where the traditional authoritative paradigm of the *Grove Online* contrasts sharply with the relatively unmediated freedom of *Wikipedia*. This comparison is not intended to establish the “value” of each resource; I am not suggesting that either the *Grove* or *Wikipedia* is somehow better than the other, nor do I mean to imply that there isn’t a place for each type of resource. Instead, I am interested in how each resource negotiates the shifting capitals described in this chapter, and whether or not it is necessary or appropriate that they do. Moreover, I am interested in what, if any, barriers to participation exist in each of these widely-consulted yet seemingly disparate resources.

The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, published by Oxford University Press, is a venerable resource for academic music scholarship with over 100 years of history as a multi-volume print edition. It is considered by many to be at its most useful when researching Western European music history. But, it is not widely accepted as a useful resource for information on popular music. Consider that there are only two references to the term “Lollapalooza” found in the *Grove Online*. The first references the title of a composition by twentieth-century concert music composer John Adams and the second appears in passing as part of the entry on twentieth-century music festivals as part of the same paragraph in which the only reference to 1969’s Woodstock Music Festival appears. In the seven-part entry on “Festivals” in the *Grove Online*, only part six is concerned with twentieth-century festivals, and there, out of the 1,300 words on this topic, only 180 words are dedicated to the “fashion for pop and rock festivals” in the latter twentieth century.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, there are separate detailed entries for “classical” music festivals Tanglewood, Aspen, and Aldeburgh, among many others.

Grove Online emphasises that each of their articles features “links to articles,” but these are not usually links to other Web resources; rather, they are links within *Grove* itself and this practice reinforces the notion of “proprietary” knowledge that I mentioned earlier in the chapter.⁷⁰ Though there are some

⁶⁹ In much the same way as providing citations to discussion in the OiNK forums was unnecessary, so are citations of *Grove Online* entries. Unless one has an individual or institutional membership, these entries are inaccessible. Nonetheless, *Grove* does indicate the proper citation of their online articles, note that the following citation includes my university affiliation. Percy M. Young *et al.* “Festival.” *Grove Music Online* (2007). Available from <http://www.grovemusic.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca>; Accessed July 2007.

⁷⁰ *Grove Music Online*. <http://www.grovemusic.com>. Accessed January 2007. As of July 2007 this specific claim no longer appears on the website. Noting the use of the term “mothership” in the *Grove*’s promotional statements, a term which any savvy popular music fan (or scholar) would readily associate with George Clinton and his involvement with funk groups Parliament and Funkadelic, it is rather incongruous that the publication would not have more in depth commentary on as important a popular music phenomenon as the Lollapalooza tours. The mothership, though initially a term that referenced a large vessel that would contain smaller vessels, was appropriated to form an integral part of a Parliament-Funkadelic performance. A

external Web links that accompany each article, they are usually to the “official” websites of artists or festivals and are not to outside criticism, opposing viewpoints, or competing sources for information. There is also very little in the way of interactivity on the *Grove Online* site; there is no way for users to rectifying any errors or lack of content in a *Grove* entry, as evidenced in the website’s FAQ:

Q. How do I comment on an article?

A. If you have any general comments on the content of an article please contact the Grove editorial team, please offer as much explanation as possible and include your academic affiliations plus any other relevant bibliographic information.⁷¹

Thus, the lack of information on the early Lollapalooza touring festivals and the recent Chicago incarnations cannot be easily corrected, suggesting that the *Grove Online*’s purpose is not to exploit the possibility of speed and efficiency with which new content can be generated online, but rather to provide easier access to the contents of the printed resource. Indeed, the availability of the *Grove* online does make it possible for those who have access to consult it from anywhere, at any time. And, the *Grove Online* is largely meant to be a reflection of the print volume, so it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that there be rapid updating and user-interactivity on the site.

The instruction to “include your academic affiliations” suggests that the participation of the non-academically trained is precluded. And, though the *Grove Online* is much more widely accessible and easier to search than the print version, the readership is similarly restricted to those who have the resources to invest in the subscription fees.⁷² Perhaps more importantly, the readership that can access the *Grove Online* most readily are those who are affiliated with institutions, such as students at universities, and more often than not the institutional subscription fee is accompanied by rising tuition costs, and often perceived as a part of them. These barriers to access can potentially reinforce a culture of elitism by excluding many popular music fans from contributing to the “official” discourses that surround the music about which they are so passionate.⁷³

model spaceship would descend to the stage amidst much smoke and pyrotechnics, out of which George Clinton would emerge with his messages of Black Nationalism.

⁷¹ Ibid. However, those scholars who have authored articles are able to update and edit them as they wish.

⁷² The fees are approximately \$300USD per year. See Ibid.

⁷³ Of course, the notion that there can be an “official” discourse about popular music is a topic of much contention among popular music scholars since popular music has traditionally existed on the margins of a much larger “official” *music* discourse, that of Western European Art Music. Yet, despite the best of intentions, those who are outside the academic study of popular music often see it as being either subsumed into “the establishment” of academic music or, perhaps more cynically, as a consolation in music departments who want large enrolment classes. At its worst, some regard popular music in the academy as a “bird course,” and easy credit, i.e. not “real”

In this way, music blogging, and the contributions of music-related articles by “amateurs” to open source knowledge initiatives provide a useful counter balance to more exclusive sources such as the *Grove Online*. I suggest that though they differ in terms of their editorial and publishing practices, the *Grove Online* and *Wikipedia* are complimentary research sources, and that the importance of citizen media is not simply that it can *displace* “expert systems” or authoritative knowledge, but rather that it can *augment* more traditional resources either by reinforcing the content of these resources, or by providing opinions and ideas that run counter to them.

In contrast to the *Grove Online*, *Wikipedia* is a user-dependent online encyclopædia. In a sense, it is peer-review writ large, but albeit a review done by those without traditionally recognised credentials. Anyone can add to, edit, or discuss existing articles, while free registration allows users to create new articles. Contributions made by readers are largely anonymous, and authorship cannot be readily established for articles.⁷⁴ A common feature of *Wikipedia* articles is the ability for readers to publicly indicate issues they have found while reviewing articles. These issues can range from suggestions that citations are required for certain claims, to injunctions to “clean up” or rewrite an article so that it conforms to *Wikipedia*’s standards for article layout.

