

(The Not So) New Media: from the first communities to social software

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New media

- Usually means new trends in mass media making use of information technology: Internet (mostly WWW), interactive multimedia etc
- Also known as Web 2.0 or social software
- Sometimes (mis)used as a buzzword

Six properties of social media (based on Collings & Rohozinski 2009, Elkjer Nissen 2015)

- Pervasive: used globally
- Ubiquitous: used on different devices and contexts
- Instantaneous: (almost) real-time
- Interactive:
 - Positive: feedback, dialogue, synthesis
 - Negative: echo chambers, amplification of fringe beliefs
- Socially specific: based on common interests and interest-based networks
- Sticky: opinions can be easier to adopt (vs perceived slant in official media)

Main categories (based on Kaplan & Haenlein 2010)

- Collaborative projects (Wikipedia, FLOSS)
- (Micro)blogging (Blogger, Wordpress.com, Twitter/X, Mastodon)
- Content communities (YouTube, Flickr, SoundCloud)
- Social networking sites (FB, LinkedIn, Vkontakte)
- Virtual game worlds (World of Warcraft, EverQuest)
- Virtual social worlds (Second Life)
- Cross media: various categories used in combination

Web 2.0

- Another popular term
- Network (Web) as a platform – browser as the “killer app” (e.g. Google Docs)
- Dynamic, rapid changes
- Participation, inclusion, communities
- Technologies: XHTML and HTML5, CSS, LAMP, AJAX, tagging, blogs, RSS, wikis, forums

Two kinds of information

- **Passive** - “already on Internet”, can be retrieved with search engines or a variety of other tools (web databases etc).
Simply put, the stuff we can google
- **Active** - “live”, dynamic information that is in the heads of the people participating in online communities (aka “not yet in the Web”) – retrieval means active communication with people and constructing the knowledge from pieces of information

Early history of online communities

- Among the first: 19th-century telegraph operators
- 1973-1975: Community Memory in San Francisco
- 1973: PLATO Notes at UIUC
- 1974-2000 – EIES at New Jersey Institute of Technology
- 1979 – MUD1 at Essex University
- 1985 – WELL (Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link) in California

Community Memory

- The first computerized bulletin board
- UC Berkeley 1973-75, started as a research/social project (Resource 1)
- SDS 940 computer at the university and a teleprinter at a local music store, 110 baud modem connection
- Everyone was free to read messages (writing had a 25 cent charge) - 'Information flea market'
- Benway, the first online persona



PLATO

- G.I. Bill 1944 – WWII veterans were entitled to free education (including college level), increasing remarkably the workload on higher education. Automation was seen as a solution
- The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) – relatively away from the two cradles of IT on the coasts
- ILLIAC supercomputer series – from 1952 to today
- PLATO I (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations) launched in 1960. Subsequent systems worked up to 2006
- PLATO Notes (1973) – considered the first online community

...

- Considered a pioneer in several fields of IT:
 - Plasma display and touchscreen
 - Predecessors of sound cards and MIDI
 - Several game types
 - Various educational technology (e.g. online testing => Pearson VUE)
 - Screen sharing
 - Message boards and online chat

Mailing lists

- Likely the oldest component of New Media still in use: started in 1973, soon after the introduction of e-mail
- Some catalogues are still online, e.g. <https://www.lsoft.com/catalist.html> (public lists using LISTSERV software)
- Netiquette – the basic rules of good behaviour
- Moderation
- Recommended reading: How to Ask Questions the Smart Way by Eric S. Raymond (<http://www.catb.org/esr/faqs/smart-questions.html>)

Usenet

- A hierarchical discussion system with a long tradition (created in 1980 at Duke University). In decline today, yet has an important part in Internet history and substantial archives containing materials on many important events (e.g. birth of WWW or Linux)
- Hierarchical network of topical discussion groups
- Technically similar to mailing lists, but is a 'pull medium', users need to download the material by themselves (ct mailing list 'pushing' the content to mailbox)

