

New decency standards set up roadblock on information highway

By Brian Labonte
Staff Reporter

On February 8, computer screens around the world donned black to mourn the passage of the Communications Decency Act of 1996. It wasn't its death they were mourning, however, it was its birth.

The act is a rider attached to a larger telecommunications bill (S. 652) which was signed by President Clinton on Feb. 8. It was conceived in the Senate Commerce Committee by Senator James Exon (D-Neb.)

The act has been attacked because it outlaws "any comment, request, suggestion, proposal, image, or other communication which is obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, or indecent, with intent to annoy, threaten, or harass another person." In other words, anything that is allowed in print form is banned on-line.

"I am not trying to be a super censor. The first thing I was concerned with was the kids being able to pull up pornography on their machines," Sen. Exon said.

Protests centered on the definition of "indecent" and on its specific reference to the 1873

Comstock Law, which prohibits communications related to obtaining abortions. The Comstock reference was added by Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-Ill.) who said he didn't intend for the reference to prohibit free speech, but only to ban the "selling, procuring or facilitating..." of abortion devices via the Internet and on-line services.

Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) introduced a bill on Feb. 26 striking the Comstock provision, but since she voted in favor of the amendment in December, the anti-obscenity provisions will not be affected by her bill.

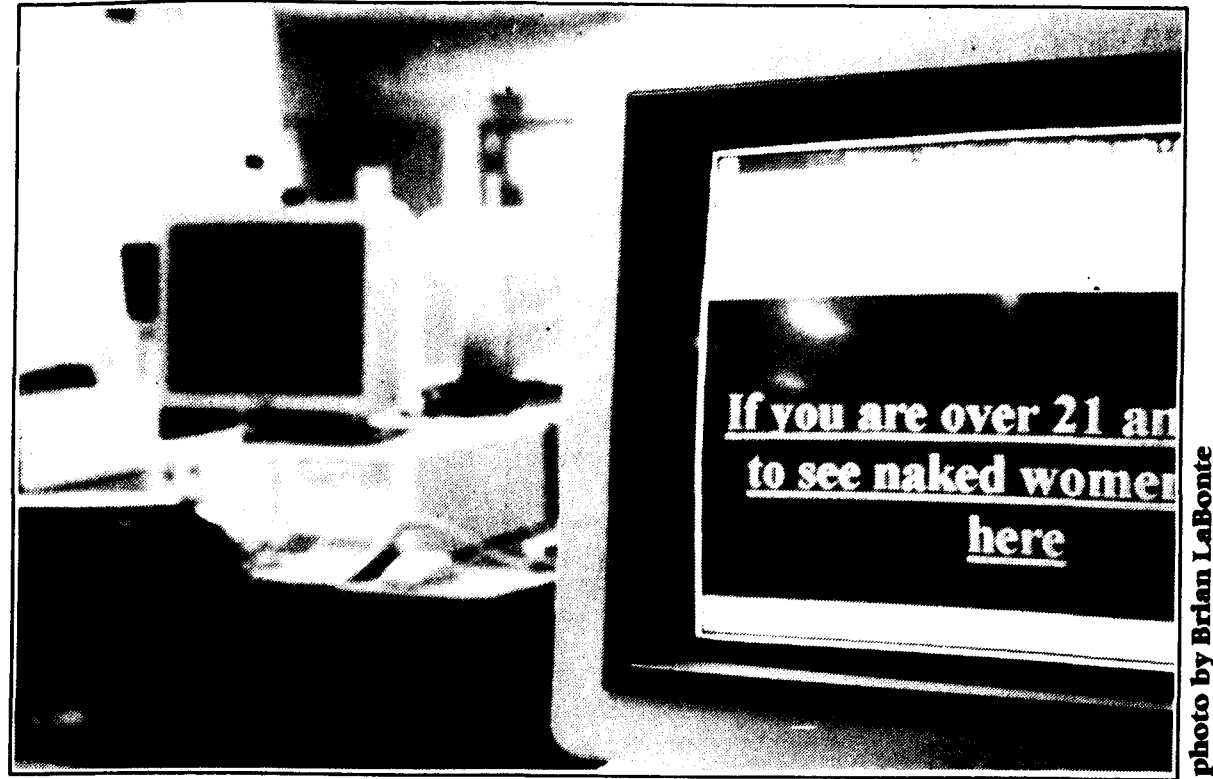
During the week of Feb. 5, two lawsuits were filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). One filed in United States District Court, the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, was on behalf of the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) who argued that "indecent" and "patently offensive" material is protected by the Constitution even for minors...