The *Wikipedia* entry on Lollapalooza is long and includes numerous subsections, lists of participants, and links to both other relevant *Wikipedia* articles and external Web resources.⁷⁵ It has steadily evolved since its first iteration in July 2003 as a “stub” (a short blurb introducing the topic) to an article that features some historical and contextual information, though it is primarily concerned with listing those artists who participated in each tour.⁷⁶ Yet, despite its detail and length, the article has been “flagged” by readers at several points who suggest that it include more citations; *Wikipedia* administrators have also marked it as “need[ing] additional references or sources for verification.” These criticisms are well founded as the article reads like a poorly researched summary of the popular history of the festival. At points it is heavily opinionated, and, according to the discussion page that accompanies the article, facts regarding which artists have performed at the festival are simply wrong.⁷⁷

university! Moreover, “official” popular music discourse can also be seen as that which is proffered by the mainstream music press (magazines like *Rolling Stone* or *Spin*, television networks like MTV, VH1, or *MuchMusic*) where a similar, if less ivory-towered, elitism exists.

⁷⁴ Though articles at *Wikipedia* are unsigned, it is possible to determine who authored an article or made an edit, but this only goes as far as a username (usually a “screen name”) or an IP address (which doesn’t help in identifying an actual person).

⁷⁵ See “Lollapalooza.” *Wikipedia*. Available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lollapalooza>; Accessed July 2007.

⁷⁶ See “Lollapalooza.” *Wikipedia* (2003). Available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lollapalooza&oldid=1160800>; Accessed July 2007.

⁷⁷ “Talk:Lollapalooza.” *Wikipedia*. Available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Lollapalooza>; Accessed July 2007.

The poor quality of the Lollapalooza article seems to echo the sentiments of many on the listserv for the American Musicological Society who point to the general inadequacies of most *Wikipedia*'s articles on music related topics.⁷⁸ That said, there are certainly *more* articles about contemporary popular music than are found in the *Grove Online*.⁷⁹ *Wikipedia* works from the premise that other readers and administrators will catch any factual errors or overly opinionated articles, and that this approach will ultimately result in the collective repair of a given article and greater quality overall. Though *Wikipedia* does have approximately 1,500 users with “administrative privileges”—those who have an access level that permits them to edit protected pages, revert changes, and delete or restore pages—the process of submitting and editing is largely non-hierarchical and dispersed, features shared with citizen media more generally.

Yet, there are some barriers that preclude just anyone from becoming a *Wikipedia* administrator. Firstly, the *Wikipedia* community values participation and promotes those who contribute through debate amongst other administrators and editors by examining criteria relative to the nominee's activity in the community. This means that if one wished to increase their user level access to administrator (or to any of the other higher statuses) then one must spend a lot of time editing and creating articles in order to build up his or her virtual *Wikipedia* “resumé.” This is certainly prohibitive to many, including those who may indeed have valuable expertise to add to *Wikipedia* articles but whose positions as paid experts elsewhere dominate much of their time. Secondly, learning how to edit and create articles while also conforming to *Wikipedia*'s standards for article layout and citation of sources requires a fairly advanced set of technical computer skills (not to mention access to a computer and an Internet connection). Furthermore, any editor must have reasonable facility with the hybrid languages used on articles' editing pages, which partially employ Hyper-Text Markup Language (HTML), especially when creating links to other webpages and when creating the references section of an article. Though there are plenty of help guides for those who are new to *Wikipedia*, the process can nonetheless be intimidating.

Despite these barriers, *Wikipedia* has grown to be one of the most widely used information websites, and also one of the most highly contested amongst those whose economic prosperity or authority rests in the knowledge and

⁷⁸ See *Archives of AMS-L@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU*. <https://listserv.indiana.edu/cgi-bin/wa-iub.exe?A0=AMS-L&X=63C4472D01E452C064>. Accessed May 2007.

⁷⁹ Although Oxford University Press is planning to expand the capabilities of their online music references by publishing an online version of Colin Larkin's *Encyclopedia of Popular Music* indicating that efforts are being made to embrace the greater potential of linking between resources and the importance of contemporary popular music as a legitimate field of study. Nonetheless, old-media authority paradigms are still in play here inasmuch as the validity of popular music studies as an academic field still requires that its knowledge be “fixed” into encyclopædia form. See *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*. <http://www.oup.com/online/epm/>. Accessed July 2007.

information industries.⁸⁰ These contestations are largely focussed on inaccuracies and lack of content, and sometimes on the perception that some *Wikipedia* articles are not worthy of inclusion in an encyclopædia—and in many cases these criticisms are well founded. But, I claim that what informs these criticisms is not *only* the defence of truth or accuracy, though such egalitarian ideals do play a part. Rather, I suggest that a significant part of the challenge that *Wikipedia* and other citizen media avenues bring to the established knowledge and information infrastructure is an ideological one. It may be that the greater emphasis on the authority of social and cultural capitals and the threat they present to the authority of symbolic and economic capitals is what inspires criticism of *Wikipedia*'s content, and which in turn veils a much greater fear of, and ideological stance against, the openness of the *model* for creating this content.

Consider that *Wikipedia*'s process seems to embody many of the values (or at the very least the theories) celebrated in postmodern thought: it is participatory, largely non-hierarchical, gender and race neutral in its submission process (notwithstanding class, gender, and race issues surrounding access to Internet technologies), and for the most part, unfiltered by the potential biases of editorial boards.⁸¹ *Wikipedia* is a tangible representation of the way that the concepts of knowledge, meaning, and truth are said to function in much postmodern theory: they are fluid, subject to shifts in ideological perceptions, and constantly re-interpreted; moreover, these concepts are constituted by “regular,” “normal,” everyday people. Yet, despite postmodern notions of dead (or dying) authorship and the impossibility of a universalised subjective experience, authorship and widely recognised authority are nonetheless intimately allied to what constitutes “official” knowledge. For those who are invested in knowledge and information industries, such as academics, journalists, and newspaper and encyclopædia publishers, open source knowledge initiatives like *Wikipedia* and other citizen media projects present a threat to the paradigms of legitimacy that have long provided their symbolic authority.

It is also entirely reasonable within the socio-economic structure of late capitalism that authorship be defended vigorously. As is seen in the filesharing debate, and as indicated in the discussion of Foucault at the beginning of this chapter, authorship more than ever is intertwined with economic capital and this is also a very tangible reason that assertion of ownership is integral to this discussion of citizen media. For academics, job search committees and tenure

⁸⁰ *Wikipedia* consistently ranks in the top 10 most visited websites globally according to *Alexa*, a website that analyses and rates Internet traffic. See *Alexa Web Search Top 500*. Available from http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_500?qterm=. Accessed July 2007.