Example

- comp.os - computer operating systems
 - comp.os.ms-windows – MS Windows OS-s
 - comp.os.ms-windows.apps – applications for MS Windows
- Works as a network of Usenet servers. Every server owner would choose which groups to serve – messages to these groups will be available from the local server, and all messages posted locally will be forwarded to other servers catering to the same newsgroup
- Needs client software (for a while, e-mail clients did Usenet too)

8 classic hierarchies + 1

- comp. - computers
- misc. - various
- news. - topics about Usenet itself
- rec. - recreation (music, sports etc)
- sci. - natural and exact sciences
- soc. - society and culture
- talk. - various (often controversial) topics
- humanities. - humanities (languages, philosophy)
- In 1987, the alt was added – free creation of new groups

Later developments

- Regional groups (ee. was quite popular for a time)
- Web gateways
- <https://groups.google.com/>
- Gradual shift to binary content (incl. some shady kinds)
 - At first, the 60K character limit for articles
 - Turn of the century: new ways to add binary files
 - Gradual growth of binary traffic (up to today!), decline of traditional content – AOL stopped in 2005, Duke (the birthplace) in 2010 and news.unc.edu in 2011
- Readers were reprofiled for binary files

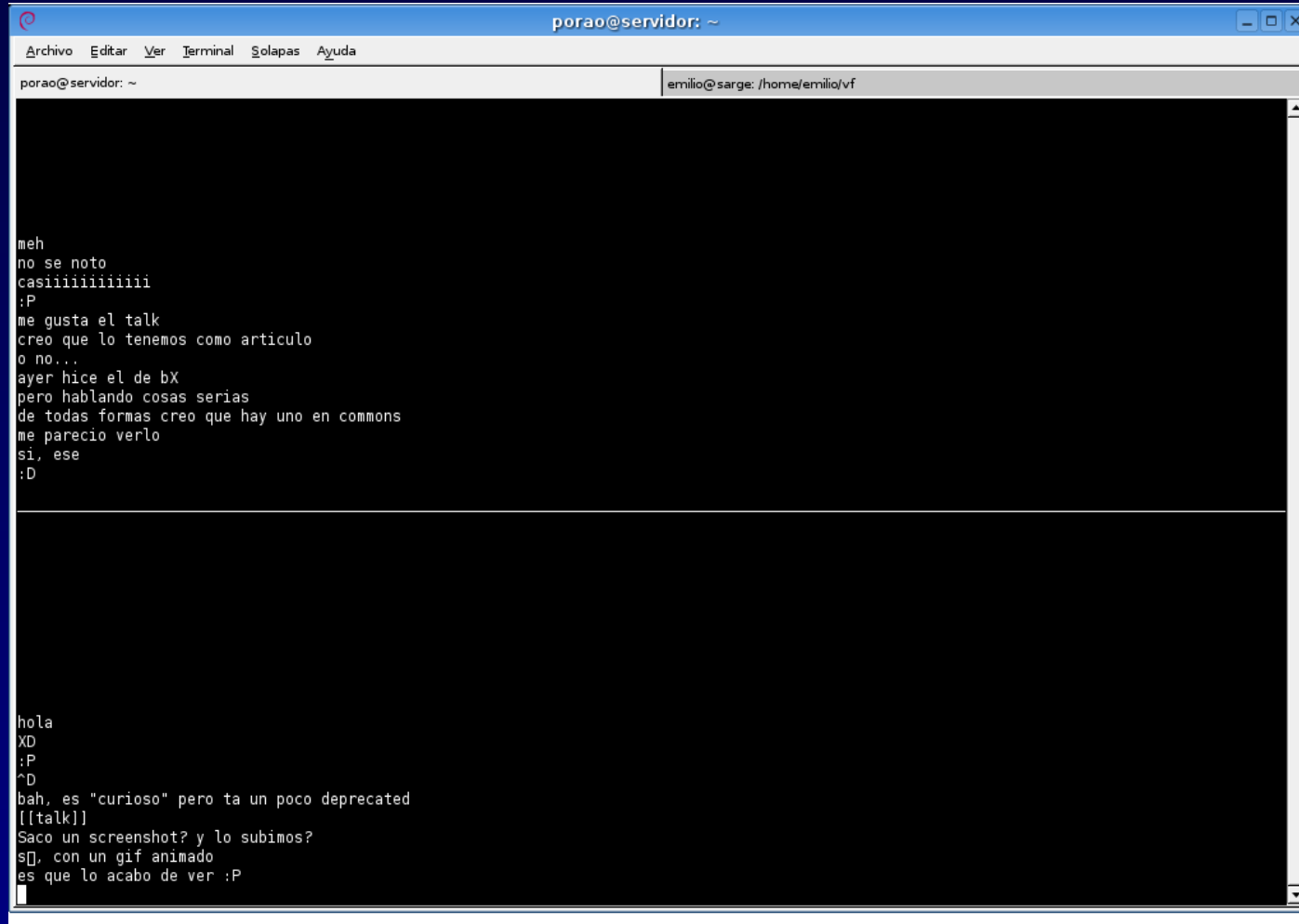
Online journalism

- 1970 – NY Times started to collect abstracts of articles online
- 1971 – Project Gutenberg (<https://www.gutenberg.org>)
- 70-s – news agencies offered 'teletext'
- 80-s – commercial news channels
- 1991 and onwards – the web media
- 90-s – web versions of papers and journals, news portals, later the blog boom
- Around 2010-15 – return of the paywall

Real-time chat

- A number of solutions from different times:
 - Unix Talk
 - Talkers
 - MUDs
 - IRC
 - Instant messaging
