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## SHOULD THE INTERNET BE A RIGHT?

Posted by Dave Hughes on March 8, 2010 at 3:49pm [View Blog](#)

Should the Internet be a Right?

I wrote 30 years ago when I set up the first, free dial-up public access Computer Bulletin-Board in Colorado Springs (Rogers Bar) to discuss and debate local politics, that personal digital networking would become a world revolution in human communications while fostering 'electronic democracy'. It is doing that, in spades. Nearly two billion people are now connected to the Internet, while various forms of digital wireless are now connecting up the most remote peoples on earth.

And now the latest global survey by BBC World Service reports that 87 percent of those who regularly use the Internet believe that access should be "the fundamental right of all people". 71 percent of non-Internet users expressed the same views. 80 percent surveyed feel the Internet has brought them 'greater freedom.' The poll asked more than 27,000 adults in 26 countries.

For one beneficial thing, the Internet has given the one-way Print Press, corporate television and radio a run for their 'freedom of the press' money. Not because it has eroded their profits - they will figure out how to make a buck from it - but has, at last, permitted ordinary citizens with only a personal computer and an Internet connection, to 'talk back' to reporters, editors, and educate the rest of the world.

The political benefits of 'Freedom of the Press' were only realized - in nations which allowed such freedom - when one 'owned their own press.' The political theory pushed by journalists was that individuals could read, hear, or watch many competing newspapers, radio stations or television to get the 'truth' of events. Now anyone who has an opinion, or knows facts overlooked or 'spun' by the press can sound off. The explosive growth of blogs is a testament to the phenomenon.

Internet access a 'fundamental right?' A Constitutional amendment called for? 'Network neutrality' legislation in Congress is an interesting step in that direction.

Below is me in Roger's Bar, where I pioneered 'Electronic Democracy' with my BBS

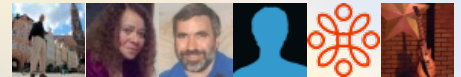
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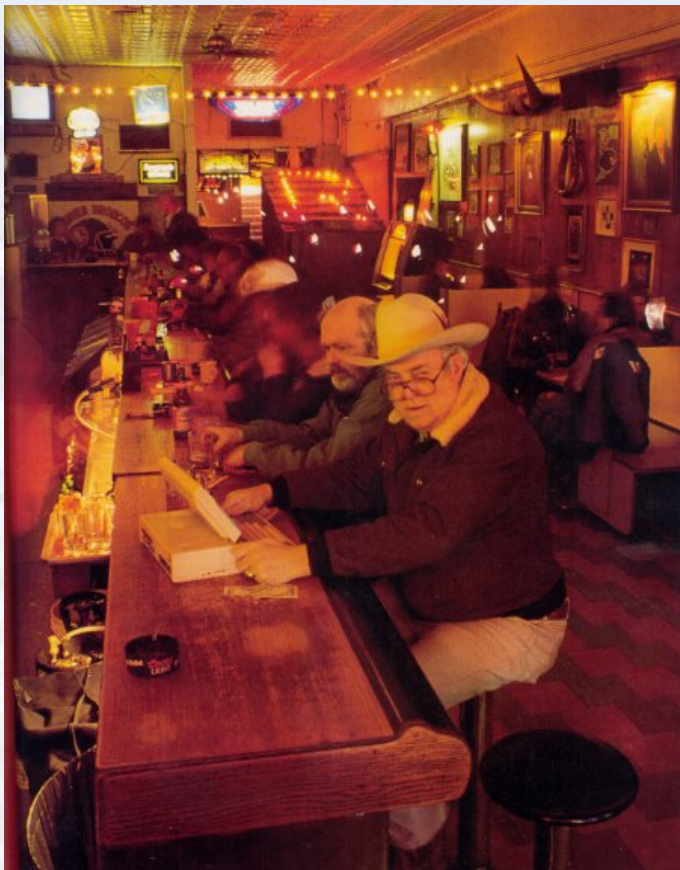
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Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on March 10, 2010 at 10:15am

Somebody asked about how people in really rural areas can get connected. The answer has been for over 15 years now, UNLICENCED Wireless. You know it as 'Wi-Fi' today, where you can connect up from your laptop wirelessly to either your base-station in your house which in turn is connected to the Internet upstream by Comcast or DSL, Or outside connect up with 'open' wi-fi connections. You pay for the upstream Internet but NOT between your computer's radio and the radio at the other end. As early as 1993 I connected up the small school in tiny San Luis to the Internet in Alamosa 30 miles line of sight at ZERO cost for the link - only for the two radios, (while US West wanted to charge them \$2,000 a month to do the same thing by wires.