⁸¹ However, *Wikipedia* has been accused by some, including former founder Larry Sanger of “anti-elitism” or a general mistrust/lack of respect for “experts.” See Larry Sanger. “Why Wikipedia Must Jettison Its Anti-Elitism.” *Kuro5hin* December 31 (2004). Available from <http://www.kuro5hin.org/story/2004/12/30/142458/25>; Accessed July 2007. This is not to suggest that “Wikipedians” actively seek out “good” articles and destroy them but rather that within *Wikipedia* culture “experts” are often seen as having agendas (usually economic or authoritative) that conflict with the founding principles of *Wikipedia*.

review boards are not (at present) considering contributions to *Wikipedia* as criteria for career advancement. Moreover, some journalists have suffered severe career damage by misusing material found in blogs, or by having erroneous stories caught by the rigour and timeliness of online citizen media.⁸² It is one thing to theorise about readers-who-are-writers and authority, it is quite another to put these theories into practice, recalling Foucault, to embody the “forceful transgression” of writing.

In the case of *Wikipedia* the “danger” of writing is to write without authorship and without claim to authority. For other citizen media avenues the transgression of writing is achieved by the widespread contribution to discourse by those who previously played no part in public discussion, that is, the non-author, the non-journalist, the non-expert. In both cases it is the constitutive elements of knowledge itself that come under question and become subject to alteration. In much the same way as our definitions of artistic success come to be redefined as we witness the increased agency of marginalised groups in the promotion of their own careers, so will our definitions of what counts as knowledge, and indeed what counts as *authoritative* knowledge, be subject to revision as people involve themselves in new ways of circulating and sharing information.

⁸² Indeed, for those academics looking for jobs, the importance of claiming authorship cannot be understated; consider that for many, an academic job is the only way in which they can payback increasing student debt, a debt that is very much a product of one’s own authoring! On journalists job woes see Craig Silverman. “2006 Plagiarism/Fabrication Round-Up.” *Regret The Error* December 13 (2006). Available from http://www.regrettheerror.com/2006/12/2006_plagiarism.html; Accessed June 2007. See also the following on the “Rathergate” scandal where fact-checking errors in a CBS news report were quickly unearthed in the blogosphere, leading to eventual mainstream media coverage “Killian Documents.” *Wikipedia*. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killian_documents; Accessed June 2007.

CONCLUSION

With the exception of *GoGirls*, the oldest of the communities discussed here, in the year-and-a-half of research for this project each of the communities I address in this thesis has undergone significant changes. *Little Red Hen* seems to have ceased altogether and though it is still present online, they not updated their website since April 2006. *OiNK* has changed it's URL after a series of "denial of service" attacks on its previous domain name and during this change the discussion forum was culled of old topics; thus, the incredible forum debate over the fate of the invite seller has simply disappeared, replaced by similar discussions, of which none are quite so well developed or intense. Project D.U. ceased to exist and was subsumed under AT&T's latest marketing endeavour, the Blue Room, an Internet portal for all manner of entertainment. Gone is the emphasis on "expert blogging"; there is no rhetoric at all now, only advertisements for upcoming AT&T sponsored events. The links to specific blogs are gone, too, replaced by a "ticker" of unique blog posts (presumably by bloggers with similar agreements as those of Project D.U.). The 2007 iteration of Lollapalooza once again featured blogs on the main site, though *Chromewaves* was absent, replaced instead by *Muzzleofbees*, Rachel Hurley's *Scenestars* was again present, but it crashed over the course of the weekend, leaving only one post from the first day before she had a chance to report on the festival.

Though the specifics might change, many of the issues remain. In August of 2007, during the AT&T Blue Room webcast of that year's Lollapalooza, segments of audio from Pearl Jam's performance were censored. During their performance of "Daughter," lead singer Eddie Vedder sang the following lines to

the refrain from Pink Floyd’s classic anti-establishment anthem “Another Brick in the Wall (Part 2)”: “George Bush, leave this world alone, George Bush, find yourself another home.” Line editors employed by the company contracted by AT&T to run the webcast muted the lines. Those watching the webcast noted the muted lines, and sparked a wave of controversy that was addressed in many blogs and citizen media outlets. Pearl Jam’s reaction to the event was to note on their website that

AT&T’s actions strike at the heart of the public’s concerns over the power that corporations have when it comes to determining what the public sees and hears through communications media [...] What happened to us this weekend was a wake up call, and it’s about something much bigger than the censorship of a rock band.¹

They also provided a link to uncensored video of the performance.² AT&T quickly apologised in a statement, posted on the Blue Room website, and suggested in various press releases that the editing was the fault of a subcontractor’s employees going “too far” with their responsibilities, that it was “a mistake by a webcast vendor and contrary to our policy. We have policies in place with respect to editing excessive profanity, but AT&T does not edit or censor performances.”³ Days later, after it became evident that other AT&T sponsored webcasts had been subject to similar “editing”; AT&T representatives admitted, “It has happened in the past in a handful of cases. We have taken steps to insure that it will not happen again.”⁴ At the time of writing, the blogosphere and online news sources are rife with coverage of this event; accusations of censorship and claims of corporate media “no politics” directives abound.⁵

I think there are at least two positions to take with regards to AT&T’s statements. We can understand the apology as the necessary “spin” of a company who was caught in an act that many music fans found unsavoury. If they hadn’t been caught then there would have been no mention of the “mistake”—of course,

¹ “LOLLAPALOOZA WEBCAST: SPONSORED/CENSORED BY AT&T?” *pearljam.com* August 8 (2007). Available from <http://www.pearljam.com/news/index.php?what=News#195> Accessed August 2007.

² Pearl Jam, *Daughter (Lollapalooza 2007)*, YouTube Video. Available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDfnCVDBTUA&url>; Accessed August 2007.

³ Eliot Van Buskirk. “AT&T Responds To Pearl Jam’s Accusations of Censorship.” *Wired* August 9 (2007). Available from <http://blog.wired.com/music/2007/08/att-responds-to.html>; Accessed August 2007. Tellingly, the original Blue Room apology is now absent from the website. The search function on the site yields no references to the event when searching “apology,” “apologise,” “pearl jam,” and other related terms.

⁴ tkarr. “AT&T Gets Caught in its Own Spin Cycle.” *savetheinternet.com* August 15 (2007). Available from <http://www.savetheinternet.com/blog/2007/08/15/att-gets-caught-in-its-own-spin-cycle/>; Accessed August 2007.

