Message 2

@ Harvard University, Summer 2000

Message 2 contains some of the messages that I posted at Harvard University, Creative New Media and the World Wide Web's bulletin board in cyberspace.

Russell's paradox

Posted 07-17-2000 at Harvard University, Creative New Media and the World Wide Web class' bulletin board in cyberspace.

Does a set that is defined as "all sets that do not include themselves" include itself as a member?

The above phrase describes what has become widely known as "Russell's paradox" after the mathematician and philosopher Bernard Russell. Russell's emphasis on logical analysis influenced the course of philosophy of the 20th century. "Russell's paradox" forms the basis of Bernard Russell and Alfred North Whitehead's monumental work Principia Mathematica ('Principles of Mathematics') (1910-1913), which showed that mathematics can be stated in terms of the concepts of general logic such as class and membership of a class.

Having Principia Mathematica in mind, a set is a mathematical construct that is a collection of things. A set may include artists, graphic designers, marketers, physicists, business people, international students, American students, graduate students, undergraduate students etc. "Introduction to Creative New Media and the World Wide Web" (CSCI S-K) can be imagined as a set that includes all those people mentioned above. Each one of those people belongs to a certain set that is defined either by profession or by whatever else characteristic we choose to group the members of a set.

While it seems that there is homogeneity among all members of CSCI S-K - each member of CSCI S-K belongs to a certain set - chances are that each one of those members has a different perception on what constitutes freedom of speech in academia.

Consider in the CSCI S-K's environment a set (A), which is defined to contain all sets that are not members of themselves. Consider, for

instance, that set (A) contains all members' different perceptions on freedom of speech in academia.

Does this set (A) that includes "all sets that do not include themselves" - i.e. the different perceptions on freedom of speech in academia - include itself as a member? In other words, does this set (A)includes "whatever each one of the members of CSCI S-K can perceive as freedom of speech in academia" or not?

If we answered YES to the above question, then a request submitted by a member of CSCI S-K to another member belonging to the same group having the content "on the basis of freedom of speech in academia and more specifically in CSCI S-K, please, shut up," does not belong to set A, which is about the different perceptions on freedom of speech in academia.

If we answered NO to the aforementioned question (does this set A includes whatever each one of the members of CSCI S-K can perceive as freedom of speech in academia or not?), then the definition of set A per se - "whatever each one of the members of CSCI S-K can perceive as freedom of speech in academia" is threatened. That is because we reach the conclusion that for CSCI S-K's definition of freedom of speech in academia the viewpoints of certain students are disregarded while at the same time only the viewpoints of other students are regarded.

We defined set (A) as the set that includes "whatever each one of the members of CSCI S-K can perceive as freedom of speech in academia." The definition of set (A) appears to be reasonable.

The question of whether set A belongs to itself also appears to be reasonable. However, we have difficulty in coming up with a reasonable answer to "Russell's paradox"-which for the sake of CSCI S-K has the form we mentioned above: does this set (A) includes "whatever each one of the members of CSCI S-K can perceive as freedom of speech in academia" or not?

Bernard Russell pondered on "Russell's paradox" for more than a decade, but finally he came up with an answer. He invented the equivalent of a theoretical computer - a logic machine - that

implements one logical transformation at a time, each one requiring a quantum of time, so that things do not happen all at once. Based on the conception of one logical transformation at a quantum of time, Russell proved that the answer to "Russell's paradox" can never be YES and NO at the same time.

The conclusion I reach from the above thoughts is the following: If we were all interested in preserving the freedom of speech in academia or at least in CSCI S-K, we should avoid stating publicly requests that threaten the balance of our "Introduction to Creative New Media and the World Wide Web" by driving us to "Russell's paradox" situations.

Joke

Posted 07-24-2000 at Harvard University, Creative New Media and the World Wide Web class' bulletin board in cyberspace.