While Judge Ronald L. Buckwalter disagreed that minors have a constitutional right to patently offensive on-

line material, he did see a legal problem with the term "indecent," which he said would "leave reasonable people perplexed in evaluating what is or what is not prohibited in this statute." This decision, while it did block the amendment from going into effect, leaves supporters and opponents confused as to which way the law will eventually decide.

So far the government hasn't assigned any "Superhighway Patrol Officers" to enforce the law. Instead they included a "Good Samaritan" clause in the act. The clause states that a "provider of user of an interactive computer service shall not be held liable on account of any action voluntarily taken in good faith to restrict access to the availability of material..." that the law covers. In other words, Compuserve, America On-Line, or any on-line provider may restrict what goes on your computer screen.

Penn State doesn't have any worries about the new law since the amendment doesn't effect institutes of higher learning. At present, PSH doesn't have a formal web policy, but the University is working on one,



"If you are over 21 and want to see naked women - click here" - is one of many similar messages that appear on the Internet.

according to Steve Hevner, Director of Public Information at PSH.

What PSH does have is AD 20, which is posted in all the computer labs. The policy is in effect to "protect the security of the computer and the network," not to censor the user.

On page two of the policy, regulation seven states: "University computer systems are reserved for use only for University-related activities. Transmitting or making accessi-

ble offensive, obscene or harassing materials or messages are not University-related activities and are prohibited."

With all the protests about the Communications Decency Act, the telecommunications bill itself has gotten lost. What the bill does is partially deregulate the telecommunications industry. It's mainly intended to promote competition in the telephone and cable television industries.

The bill would also

require television manufacturers to install "v-chips" into every set over 13 inches. The chip will allow parents to screen out any programming they deem unacceptable for family viewing.

The bill also requires the cable and broadcast industry to develop ratings for sex and violence within one year. If they don't comply, the Federal Communications Commission would draft ratings for them.



Rama Bondada, economics major, picks up letters from his mailbox at Penn State York

photo by Jody Jacobs

PSH needs to communicate better

One student tells what this campus needs

By Jody Jacobs
Staff Reporter

One problem I have noticed since I arrived at Penn State Harrisburg is the ineffective means of communicating campus-related information to students.

The bulletin boards are overloaded with data, and let's face it, none of us really has the time to stop and sort out which of the numerous eight and a half by eleven sheets of paper that are posted on them are important to read.

Workshops, forums, and activities continue to take place without our knowing about them and we continue to walk around in the proverbial dark.

I admit that spending my first two years at Penn State York may have spoiled me. At that campus each student has a campus mailbox. Now I appreciate the inter-campus correspondence treasure that school's lobby houses.

Imagine the possibilities of having such a system at Penn State Harrisburg. General information about campus life and more specific, personal information about majors, grades, and even financial aid would be

found in one location. There would be no need to stand in the stairwell being walked over by people on their way to class, (as with the bulletin board system). We would have the luxury of taking the mail with us and reading it at our leisure.

So what would it take to have such a system here? York Campus Registrar Frank Miller says it's not that complicated or expensive.

He said it would only take lumber and masonite to build the mail slots. It would also require less than an hour of office time to assign each student a mailbox number. Miller also said that he has a computer program for the number assignment and he's willing to share it with our campus.

On a commuter campus such as ours, inter-campus communication is vital to enhance the college experience. Bulletin boards and word of mouth are not effective means of relaying information to students who travel here for classes and then leave.

Time is a precious commodity for our student body. Mailboxes would conveniently inform students and would be found in one permanent place. We need a such a system here.

Academia - Nuts: One student's perspective

by Jim Miller
Contributor

I could never be an academic. Who in their right mind would want to have as the highlight of their life the fact that they have been published in "Journal of Electromagnetic Hyperfriction?"

I guess it make perfect sense. After I graduate from college, the first urge I will have will be to WRITE MORE PAPERS!! I see academia as a narcotic of sorts, where all of the intellectual junkies gather to catch a "high" by sitting down and typing out a detailed analysis of earthworm symbolism in several of Shakespeare's tragedies.

The first thing that professors tell the students is that they expect us to produce "college-level writing." What they really mean by "college-level writing" can best be described as the gratuitous use of complex sentences throughout a paragraph that lasts longer than the Gulf War.

Do these people practice writing this way? I mean, can't they just get to the point? Will it really matter in the end if they say "The sky is blue" instead of saying "The auxiliary troposphere exhibited characteristics not completely variant from the hues created by the coalescence of multivariable particulates blended within the context of the realm of possibilities, namely the visual spectrum."