⁵ Eliot Van Buskirk. “Crew Member: Previous AT&T Show Had ‘No Politics’ Policy.” *Wired* August 13 (2007). Available from <http://blog.wired.com/music/2007/08/crew-member-pre.html>; Accessed August 2007.

why would a corporation like AT&T admit to a mistake unless they realised *not* admitting to it would be “bad press”? If this is indeed the case, then it means that people will have to be ever vigilant and keep an eye on the activities of the providers of Internet content. And, in fact, this is exactly what is happening online: bloggers are linking to each others’ posts and to articles from the online sources of traditional media, and Internet and corporate responsibility watch groups are all weighing in with opinions on the matter.⁶ In this constellation of accusations and explanations, we digital citizens bear witness to the positive effects of open discourse; both sides are using the online media to tell their stories and defend their positions. Indeed, we might even think that if Eddie Vedder’s rather banal words *had not been censored* then perhaps they would have appeared (and then disappeared) merely as those of yet another “political band” taking pot shots at a straw man. As one commenter at *Stereogum* suggested, “Who cares if AT&T pulled it [Vedder’s words]? It was generic lib[eral] rhetoric that everyone’s heard a million times before.”⁷

But there is another scenario, one that I find much more insidious. Suppose that we take AT&T at its word, and understand its apology/explanation of its mistake as genuine; *and* we assume that the line-editors running the webcast did in fact go “too far” in censoring the webcast; *and* we agree that AT&T does not have a corporate strategy that limits freedom of speech, even when that speech is critical of ideologies that align with their own. These factors being equal indicate that the corporate desire not to engage with controversy for fear of losing profit is no longer confined to the boardroom, nor a policy enforced knowingly and with intent. This scenario is insidious because it means that fear of allowing dissident voices has permeated all levels of involvement in media production. Perhaps the line-editors, far from being pro-Bush, anti-freedom-of-speech warmongers are, rather, fearful of the repercussions they may face as individuals for not employing a pre-emptive strategy in dealing with controversy. Even worse is the possibility that these repercussions may not even exist, and that a culture of fear and censorship has become so pervasive that line editors are acting on their own accord out of what they *think* the corporation would expect from them in that situation. Tom Meyer, the president of Davie-Brown Entertainment, the third party that AT&T blamed for the “mistake,” implicitly acknowledged this

⁶ Such as Save the Internet, a net neutrality advocacy group, and Public Knowledge, a Washington D.C. lobby group concerned with legal rights and digital culture. See *Public Knowledge*. <http://www.publicknowledge.org/>. Accessed August 2007, and *Save The Internet*. <http://www.savetheinternet.com/>, Accessed August 2007.

⁷ Dave. “Comment on, ‘Classic Moments in Rock Censorship’.” *Stereogum* August 10 (2007). Available from <http://www.stereogum.com/archives/classic-moments-in-rock-censorship.html>; Accessed August 2007. *Stereogum* was again featured as one of the official Lollapalooza blogs. In response to the fervour over the Pearl Jam censoring they took a light hearted view of the matter, turning it into an opportunity to lampoon other instances of censorship in popular music.

possibility when he stated “My guess is [the webcast editor] felt that it was something controversial and they had to make a snap decision.”⁸

This is very much “about something much bigger than the censorship of a rock band.” Whichever scenario is “true” (and we will surely never know), the fact remains that decisions *were* made to edit out Vedder’s critical comments and that these decisions were driven by an ideology that places concern for profit ahead of allowing different views to be heard. It also is highly suggestive of an ideology that sees popular music’s “proper place” as entertainment, and not a place for “politics.” Indeed, this was reflected (to my surprise) in some of the comments posted by Pearl Jam forum members in the days following the band’s announcement on their website. RVM1965 wrote “I just wish artists would dance with the one that brought them to the show, and that is their music not their political views. The last time I checked musicians were professionals at playing instruments, singing etc and not professional political commentators.”⁹ Though most of the comments on the forum supported Pearl Jam’s stand and were decidedly anti-censorship, RVM1965’s were echoed by several members, including dunstadme, who, in assuming a “neutral politics” attitude toward music, curiously wove politics directly into his/her own musical experience.

We all have a right to our God given freedoms. It does not mean the I agree with with [sic] what he said nor do I think that is the place for it. Leave you damn political views at home, give us a show, I want to hear the music not your liberal garbage comments. The president is MY Commander in Chief, I proudly serve under his lead and I hope people like this can one day realize without leadership who acts upon aggressive issues against America, they can just as well learn another language. Oh, and George Bush is home...maybe you should find another one and leave this one protected and free. God Bless America and our men and women in harms way.¹⁰

dunstadme’s suggestion that Vedder’s presence in the United States somehow makes the country less free is laughable at first glance. Upon further consideration though, the paradoxical conflation of freedom with a desire to

⁸ Quoted in William Marra. “Pearl Jam’s Anti-Bush Lyrics Jammed by AT&T: Rock Band Upset After 15 Seconds of Lyrics Cut From Webcast; AT&T Apologizes.” *ABC News* August 10 (2007). Available from <http://www.abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/story?id=3467093&page=1>; Accessed August 2007.

⁹ RVM1965. “Pipe down and play...Comment on ‘Lollapalooza Webcast: Sponsored/Censored By AT&T?’” *Pearl Jam Message Pit* August 14 (2007). Available from <http://forums.pearljam.com/showpost.php?p=4700045&postcount=443,%208/14/2007>; Accessed August 2007.

¹⁰ dunstadme. “Just play the show and leave your views at home. Comment on ‘Lollapalooza Webcast: Sponsored/Censored By AT&T?’” *Pearl Jam Message Pit* August 14 (2007). Available from <http://forums.pearljam.com/showpost.php?p=4701738&postcount=449,%208/14/2007>; Accessed August 2007.

silence oppositional voices is something that has been in high relief in popular music since September 11, 2001; the fallout experienced by the Dixie Chicks after their comments about George W. Bush elicited a much larger outcry from those who purported to protect the moral values of the United States, chief among them, freedom of speech.¹¹ The very fact that dunstadme took the time to comment on a *music* forum, about a *musical* performance, by a *musical* act should indicate that music is not just about the “show.” It is not even the case that these “extra-musical” aspects of Pearl Jam, or the Dixie Chicks, are what attracts people to them; it is not a case of controversy attracting fans, nor it is a case of the politics of these bands aligning with fans personal politics. It is that this is all a part of what makes Pearl Jam, and music, simply *mean something*.

Pearl Jam matters because censoring them has sparked greater interest in one of the key issues of the Internet age: the debate over Net Neutrality. At base this debate is over whether or not Internet Service Providers, big corporations like AT&T, as the owners of the physical infrastructure through which Internet traffic travels, should have the right to offer preferred service to high paying customers. On the opposite side are those who believe that governments need to create laws that ensure that all Internet traffic transmits at equal speeds, regardless of what information this traffic contains. These proponents of neutrality envision the Internet as a public good; they understand the internet in the same way as it is understood throughout this thesis, as an “imagined community” or a “place of collective identification,” rather than as a media “product.”¹² If corporations are allowed to determine what content travels to which end users at what speed, it means that, for example, AT&T could partner with Microsoft, and legally and deliberately improve service for those using Microsoft Internet products and similarly restrict or bar altogether the services of its competitors. More importantly, it means that the ideologies that inform these company’s actions also get preference. AT&T’s complicity in censoring Pearl Jam’s performance, and others, critics say, is a harbinger of what is to come should the ISPs get their way.¹³ This is a complex debate and its outcome will impact all of the phenomena discussed in this thesis. It means the difference between there being opportunities for women to create music and market it on their own terms or not; between the potential for reconceiving music distribution or not; between there being opportunities for people to communicate widely and organise to affect

¹¹ Barbara Kopple and Cecilia Peck, *Shut Up And Sing* (Cabin Creek Films), Documentary Film.

