

UNBLJ FORUM:

DEMOCRACY & THE INTERNET

EDITORS' PREFACE

Traditionally, the *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* includes a Forum section presenting diverse perspectives on a specific topic of interest in Canada's contemporary legal climate. This year the *Journal* chose a topic that not only impacts Canada's legal system, but extends to the world: "Democracy and the Internet".

Our generous contributors hail from all parts of the globe. Worldwide, it is accepted that the Internet has had an undeniable effect on the practice and accessibility of law. The Internet has facilitated research, increased the speed of communication and supported dissemination of legal issues: legal scholars do not dispute these facts or that the Internet has an undeniable potential to benefit society as a whole. Where the scholars divide is with regard to issues of Internet regulation, limiting accessibility, and as to whether the Internet has realized its full society-engaging capacity. For these concerns, everyone has a solution.

The forum opens with Steven Patten and Graham Longford's brief review and analysis of the Internet's impact on democracy and the political climate in Canada. Following this, Gary Genosko investigates the impact of the obscured judicial decision of "Mafiaboy" and the Internet's potential to give subcultures a voice. Duncan Card's contribution sounds a warning-call demanding regulation of the Internet as it has become a central infrastructure pillar of our society, while Ian Kyer's contribution reminds us that we must be careful in what we wish for. Next, Australian law professor, Kathy Bowrey, considers the ability of copyright laws to govern the wild west of the Internet while suggesting that open accessibility alone, does not guarantee democracy. Alternatively, American Judge, Richard G. Kopf, argues for the ability of the Internet to bolster democracy through equal access and calls upon his brethren to follow the e-filing lead of Canada's Federal and P.E.I. Courts. Finally, the forum closes with Sheldon Burshtein's contribution wherein he presents a comparative analysis of the judicial scope given to the freedom of expression regarding cybergiping and trade-mark law.

As testimony to the current prevalence of the Internet in legal scholarship, the first two academic, fully-refereed, articles also focus on the Internet's impact on traditional areas of law. Jane Bailey's article explores the transformative effect of the Internet on child pornography and Yaman Akdeniz's comparative article questions how racist content on the Internet can be governed.

We hope that this Forum section will be a valuable contribution to this important debate and stimulate further discussion.

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