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Opening Remarks

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OPENING REMARKS

DEAN RUDOLPH C. HASL*

It is thanks to the persistence and imagination of Christine Shah, the members of the *Journal of Legal Commentary* and Professor Claire Moore Dickerson, that this Symposium is being held. These people worked with me over the period of almost six months to get my commitment to proceed, and I am happy that we were able to find the resources that made this symposium possible.

Today's topic, *Cyberspace and the Law*, is indeed very, very timely. Technology is moving so quickly that it is hard to keep up with what is possible to accomplish. Each of these technological advances and opportunities raises significant legal questions.

I offer one example of the technology's impact, in terms of library technology. Publishers have not been particularly concerned in past years with a very common practice of inter-library loans. Many of you have probably benefitted from this practice in increased access to materials that are not currently housed in your library.

The availability of technology to scan optically and transmit and store electronically, with an option to print a hard copy of those materials on demand, also provides increased access to the written word. We have this technology available here at St. John's.

In recent years, publishers have become much more concerned about copyright and payment issues. It remains to be seen what impact, if any, the on-line method of information access will have on those copyright and payment concerns. Of course, the exploration of this question is part of the reason we have gathered today.

At the end of last week, we lost someone who was a guiding force in the area of information technology, Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown. A law graduate of St. John's University, he chaired the Information Infrastructure Task Force, a body created

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by President Clinton, to articulate and implement the Administration's vision for the national information infrastructure.

I ask that we pause for just a moment of silence in memory of Secretary Brown and those who accompanied him to Bosnia on that important peace mission. I would also note the dedication in the front of the program to Secretary Brown, and I thank the *Journal* for including that dedication.

With that, let me wish you well in this endeavor. You have an important task in front of you and I look forward to working with you during this conference and hopefully in more conferences in the future. Thank you.