¹² For more information on net neutrality see *Hands Off The Internet*. <http://handsoff.org/blog/>, a website that is anti regulation, and *Save The Internet*, the pro-regulation side of the debate.

¹³ See Nate Anderson. “Pearl Jam Censored by AT&T, Calls for a Neutral ‘Net.’” *Ars technica* August 9 (2007). Available from <http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20070809-pearl-jam-censored-by-att-calls-for-a-neutral-net.html>; Accessed August 2007, Ryan Blethen. “Add Internet Freedom to Pearl Jam’s Greatest hits.” *The Seattle Times* August 17 (2007). Available from http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2003839900_ryan17.html; Accessed August 2007, Matt Stoller. “FCC Commissioner Michael Copps on Pearl Jam.” *Open Left* August 17 (2007). Available from <http://www.openleft.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=841>; Accessed August 2007.

positive change or not. It means, at base, whether or not there will even be such a thing as online community.

Few cultural phenomena today enjoy as high a profile in the cultural imagination as does popular music, and few technologies have had as profound an impact on the very fabric of our modern existence as the Internet has. Both of these phenomena are comprised of personal, individualised experiences that inform wider perceptions of their importance. This is why the intersection of the two is an important field of study. As we see with the recent developments regarding AT&T and Lollapalooza, the censorship of a high profile act like Pearl Jam has shed light on a host of other infringements on open and free communication and on the silencing of dissidence. Crucially, it was through blogs, citizen media, and online forums, that information about the incident became known, and it is through these avenues that it is still being talked about. John Gilmore, one of the founders of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, was famously quoted as saying, “The Internet interprets censorship as damage and routes around it.”¹⁴ Gilmore implicitly anthropomorphises “the Internet,” for it is we Internet users who suffer the damage of censorship, and we who in turn are called upon to take action.

The question is, will we?

¹⁴ Quoted in Philip Elmer-Dewitt. “First Nation in Cyberspace.” *Time International* December 6 (1993). Available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,979768,00.html>; Accessed July 2007.

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dunstadme. “Just play the show and leave your views at home. Comment on ‘Lollapalooza Webcast: Sponsored/Censored By AT&T?’” *Pearl Jam Message Pit* August 14 (2007). Available from <http://forums.pearljam.com/showpost.php?p=4701738&postcount=449,%208/14/2007>; Accessed August 2007.

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APPENDIX ONE

LYRICS

“I Can’t Do Math” – Meaghan Smith (*Lost With Directions*, 2004)

You’re so patient with me
I can be so frustrating
You’re a saint for sticking around
As long as you have

Well I’m lost with directions,
In a constant state of confusion
And I’m full of imperfections
And I just can’t do math

Why when everything is going so well,
Do I automatically assume the worst
Put you and me together doesn’t it
Problematically work
Oh but please don’t ask
It’s as simple as that, oh I just can’t do math

Well you never give up
Even when I’m stuck
You can bet you’re in luck
That our differences make us laugh
But I need your help with this one
Cause sometimes I feel so dumb
When I can’t reach the sum
So can you please help me do this math

Why when everything is going so well,
Do I automatically assume the worst
Put you and me together doesn’t it
Problematically work
Oh but please don’t ask
It’s as simple as that, oh I just can’t do math

Oh and try as I might, it just never comes out right
Oh baby, won’t you please just do this math
Won’t you please help me baby,
Oh won’t you please just do
This math

“O Leander” – Kristin Sweetland (*Root, Heart & Crown*, 2002)

Driving by, say hello, Witchita, New Mexico
Carolina, Iowa, Oglala, Omaha
Late night, radio, Arizona, Navajo
Ride away, hide away heart

Chorus: O Leander O Leander
Since you left across the black waters wide
O Leander O Leander
There is none save the thunder inside

Here we go again, Colorado, Oregon
Wheat fields, graveyards, Coal mines, postcards
Indiana, Manitoba, Old Chicago, Oklahoma
Rain clouds, water runs down

(Chorus)

Big snow, drive slow, Homeland, Ontario
Smoke stack silhouettes, Coffee cups, cigarettes
Go south, white line, Blueridge, moonshine
Shenandoah River run wild

4 wheels, 2 lanes, Say goodbye, people change
I’ll come back somehow, Or alone I’ll always be
A sailor on the ever sea, No wind, no sail, no sound

O Leander O Leander
Light the torch in the signal tower
O Leander O Leander
Waves break foam like the whitest flower

(Chorus)

APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Email Questions for Meaghan Smith and Kristin Sweetland

1. How long have you been promoting yourself online?
2. Why did you decide to use the internet to promote yourself?
3. Do you maintain your own website?
4. Do you hope to get a record deal someday?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages to being a female musician online?
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages to promoting your music on websites specifically for female artists?
7. Given that you can represent yourself however you want online, what thought have you given to how you present yourself, does gender play a role in this?
8. What have you learned from other female artists who are promoting themselves online?
 - i) *About marketing and distribution?*
 - ii) About music in general
 - iii) How to network and collaborate for musical and business purposes?
9. Why is it important to you to network with other female artists?
10. How much dialogue is there between female artists online about the music business? What does this dialogue focus on, the music, the musicians lifestyle, etc.?
11. Which parts of yourself and your music do find are well represented online, which do you find are not?
12. What, if any, pressure have you had to present a physical appearance online (pictures etc.) Where does this pressure come from (personal, professional?)

13. How do you choose the content of your website?
14. Is there an unspoken camaraderie or rivalry amongst female musicians?(i.e. is there a sharing of contacts, gig opportunities, equipment, etc., or are these things kept private for fear of competition?)
15. What challenges have you found along the way to promoting yourself online? What do you still find challenging?
16. What is the best thing (career or otherwise) that has happened to you as a result of your online presence? What is the worst?
17. By all means, please add anything and everything you can think about as it pertains to promoting yourself online.

Open Online Questionnaire

Please answer as many questions as you wish. None of the questions are required, and neither is your name or your email address, although they would be greatly appreciated and useful for follow up questions.