 - Social networks
 - Video chat systems (most also retain the textual component!)

talk (from Wikimedia Commons)



The image shows a terminal window titled "porao@servidor: ~". The window has a menu bar with "Archivo", "Editar", "Ver", "Terminal", "Solapas", and "Ayuda". The terminal content shows a chat conversation between two users: "porao@servidor: ~" and "emilio@sarge: /home/emilio/vf".

```
porao@servidor: ~
emilio@sarge: /home/emilio/vf

meh
no se noto
casiiiiiiiiiiii
:P
me gusta el talk
creo que lo tenemos como articulo
o no...
ayer hice el de bx
pero hablando cosas serias
de todas formas creo que hay uno en commons
me parecia verlo
si, ese
:D

hola
XD
:P
^D
bah, es "curioso" pero ta un poco deprecated
[[talk]]
Saco un screenshot? y lo subimos?
s[], con un gif animado
es que lo acabo de ver :P
```

Talker

- A simple “virtual world” with rooms to communicate in, on three levels (private, room, world)
- Boomed in late 90s, later replaced by IM and social networks
- Talker.com hosted ~100 talkers in 90s
- Classic ones used Telnet, later ones had Web interfaces
- Once in Estonia, every university, trade school (and many secondary schools) had one
- Formed several strong virtual communities that also acted offline, some still exist (perhaps in other forms, e.g. on Facebook)

MUD

- *Multi-User Dimension/Dungeon*
- Technically similar to talker, but adds game functions (objects, mobs, NPCs, combat, quests) and experience gathering (levelling)
- RP vs XP vs PK (ct Bartle's four gamer types!)
- Text vs graphics
- MUD vs MUSH/MUSE/MUX
- New century – MMORPG and MOBA

A walk in the Grey Havens: MUME

```
*>w  
Guild Street  
There is an old street-lamp on the border of the street.  
A little dog is here.  
A woman is here, looking for someone to chat with.  
A little boy is here, running around.  
Exits: East [South] West.
```