Another great characteristic of the academic is his ability to speak for an hour (without notes) on the theory of Division of Labor. Where most people have devoted massive quantities of brain cells to such relevant information as Ted Williams' life-time batting average or the number of episodes of "Golden Girls" in which the old lady cracked a joke about sex, the academic actually derives pleasure from reading more books!

I can only imagine: "Not tonight, honey, I just have to finish reading *Eighteenth Century Korean Sculptors*. It's sooooo compelling!"

I must give the profession some degree of credit, however. The days of the

stereotypical stodgy old man with horn-rimmed glasses and a pocket protector have fortunately passed us by. Instead, our professors now wear blue jeans and drive sports cars.

I wonder if these professors actually set out to do this for a living ("Well, Bob, I was kinda thinkin' of giving up the swing shift at Uni-Mart to go get my doctorate"). Remember, it takes a tremendous amount of time, talent and (most importantly) money in order to pursue one's dream.

However, it is the idea of becoming a crashing bore with the social presence of a sedated Fred Rogers that repulses even the most eager student. Are our graduate schools offering classes on How To Act Like an Academic?

Were there a class such as that, the first lesson would undoubtedly be "return papers and tests at least four weeks after receiving them." Hopefully, some of my finest efforts from 1992 will get back to me any day now.

To be totally honest, I am somewhat thankful that I have decided to focus my education in the field of Humanities. I feel total empathy for those poor souls in other majors who are forced to sit through two-hour lectures conducted by professors with difficult accents.

In all seriousness, I am grateful to those fine men and women who have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of the elusive world of mathematics. Let me also include the fact that of those of us in the "non-academic" or "real" world, understanding long division is a more than sufficient mathematical education.

"Sure," you defenders of academia (and you know who you are) say, "Sure, and who are you to talk? You who couldn't even pass Introductory Economics! Sitting there, pondering the ramifications of a post-modern society ravaged by the multi-biased face of corporate American operating under the discursive..."

Oops, looks as though I have to cut this short. The latest issue of "Journal of Adaptive Dynamic Horticulture" is in my mailbox. The swimsuit edition.



photo by Tina Shearer

Rumble in The Bronx tumbles beyond typical martial arts movie

By Mary Angelo
Contributor

I have admit, I went to the showing of *Rumble in the Bronx* with much trepidation and whining. Pulled to my seat with feet dragging I resigned myself to a typical martial arts movie with a typical martial arts plot. However, I was extremely surprised.

If you don't already know, this film stars Jackie Chan, who has long been making movies but is now attempting to break into stardom in the United States. The film was directed by none other than Raymond Chow, who directed and/or produced all of Bruce Lee's movies.

The film opens with Keung, played by Chan, meeting his uncle in an airport. Almost immediately I began to notice that the actors lips did not match their voices. While my head began to become swimmy with images of bad Godzilla movies, my guest leaned over and told me that over dubbing is one of Raymond Chow's styles. Here I thought it was just a dire attempt at comedic relief.

Chan's character meets his doom, and here the plot takes off, when he witnesses a challenge between two female gang members. They race their motorcycles down an alleyway via the tops of cars, and Chan notices that his uncle's antique car is about to get totalled.

He stops one girl from riding over his uncle's car, thereby causing an accident and angering the gang members.

Chan tries to help a girl that he believes is being raped and he discovers that he is being set up. With a multitude of martial art moves and extreme agility, Chan leads the viewer to believe that he can

outsmart and get away from this fight. However, the gang corners him and proceeds to throw glass bottles at him (he's trapped in an alley). Chan is beyond hurt and crawls to the home of his neighbor, a small disabled boy, for help. The boy's sister, who happens to be one of the gang members, helps Chan.

Stolen diamonds come into the picture as a member of the gang stuffs that bag into the boy's wheelchair cushion after a shootout after a shootout at their apartment building. Now the gang is after Chan for two reasons: the original wrongdoing, and now they're after the diamonds. There is a lot of heart-stopping action in this movie, complete with many humorous scenes, that are so intentionally inane you have to laugh.

After Chan becomes involved with the lead gang member's girl (the disabled boy's sister), many fights ensue and end with Chan chasing a hover craft. The movie really becomes hilarious when the driver of hover craft is eventually forced to drive into the city.

I found the movie interesting mostly because Chan does all of his own stunts. And at the end of the movie after the bad guys are lead away out-takes are shown in which the audience gets to see what went wrong, (Chan broke his ankle during one of the chase scenes, and bungled attempts during the fight scenes.)

This is recommended if you're in the mood for some bloody battles, great fights, and wry humor. Jackie Chan is interesting to watch and the plot wasn't half as bad as I thought it would be. I give this movie a solid "B."