Your Name:

Your location (city, country):

Your age:

Your occupation:

Your income level (per year): <\$15,000 \$15-25,000 \$25-35,000 \$35-45,000
>\$45,000

Your Gender: Male Female

Your E-mail address:

Your website:

Your blog:

Are you a professional musician? Yes No

Please indicate how you found out about this questionnaire, general email, listserv (which one), my website, word-of-mouth:

NOTE: You may be as detailed as you wish answering the following questions, please don't feel constrained by the size of the text boxes, they will scroll to accomodate more text.

General Questions

1. Is the Internet your primary resource for finding out about new music?
2. Do Newspapers, magazine, and radio influence your music listening habits?
3. Do you attend live performances you find out about online?

4. Do you talk with other people about interesting things you have found online (not just music related)? What do you tell them about?

Filesharing Questions

5. Do you download music?

6. Would you describe your downloading habits as “I never download,” “I occasionally download” or “I am a fanatic for downloading!”?

7. Do you use peer-to-peer (P2P) programmes such as Limewire, BitTorrent? Do you have a preference, and what is this preference based on?

8. Do you use the “chat” feature included with some downloading software? If so, what sorts of things do you chat about?

9. If you use bittorrent to download, do you ever contribute to the “comments” section that often accompanies a torrent download page? If so, what do you say?

10. Please describe any interesting experiences using P2P software.

11. Do you purchase music through iTunes or other such online digital music services?

12. Please describe any interesting experiences using iTunes or other pay services.

Blogs/Forums/Reviews Questions

13. Do you communicate with other music fans online through forums, emails, blogs, chat? Please describe in what way, and a little about what you talk about.

14. Do you read and consider the customer reviews sections of websites like Amazon or Barnes and Noble when buying music online? Would you say that these affect your purchasing habits?

15. Have you ever contributed your comments to a site like Amazon? What did you say - was it negative or positive? What sorts of things did you address?

16. Do reviews written on personal blogs factor into your music listening?

17. Do you ever respond to these reviews in the comments section of someone's blog?

18. Do you have your own blog? Do you discuss music on it? If so, what types of music? Do you link to other music blogs?

19. Do you frequent artist forums? Do you contribute or "lurk" (look but don't write anything—be honest!)? Please describe your experiences here.

20. If you contribute to a forum or a blog, do you consider your participation more like "conversation" or like "writing"? This means, do you see your contribution as permanent (always there on that blog, for all to see) or do you write and forget about it?

Community Questions

21. Many artists give their email address and invite communication. Do you email artists? If yes, then for what reasons? What types of responses have you got? If no, why not?

22. Do you belong to any online music communities? If so, what types (musicians forums, collectives, fan clubs)?

23. Are you a member of any music listservs or email groups? Do you communicate on these?

24. Please comment on your online music experiences—favourite websites and why, favourite music resources, blogs, interesting communication with other fans/artists, etc.

25. Are there any other questions you think would have been useful on this survey?

It may be useful for me to contact you and discuss them in greater detail. This is by no means required of you.

Would you like to be contacted with follow up questions or perhaps an interview? Yes No

If you wish, please provide your phone number with the area code:

APPENDIX THREE

LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT

September 2006

Researcher: Paul Alexander Aitken
McMaster University
School of the Arts
Togo Salmon Hall Room 414
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8S 4M2
info@paulaitken.com

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Christina Baade
Assistant Professor
Communication Studies and Multimedia
McMaster University
Togo Salmon Hall Room 329A
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8S 4M2

Purpose of the Study

My thesis seeks to examine some of the major issues surrounding the building and maintaining of online musical communities. Through observation and participation in blog culture, online music forums, and files sharing communities, I will be discussing aspects of online music promotion and consumption from both artist- and audience-centred perspectives. As this project is concerned with aspects of community and communication in online environments, I feel it is absolutely necessary to ground these phenomena in real practice. To this end, the inclusion of commentary by those who make up Internet communities provides for interesting points of departure for further investigation.

Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time, please inform me in writing at thesis@paulaitken.com. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed, unless you indicate otherwise.

Procedures involved in the Research

You are asked to answer short email/web questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaires will be used, as appropriate to expand on, promote, negate, or reinforce arguments made in the thesis.

Should you agree, and consent to further communication, you may be asked to participate in a follow up questionnaire or interview based on your responses to the original questions.

You may decline to answer any or all questions in all scenarios.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts

Because music listening habits are of such a personal nature, you may feel some embarrassment revealing your particular tastes in music, and Internet surfing habits. However, this study is less concerned with what you listen to as it is with the ways in which you discover the music you value. Thus, I feel that any embarrassment over listening to an unpopular artist or genre will be short-lived. It is possible that the expression of unpopular opinion can come with the risk of loss of social status or social ostracism. However, I stress that in this project your anonymity if so desired, is guaranteed. Furthermore, the opportunity to deny participation or to withdraw at anytime is also guaranteed. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed, unless you indicate otherwise.

Potential Benefits

It is most likely that the research of this project will not benefit you directly. However, you will have the opportunity to make your own opinions on music and the Internet known. I hope that you will enjoy the process of discovering more about your Internet and musical practices.

If you are an artist, it is possible that you may experience some positive "exposure" by taking part in this project should someone read my thesis and be inclined to "check out" your work,. It is also possible that the reader make purchase a CD or other merchandise, thus resulting in some economic benefit.

The potential benefit to the artistic community and society is to be found, I believe, in the greater opportunity for readers of my work to experience the creative works of others, especially those musicians who struggle to gain exposure to a wider listening audience, while either maintaining their independence, or while seeking assistance, from major record labels. Furthermore, as Internet based communications are becoming increasingly widespread, I believe there is immense benefit to understanding our own identities within this new and exciting communication medium.

Generally, the potential benefits of my project pertain to a greater understanding of how we use modern communication technologies in finding music and creating and maintaining musical communities.

Payment or Reimbursement

Sorry, you will receive no payment or reimbursement for your participation.

Confidentiality

Anonymity for all participants is the default position for this project.

Your anonymity is at all times a matter of your own choosing. Due to the nature of this research it is likely that you may wish to have your name attached to your comments in the final thesis, especially, I would imagine if you are an artist. Your comments will remain anonymous unless you choose to have your name included in the thesis. If you wish to withdraw your participation entirely, please let me know and I will honour your decision. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed, unless you indicate otherwise.

All information collected by me through questionnaires will remain in my possession and will be kept confidential to the full extent of the law and I will treat all information provided to me as subject to researcher-participant privilege.

Completion

You will be entitled to an electronic copy of the final thesis after it has been successfully defended. I will email you a copy and it will also be available for viewing on my website. It is expected that the final version of the thesis will be available to the public in July 2007.