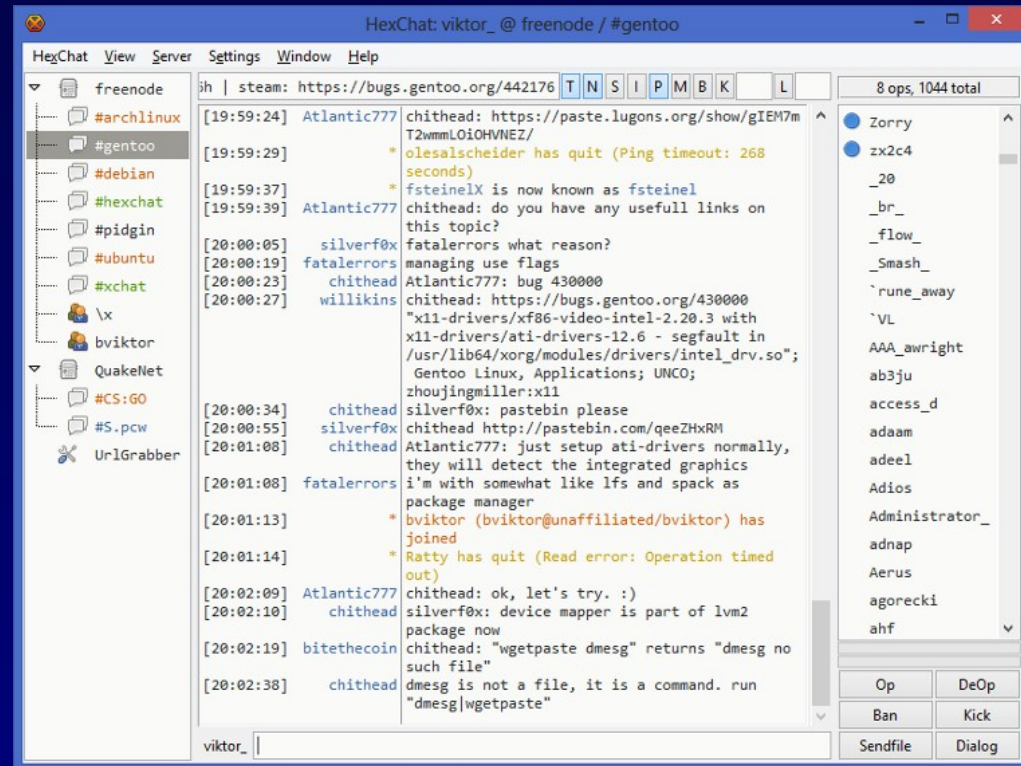
```
*>w  
Guild Street  
There is an old street-lamp on the border of the street.  
An old man is walking around, cleaning up.  
Exits: East West.
```

```
*>w  
Guild Street  
There is an old street-lamp on the border of the street.  
Exits: East South West.
```

```
*>s  
The Guild of Warriors  
A weapons rack stands against the wall.  
Huor of Dor-Lómin is standing here, ready to teach his arts.  
Exits: North [West] Up.
```

IRC

- Internet Relay Chat, 1988 by Jarkko Oikarinen
- Channels (a bit similar to Usenet groups)
- Source of most terms used in chat (bot, ban, kick...)
- Declining in use, but like Usenet has historical importance (e.g. the Soviet coup in 1991 was largely reported over IRC)
- Still has some quite active communities



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/56/Screenshot_of_HexChat_in_Windows_8.png

Search engine

- Software that gathers online information, indexes it and allows searching by keywords
 - First experiments (Wandex, AliWeb) 1993, the first full-text production system was probably the WebCrawler by Brian Pinkerton (1994)
 - 1995 – AltaVista (Digital Corp). Multi-language support
 - 2001 – Google
- The main mechanism – the periodically web-crawling 'robot'.
Rapid expansion of the Web => less effective
- The results can be influenced from both sides (engine and Web). SEO and Google bombs. Privacy concerns

Web directory

- In essence, a managed (by real people) collection of web links
- The first large player: YAHOO (Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle – in its original form), started out as Jerry's Guide to the World Wide Web – David Filo & Jerry Yang
1996
- From the turn of the century, got typically merged with other services

Yahoo.com on Feb 1, 1997 (via archive.org)

YAHOO!

New Cool Today's News More Yahoo!