And after years of hooking up remote towns, schools, and scientific 'data loggers' in remote areas from Mongolia, across the Alaskan Tundra, to the rain-forests of Puerto Rico, I then was asked to help the Sherpa's on the Slopes of Mount Everest in Nepal hook up their school kids so they could learn 'oral English.' In 2004, when I was still just a lad of 75, I went there trekked for three days to the village of Namche t and connected up, wi-fi from a remote school in tiny Thame, to the base of a satellite connected to the Internet.

Below is a picture of me at a Buddhst 'Stupa' holding an unlicenced radio requiring 12 volts of solar power plus car-sized battery a 15,000 feet up (the range behind me is 22,000 feet high. Then at the other end in Pittsburgh was a Sherpa native programmer halfway around the world who knew Sherpa, Nepalese and English and with that Internet link end to end and Skype (voice over the Internet) the Sherpa kids learned enough oral English that they could get out of just carrying heavy loads for Westerners for \$5.00 a day!



## PHOTO GALLERIES



## EVENTS



### THE ARC PPR 4TH ANNUAL ACHIEVE WITH US FILM FESTIVA

March 23, 2016 all day - [Stargazer's Theatre and Event Center](#)



### PINE FOREST SPRING SHOW & SALE

April 23, 2016 at 10am to April 24, 2016 at 3pm - [Lewis Palmer High School](#)



### JOHN DENVER TRIBUTE WITH JIM CURRY

May 13, 2016 from 7pm to 9pm - [Stargazers Theatre](#)

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Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on March 9, 2010 at 3:41pm

The \$64 questions is how to make the Internet 'free and accessible to all' Bob. The 'accessible' is being solved, in part by wireless, and I don't mean just via \$ a minute Internet cell phones. But the 'free' is another question. What are your ideas?



Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on March 9, 2010 at 3:32pm

Yes, my current Verizon-Google-Droid Smart Phone is more powerful than my laptops right up until about 5 years. ago.



Comment by [Bob Stephens](#) on March 9, 2010 at 10:21am

Nowadays, our use of the Internet might rank second only to breathing when it comes to daily tasks. It should be free and accessible to all, in my humble opinion. Love that laptop in your photo at Roger's Bar, Dave. Made me think of the two-ton computer Spencer Tracy handled in the movie "Desk Set." Our cell phones have more capability now, including Internet access, of course.



Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on March 8, 2010 at 6:33pm

Why did I call it Roger's Bar? It was because the real Irish Roger's Bar was the place where westside Democratic and Union politics had always been discussed. All I did is 'port' the place of local political debate - face to face democracy - into the online world as "Electronic Democracy."

In every small town in the world and in neighborhoods of larger cities, local politics is usually debated in local bars and restaurants. The dial up BBS provided a forum for people talking to other people, online, about local issues. Since it required a modem telephone call, it tended by natural selection to be local, no phone cost, callers.

I required all posters to use their real names - no handles. And I, as the Electronic Bartender kept order, and 'moderated' the discussion (would that the big city blogs over the Internet be that advanced). For what I was pioneering (and got huge amounts of national and international publicity) was no more nor less than the tradition of the New England Town Hall meeting over an Electronic Back Fence in Colorado. Electronic Democracy.



Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on March 8, 2010 at 4:01pm

When I wrote the above this morning and sent it to the Gazette as an Opinion piece, the editor wrote this back to me,

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Dave:

Everytime another person gains the ability to mass communicate with a computer the world becomes a freer place. Dictatorships -- whether theocratic, communist, socialist or fascist -- require central control of information.

Thanks for your part in making mass communication a capability of the individual.

Wayne Laugesen  
editorial page editor  
The Gazette