Information about Participating as a Study Subject

If you have questions or require more information about the study itself, please contact Paul Aitken: info@paulaitken.com.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Office of Research Services
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

Consent

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Paul Aitken of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study, and to receive any additional details I wanted to know about the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, if I choose to do so, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form. If I am responding electronically, in lieu of a signature my consent is implicit in my participation.

APPENDIX FOUR

ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION WHITE PAPER

http://www.eff.org/share/collective_lic_wp.pdf

A Better Way Forward: Voluntary Collective Licensing of Music File Sharing

"Let the Music Play" White Paper

The current battles surrounding peer-to-peer file sharing are a losing proposition for everyone. The record labels continue to face lackluster sales, while the tens of millions of American file sharers—American music fans—are made to feel like criminals. Every day the collateral damage mounts—privacy at risk, innovation stymied, economic growth suppressed, and a few unlucky individuals singled out for legal action by the recording industry. And the litigation campaign against music fans has not put a penny into the pockets of artists.

We need a better way forward.

The Premises

First, artists and copyright holders deserve to be fairly compensated.

Second, file sharing is here to stay. Killing Napster only spawned more decentralized networks. Most evidence suggests that file sharing is at least as popular today as it was before the lawsuits began.

Third, the fans do a better job making music available than the labels. Apple's iTunes Music Store brags about its inventory of over 500,000 songs. Sounds pretty good, until you realize that the fans have made millions of songs available on KaZaA. If the legal clouds were lifted, the peer-to-peer networks would quickly improve.

Fourth, any solution should minimize government intervention in favor of market forces.

The Proposal: Voluntary Collective Licensing

EFF has spent the past year evaluating alternatives that get artists paid while making file sharing legal. One solution has emerged as the favorite: voluntary collective licensing.

The concept is simple: the music industry forms a collecting society, which then offers file-sharing music fans the opportunity to "get legit" in exchange for a reasonable regular payment, say \$5 per month. So long as they pay, the fans are free to keep doing what they are going to do anyway—share the music they love using whatever software they like on whatever computer platform they prefer—without fear of lawsuits. The money collected gets divided among rights-holders based on the popularity of their music.

In exchange, file-sharing music fans will be free to download whatever they like, using whatever software works best for them. The more people share, the more money goes to rights-holders. The more competition in applications, the more rapid the innovation and improvement. The more freedom to fans to publish what they care about, the deeper the catalog.

The Precedent: Broadcast Radio

It has been done before.

Voluntarily creating collecting societies like ASCAP, BMI and SESAC was how songwriters brought broadcast radio in from the copyright cold in the first half of the twentieth century.

Songwriters originally viewed radio exactly the way the music industry today views KaZaA users—as pirates. After trying to sue radio out of existence, the songwriters ultimately got together to form ASCAP (and later BMI and SESAC). Radio stations interested in broadcasting music stepped up, paid a fee, and in return got to play whatever music they liked, using whatever equipment worked best. Today, the performing-rights societies ASCAP and BMI collect money and pay out millions annually to their artists. Even though these collecting societies get a fair bit of criticism, there's no question that the system that has evolved for radio is preferable to one based on trying to sue radio out of existence one broadcaster at a time.

Copyright lawyers call this voluntary collective licensing. The same could happen today for file sharing: Copyright holders could get together to offer their music in an easy-to-pay, all-you-can-eat set. We could get there without the need for changes to copyright law and with minimal government intervention.

The Money: Collecting It

Starting with just the 60 million Americans who have been using file-sharing software, \$5 a month would net over \$3 billion of pure profit annually to the music industry—no CDs to ship, no online retailers to cut in on the deal, no payola to radio conglomerates, no percentage to KaZaA or anyone else. Best of

all, it's an evergreen revenue stream—money that just keeps coming, during good times and bad, so long as fans want digital music online. The pie grows with the growth of music sharing on the Internet, instead of shrinking. The total annual gross revenues of the music industry today are estimated at \$11 billion. But that's gross revenues. A collective licensing regime for file-sharing can promise \$3 billion in annual profits to the record labels—more than they've ever made.

How do we get filesharers to pay up? That's where the market comes in—those who today are under legal threat will have ample incentive to opt for a simple \$5 per month fee. There should be as many mechanisms for payment as the market will support. Some fans could buy it directly through a website (after all, this was what the RIAA had in mind with its "amnesty" program). ISPs could bundle the fee into their price of their broadband services for customers who are interested in music downloading. After all, ISPs would love to be able to advertise a broadband package that includes "downloads of all the music you want." Universities could make it part of the cost of providing network services to students. P2P file-sharing software vendors could bundle the fee into a subscription model for their software, which would neatly remove the cloud of legal uncertainty that has inhibited investment in the P2P software field.

The Money: Dividing It Up

The money collected would then be divided between artists and rights-holders based on the relative popularity of their music.

Figuring out what is popular can be accomplished through a mix of anonymously monitoring what people are sharing (something companies like Big Champagne and BayTSP are already doing) and recruiting volunteers to serve as the digital music equivalent of Nielsen families. Billions in television advertising dollars are divided up today using systems like this. In a digital environment, a mix of these approaches should strike the right balance between preserving privacy and accurately estimating popularity.

The Advantages

The advantages of this approach are clear:

Artists and rights holders get paid. What's more, the more broadband grows, the more they get paid, which means that the entertainment industry's powerful lobby will be working for a big, open, and innovative Internet, instead of against it.

Government intervention is kept to a minimum: copyright law need not be amended, and the collecting society sets its own prices. The \$5 per month figure is a suggestion, not a mandate. At the same time, the market will keep the price

reasonable—collecting societies make more money with a palatable price and a larger base of subscribers, than with a higher price and expensive enforcement efforts.

Broadband deployment gets a real boost as the "killer app"—music file sharing—is made legitimate.

Investment dollars pour into the now-legitimized market for digital music file-sharing software and services. Rather than being limited to a handful of "authorized services" like Apple's iTunes and Napster 2.0, you'll see a marketplace filled with competing file-sharing applications and ancillary services. So long as the individual fans are licensed, technology companies can stop worrying about the impossible maze of licensing and instead focus on providing fans with the most attractive products and services in a competitive marketplace.

Music fans finally have completely legal access to the unlimited selection of music that the file-sharing networks have provided since Napster. With the cloud of litigation and "spoofing" eliminated, these networks will rapidly improve.

The distribution bottleneck that has limited the opportunities of independent artists will be eliminated. Artists can choose any road to online popularity—including, but no longer limited to, a major label contract. So long as their songs are being shared among fans, they will be paid.

Payment will come only from those who are interested in downloading music, only so long as they are interested in downloading.