[NBA Finals](#) [Summer Splash!](#) A vacation for four and more! [Click Here!](#) [Don't Forget Dad](#)

[options](#)

[Yellow Pages](#) - [People Search](#) - [Maps](#) - [Classifieds](#) - [News](#) - [Stock Quotes](#) - [Sports Scores](#)

- [Arts and Humanities](#)
[Architecture](#), [Photography](#), [Literature](#)...
- [Business and Economy \[Xtra!\]](#)
[Companies](#), [Investing](#), [Employment](#)...
- [Computers and Internet \[Xtra!\]](#)
[Internet](#), [WWW](#), [Software](#), [Multimedia](#)...
- [Education](#)
[Universities](#), [K-12](#), [College Entrance](#)...
- [Entertainment \[Xtra!\]](#)
[Cool Links](#), [Movies](#), [Music](#), [Humor](#)...
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- [News and Media \[Xtra!\]](#)
[Current Events](#), [Magazines](#), [TV](#), [Newspapers](#)...
- [Recreation and Sports \[Xtra!\]](#)
[Sports](#), [Games](#), [Travel](#), [Autos](#), [Outdoors](#)...
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[Libraries](#), [Dictionaries](#), [Phone Numbers](#)...
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- [Social Science](#)
[Anthropology](#), [Sociology](#), [Economics](#)...
- [Society and Culture](#)
[People](#), [Environment](#), [Religion](#)...

[My Yahoo!](#) - [Yahoo!igans!](#) for Kids - [Beatrice's Web Guide](#) - [Yahoo! Internet Life](#)

Web forums and groups

- Web forums added a web interface to earlier board systems
- A wide variety of services and software, many of them available today (e.g. Nabble.com, phpBB etc)
- Webgroup - web-based crossover with mailing lists and Usenet
- <https://groups.yahoo.com> and <https://groups.google.com>
- At the user's preference, would work as
 - a web portal (similar to e.g. Gmail)
 - a mailing list
 - a newsgroup

Folksonomy

- Term by Thomas Vander Wal 2004
- From *folk* and *taxonomy* – a spontaneously-forming (“order from chaos”) system based on user-created classification using tags (e.g. “literature”, “sci-fi”, “Asimov”, “space”...)
- a.k.a. social bookmarking, collaborative tagging, social indexing etc
 - Positive: easy, flexible, collaborative
 - Negative: can be ambiguous, prone to errors, or in varying detail
- Boomed in early social media, several dedicated services (e.g. del.icio.us)
- An offshoot originating in Twitter – hashtags – are still popular

Instant messaging

- ICQ 1996 (*I seek you*)
- MSN Messenger
- AIM
- Yahoo! Messenger
- Jabber
- Slack, Asana, Telegram, Matrix...

- More recently, either specialized (e.g. privacy) or integrated services (MS Teams)

Social networking websites

- Predecessors in 90s - TheGlobe, GeoCities, Tripod
- Friendster, Rate.ee (2002)
- MySpace, Orkut, LinkedIn, Bebo (2003)
- Facebook (2004)
- ...
- From Gazzag.com to Firesheep



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/nadyne/3725933284>

Graphical virtual worlds

- Earlier used as venue for games
- Possibly the first: WorldsAway 1996 (CompuServe) – other candidates also include PLATO and LucasFilm's Habitat (1986-88)
- Second Life 2003 (<https://www.secondlife.com>)
- OpenSimulator 2007 (<https://www.opensimulator.org>)
- IT College simulator (OpenSim) 2008-15, again somewhat active since 2019
- 2018: Facebook => Meta (rather similar idea)
- Main point: metaverse or alternate reality; not a ready-made world but rather a platform for builders, designers, teachers etc

Second Life / OpenSimulator



File Edit View World Tools Help Proovimaa 128, 128, 25 (Mature) - Your Parcel 1:41 PM PDT L\$0 Search

Appearance

Body Parts

- Shape
- Skin
- Hair
- Eyes
- Clothes
- Shirt
- Pants
- Shoes
- Socks
- Jacket
- Gloves
- Undershirt
- Underpants
- Skirt

New Shape
Located In /My Inventory/Body Parts

Body

Head

Eyes

Ears

Nose

Mouth

Chin

Torso

Legs

Female
Male

Height
1.97 m (6' 5")
(includes shoes)

Short Tall
Height 53

Body Thin Body Thick
Body Thickness 61

Shape: Save Save As... Revert

Make Outfit... OK Cancel

Kakk Silber
(Editing Appearance)