You are a computer nerd if:

1. Your web page is more popular than you.

2. Your favorite sport is Tetris.

3. You talk to your computer.

4. You argue with your computer.

5. Your computer has its own phone line.

6. You have dreams involving your computer.

7. You try to pick up women on chat lines.

8. You can talk to a woman about your hardware and not mean anything sexual.

9. You spend Friday nights with your computer.

10. You ask a woman for her email address instead of her phone number.

11. You have never actually met many of your friends.

12. You remember how to use DOS.

13. Only computer users can understand you.

14. Your home page is longer than your resume.

15. You always understand Dilbert.

16. You spend more time on the Internet than you do sleeping.

17. You have multiple email addresses.

18. You have setup a LAN in your house.

19. You search the Internet for computer humor.

20. Your idea of hurrying is typing faster.

21. You keep spare mouse pads.

22. You buy your computer gifts.

23. Someone mentions foreign language and you think "Cobol".

24. You get a new computer, take it out of the box, and you immediately remove the case.

25. You have ever called home to check on your computer.

26. You do processes in DOS instead of Windows not because it is faster, but because it just confuses people.

27. You have ever considered getting a tattoo of the "Intel Inside" logo.

28. You no longer interact with your family, you send them email instead; in the same house.

29. You check your email before you check your answering machine.

30. You can program the next best thing to Windows, but you still cannot get your VCR to stop flashing.

31. You have more insurance on your computer than on your children.

32. You receive more chat requests than phone calls.

33. You do not immediately go into gibbering panic when you hear of a new computer virus.

34. You have ever emailed your assignment in to your professor.

35. You have dialed 911 and emailed them your problem.

36. You call in sick to work over your computer.

37. Your first aid kit contains Norton's Anti-Virus.

38. You know what the acronyms HTML, URL, ISP, and HTTP each stand for.

39. You tinker with computers at work all day, and when you finally get off work, you rush home to tinker with your computer.

40. You have more than one home page.

41. You have a better computer system at home than at work.

42. You get jealous when other people use your computer.

43. You run back into your burning home to rescue your computer, but you leave the dog.

44. You know exactly how much hard drive space you have free, but you do not know your spouse's birthday.

45. You keep spare computer parts around the house.

What is your WQ?

Posted 07-26-2000 at Harvard University, Creative New Media and the World Wide Web class' bulletin board in cyberspace.

Nita's extensive reference to available software such as drawing tools, page-layout tools, web editors, authorwares, database tools, utilities and compositors stirred knowledge on the network economy.
It caused my natural reaction to an information overdose. Having in mind Herbert Simon, a Nobel prize-winning economist, who said that "a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention," I raised the question of locating what is useful to me as a software consumer. That is because, the problem today is not information access, but rather information overload.

David gave the answer instantly and concisely: EXPERIENCE!
It is, indeed. David hit the nail on the head. Those who believe that learning how to use the various software tools is the hardest thing to do, are wrong. The hardest thing is learning when to use the software tools that one already knows how to use.

As an addendum to David's answer, I'm providing you with the following thoughts that come from Tom Peters, one of my favorite business provocateurs. "The mess is the message! Mess (economic) is quintessentially American. Silicon Valley is the Mecca of mess. It's also Mecca of awesome success... that is the byproduct of an exceptional number of failures... vigorous tries that don't amount to anything... but feed the bubbling cauldron "Do it right the first time is insane advice. Nobody does anything... INTERESTING... right the first... or the twenty-first... or the forty-first time. Doing the new means screwing around, trying stuff, and messing stuff up... again and again and again. That is WASTE.

"So how's your WQ? i.e., Waste Quotient?"

@narchy

Posted 08-02-2000 at Harvard University, Creative New Media and the World Wide Web class' bulletin board in cyberspace.

Anarchism is a political doctrine that is opposed to all forms of centralized authority exercised by government. Anarchists with a sounding ideological background believe that the highest attainment of humanity is the freedom of individuals to express themselves, unhindered by any form of repression or control from a centralized governmental authority. They hold that the perfection of humanity will not be attained until all government is abolished and each individual is left free.