How does this help artists?

Artists benefit in at least three ways. First, artists will now be paid for the file sharing that has become a fact of digital life.

Second, independent artists no longer need a record deal with a major label to reach large numbers of potential fans—so long as you have any fans who are sharing your music online, others will be able to access your music on equal footing with major label content. In other words, digital distribution will be equally available to all artists.

Third, when it comes to promotion, artists will be able to use any mechanism they like, rather than having to rely on major labels to push radio play. Anything that makes your works popular among file sharers gets you paid. There would still be a role for the record industry—many artists will still want help with promotion, talent development, and other supportive services. With more options for artists

to choose from, the contracts will be more balanced than the one-sided deals offered to most artists today.

What about antitrust?

Because a collective licensing solution will depend on a single collecting society issuing blanket licenses covering all (or nearly all) music copyrights, there will need to be some antitrust regulation of the collecting society to ensure that it does not abuse its market power. Both ASCAP and BMI, for example, have been subject to a court-administered antitrust consent decree for many decades. The regulation need not be extensive, as the collecting society will essentially be selling only a single product at a single price to all comers. Regulators will keep a close eye on the collecting society to make sure that it deals fairly with artists and copyright holders, most of whom will rely on the collecting society for compensation for noncommercial filesharing.

How do we ensure accurate division of the money?

Transparency will be critical—the collecting society must hold its books open for artists, copyright holders, and the public to examine. The entity should be a nonprofit, and should strive to keep its administrative costs to a minimum. There are examples of similar collecting societies in the music industry, such as ASCAP and SoundExchange. We should learn from, and improve upon, their example. Giving artists a bigger voice should help ensure that their concerns with the current collecting societies are addressed.

When it comes to actually figuring out relative popularity, we need to balance the desire for perfect "census-like" accuracy with the need to preserve privacy. A system based on sampling strikes a good balance between these goals. On the one hand, in a public P2P network, it is relatively easy to find out what people are sharing. Big Champagne already does this, compiling a "Top 10" for the P2P networks. This kind of monitoring does not compromise user privacy, since this monitoring does not tie songs shared to individually identifiable information. At the same time, this general network monitoring can be complemented by closer monitoring of volunteers who will serve as the "Nielsen families" of P2P.

By combining these two methods, it should be possible to attain a high degree of accuracy, protect privacy, and prevent "cheating."

What if the music industry won't do it?

The music industry is still a long way from admitting that its existing business models are obsolete. But the current effort to sue millions American music fans into submission is destined to fail. After a few more quarters of lackluster sales,

with file-sharing networks still going strong and "authorized services" failing to make up for sliding revenues, the music industry will be needing a "Plan B." We hope they will see that voluntary collective licensing is the best way forward.

If, instead, they continue their war against the Internet and continue inflicting collateral damage on privacy, innovation and music fans, then it may be time for Congress to take steps to force their hand. Congress can enact a "compulsory license" and create a collecting society to move us toward a sensible solution. Government involvement, however, should be a last resort—the music industry has the power to implement a sensible, more flexible solution right now.

What about artists who won't join? How do we gather all the rights?

Artists and rights holders would have the choice to join the collecting society, and thereby collect their portion of the fees collected, or to remain outside the society and have no practical way to receive compensation for the file sharing that will inevitably continue. Assuming a critical mass of major music copyright owners joins the collecting society, the vast majority of smaller copyright owners will have a strong incentive to join, just as virtually all professional songwriters opt to join ASCAP, BMI or SESAC.

The complexity of music industry contracts and history make it very difficult for record labels and music publishers to be sure what rights they control. Accordingly, by joining the collecting society, copyright owners will not be asked to itemize rights, but will instead simply covenant not to sue those who pay the blanket license fee. In this way, music fans and innovators are not held back by the internal contractual squabbles that plague the music industry.

What about file sharers who won't pay?

The vast majority of file sharers are willing to pay a reasonable fee for the freedom to download whatever they like, using whatever software suits them. In addition to those who would opt to take a license if given the opportunity, many more will likely have their license fees paid by intermediaries, like ISPs, universities, and software vendors.

So long as the fee is reasonable, effectively invisible to fans, and does not restrict their freedom, the vast majority of file sharers will opt to pay rather than engage in complex evasion efforts. So long as "free-riding" can be limited to a relatively small percentage of file sharers, it should not pose a serious risk to a collective licensing system. After all, today artists and copyright owners are paid nothing for file sharing—it should be easy to do much better than that with a collective licensing system. Copyright holders (and perhaps the collecting society itself) would continue to be entitled to enforce their rights against "free-loaders." Instead

of threatening them with ruinous damages, however, the collecting society can offer stragglers the opportunity to pay a fine and get legal. This is exactly what collecting societies like ASCAP do today.

What about other countries?

Non-U.S. rights holders would, of course, be welcome to join the collecting society for their fair share of the fees collected from American file sharers. As for file sharers in other countries, there is every reason to believe that if a collective licensing approach is successful in the U.S., it will receive a warm welcome and enthusiastic imitation abroad.

A relatively small number of countries today account for almost all of the revenues of the music industry. So establishing a collective licensing system in just a few countries could turn around the downward spiral in music industry revenues. The music industry already has an international "clearing" system for apportioning payments between countries.

What about the authorized music services?

The "authorized music services" like Apple's iTunes and Napster 2.0 would be free to compete against the P2P services, just as they do today. In addition, they could themselves adopt elements of P2P architectures, thereby dramatically expanding the music inventories they could offer music fans.

What's to stop the music industry from charging sky-high fees?

The enforcement costs faced by a collecting society for file sharing will keep prices in line. After all, if the society attempts to charge too much, intermediaries won't be able to bundle the fees into the cost of their products (\$5/mo. license on a \$50/mo. broadband account makes sense; trying to tack \$100/mo. license, in contrast, won't work) and file sharers will likely rebel in droves. For example, when movie studios charged \$90 for a VHS movie, they faced widespread piracy. They learned that, by lowering prices, they made more money and eliminated much of the piracy problem. In other words, reasonable pricing makes the system work for everyone.

What about movies, software, video games, and other digital content?

The music industry is the only industry that appears to be unable to adjust their business models to take file sharing into account. And it is the music industry that has been leading the way in suing ISPs, software companies, and individual music fans.

The movie industry, in contrast, is having its most profitable years in history. The software and video game industries also continue to show strong growth and profitability. Each one of these industries has taken steps to adapt their business models to the realities of file sharing.

Of course, if other industries want to form voluntary collecting societies and offer blanket licenses to file sharers, there is nothing to stop them from doing so. Individuals would then be free to purchase the license if they were interested in downloading these materials from the file-sharing networks.

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