Local Chat Click here to chat. Say Gestures

Communicate Fly Snapshot Search Build Map Mini-Map Inventory

Newsfeeds

- A method to forward (aggregate) online content (usually news or other rapidly changing info) to other web pages or special reader software
- 1996 – Netscape (RDF) jt
- Currently two XML-based standards - RSS and Atom
- An important component of blogs and other new media channels

Blog

- “Weblog” by Jorn Barger 1997, “blog” by Peter Merholz 1999
- Online diary or journal
- First examples from very early days (incl the very first web page of Tim Berners-Lee). Justin Hall in late 90s
- The boom started with the advent of RSS
- Substantial influence on traditional media, sometimes to whole society (e.g. Iran)
- Different: generic/topical, text/pictures/links, comments allowed/disallowed, written by one/many etc

Microblogging

- The short form of blogging (at first up to 140 characters, later expanded)
- Started in about 2005 (tumblelogs: short blog posts, e.g. just a web link)
- Twitter 2006, Tumblr 2007, Plurk 2008, Sina Weibo and Tencent, in China; Jaiku and identi.ca are gone by now
- 2016: Mastodon, a FLOSS-based decentralized network
- 2023: Twitter => X

Wiki

- Hawaiian *wiki-wiki* (< Quickly)
- 1995 – WikiWikiWeb, Ward Cunningham
- Self-regulation, “Order through disorder”
- 1999 - Nupedia, 2001 – Wikipedia
(note: the former was not actually a wiki)
- Currently (Sept 2023) over 61 (since Spring, +1) million articles in 335 (+5) languages - English has 6.7 (+0.1) million, Estonian has over 239 000 (+5 000!; 45th in the world, -1)
- Increasingly common elsewhere (companies, e-learning...)



Because we can (again)

- Wikipedia (<https://www.wikipedia.org>)
- Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com>), photos
- YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>), videos
- SlideShare (<https://slideshare.net>), presentation slides
- FanFiction.net (<https://www.fanfiction.net>) and AO3 (<https://archiveofourown.org>), Fan fiction
- Also FB, Snapchat, Linux and other FLOSS...

Because we can (the other side)

- Most American (social) media corporations lean left/liberal politically
- Unfair treatment of 'the other side'? Or 'idiots deserve kicking'?
- Conservapedia 2006 (<https://www.conservapedia.com>)
- The gap started to widen during the Donald Trump era and keeps widening (alt-right => alt-tech)
- alt-tech today: Gab, Parler, Rumble, Gettr, Voat, Truth Social, Hatreon, Metapedia, MeWe and many others
- Extremely varying – has got its share of village idiots and maniacs, as well as sensible people and views
- Recently, seem to have lost a lot of momentum due to stances about the War in Ukraine and subsequent processes

IoT

- Internet began as a computer network
- Now there are phones, TVs, watches...
- ... increasingly also toasters and fridges
- Needs the breakthrough of IPv6 – the address space of v4 is too limited
- On the one hand, ample new opportunities. On the other, similarly ample threats (PIBKAC, privacy, security, Big Brother, junk...), possibly creating the Internet of Bad Things

Net neutrality

- One of the reasons for the rapid spread of the “Internet of old” was neutrality of data – no discrimination by apps, devices, owners etc
- Alas, some businesspeople are inventive (e.g. the original MSN)
- Danger of artificial scarcity (ACTA etc)
- The EU has a regulation (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32015R2120&rid=2>) in place since 2015, but it has been called ineffective – several countries (but not Estonia!) have introduced more potent local laws

Creative freedom

- The former “intellectual property” faces new challenges:
 - Free software (GPL etc)
 - Free documents (FDL, CC)
 - Free research (Open Access)
 - Free content (Creative Commons, Free Art License)
 - New repositories (Flickr, Scribd, SlideShare etc)

For conclusion

- Internet as a media channel has broader influence than it may seem
- Traditional media and legal system are changing
- Quantity vs quality

For further reading

- *The Virtual Community* by Howard Rheingold
- *The Friendly Orange Glow* by Brian Dear
- *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* by Fred Turner
- *Next Generation Democracy* by Jared Duval
- *The Weaponization of Social Media* by Thomas Elkjer Nissen

Next time, something else...