The 19th-century French writer Pierre Joseph Proudhon is generally regarded as the father of the system of the so-called philosophic anarchism. According to Proudhon and his followers, anarchism would exclude authority from society, setting up extreme individualism. Proudhon envisioned a society in which people's ethical nature and sense of moral responsibility would be so highly developed that government would be unnecessary to regulate and protect society. He rejected the use of force to impose any system on people. In the ideal state of society, what Proudhon called "order in anarchy," people would act in a responsible, ethical manner of their own free will.
Cyberspace is evolving in ways that threaten constitutionally recognized central authorities. It seems that the modus operandi in cyberspace in the USA requires that the government refrains from being involved in setting the architecture of the Internet; the companies and consumers insist in giving themselves the chance to protect individual freedoms by establishing rule-sets in cyberspace. The architecture of cyberspace (relative anonymity, decentralization, multiple-to-multiple points of access, etc) makes it difficult - probably impossible - to control content in cyberspace.

The most appropriate way to think of cyberspace is in the consumer's mode: if we do not like a particular cyber community, we can move - and most of the time, more easily than how we can move in real space. Communities in cyberspace are governed by rule-sets that constrain behavior in a particular space. Individuals choose to enter one

community or another based on a set of criteria, among which are the rule-sets of a particular community in cyberspace. As communities in cyberspace compete for new members, rule-sets compete for new members, too.

While regulation in real space pushes individuals to fit the demands of governments which are constitutionally recognized organizations empowered with legislative authority, in cyber communities' rule-sets are pushed to fit the demands of individuals - they are a kind of customized laws for the sake of retention of users.

In real space moving from one community to another because of unsatisfactory regulation is usually costly. On the contrary, in cyberspace moving because of disagreement with a cyber community's rule-sets costs nothing and can be done instantly. Thus, competitive pressure in cyberspace is greater than in real space. Rule-sets in cyberspace target a world of volunteers - the rules are selected by users, they are not imposed on the users.

As a result, the power of centralized governmental authorities in cyberspace is minimum. Governments compete for new members in cyberspace the same way companies compete for new consumers. The powerless situation of governments in cyberspace is the result of extreme individualism. Unhindered by almost any form of centralized control in cyberspace, individuals can express themselves freely in an environment that is identical to what Proudhon called "order in anarchy."

One important detail: simply put, Proudhon's vision of a society in which people's ethical nature and sense of moral responsibility would be so highly developed that government would be unnecessary to regulate and protect society remained a mere vision. I wonder what makes people believe that the governless cyberspace in its adolescence will remain intact by any form of governance in the Internet's maturity? If Proudhon's ideological construction for people's ethical, moral and legal standards in real space remained a vision, what makes people believe that people's ethical, moral and legal standards in cyberspace

will not remain a vision, too?

Do not be afraid of anything!

Posted 08-04-2000 at Harvard University, Creative New Media and the World Wide Web class' bulletin board in cyberspace.

You should have no doubt that the software tools we have been struggling with during the last couple of months have an extreme potentiality.

If you combined these software tools with fields of science other than IT, you could thrive in business as well as in science.

Phobias are the most common form of anxiety disorders, which themselves are the most common psychiatric disorders. Recent studies show that in the Netherlands up to 12.4% of the population is suffering from one or more phobias. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in the United States has reported similar numbers. Phobias can often effectively be treated using exposure therapy. This involves subjecting the patient to anxiety-producing stimuli while allowing the anxiety to attenuate. These stimuli have traditionally been generated by presenting the patient with actual physical situations (in vivo) or by having the patient imagine the stimulus.

Virtual Reality (VR) allows a third option of exposure therapy in a virtual setting that is safer, less embarrassing, and less costly than reproducing the real world situations and more realistic than imagining the danger. Already some experiments have proven VR to be a useful tool in treating simple phobias such as fear of heights, fear of spiders, fear of flying and claustrophobia, as well as agoraphobia (the fear of being in places or situations from which escape might be difficult or embarrassing).

To take Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy (VRET) from the experimental lab and into the daily practice of psychologists more research is

needed. Delft University of Technology and the University of Amsterdam have taken up this challenge.

The VRET applies scientific knowledge and skills from three different areas:

- psychology
- computer graphics
- human computer interaction

Once you get a grasp of what is the potentiality of software, you can become a millionaire (provided that you made the right combinations) [By the term 'millionaire' I mean either of the following categories:

- you own millions of money
- millions of people feel something for you
- you own millions of money and millions of people feel something for you because you are a millionaire
- you own millions of money and millions of people feel something for you

The ideal millionaire belongs to the forth category]