Module 1 Readings


Amidst all of the silliness of people comparing brains to computers (and vice-versa), here's a nice piece on how the brain is deeply analogue, and what is more, it's very associational.


To give you a sense of the larger agenda we're addressing here, check out this video called, "Did You Know?"


Also, think of genome decoding as an information project; see Stephen Jay Gould on the Genome (RIP: we'll miss him).


With this year's Wolverine coaching dilemmas, let's try computing football (and this isn't Madden).


An interview with Stephen Wolfram
Module 2 Reading


Module 3 Reading


Module 4 Readings

The best recent summary of major battles in the copyright wars. Make sure to read this article.

An entertaining and accessible explanation of copyright law comes as a mash-up video, "A Fair[y]-Use Tale."

As the University of Michigan is perhaps ground-zero for the Google Print controversy, the university itself has taken some strong positions in defense of the project, especially on "fair-use" grounds. Please read a sharp defense of the project by UoM President Mary Sue Coleman, which appeared as an op-ed in the Washington Post.

"Traditional knowledge," the knowledge residing within "non-western" communities, is now subject to getting hijacked by foreign interests. With the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, the Indian government is using a database to fight back.

For a perhaps over-the-top slam at how Big Media is using copyright law to pursue its own narrow interests, here's a biting piece by Dan Gillmor of Silicon Valley's top rag, the one the IT community reads over its coffee, the San Jose Mercury-News; I like the fact that copyright on the article is claimed for 2001, but it wasn't written until 2002!

In the professional magazine for professional special librarians, Lesley Ellen Harris explains in a nice, readable fasion the legal implications of Google Print.

The DMCA of 1998 has such stringent provisions that it has made it illegal for a UM grad student in EECS to publicize his dissertation.


According to the Electronic Frontier Foundation, how the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998 has failed.
Module 5 Reading


One of the most exciting attempts to bridge the digital divide is an effort to put networked PCs in the projects.


Here's a very smart report from the Pew Trust and Gates Foundation on how libraries and their service help bridge the digital divide.


The techno-enthusiasts at the MIT Media Lab hope to rescue the Third World with a $100 laptop; the necessary information literacy presumably will appear, somehow. FYI, here's the link to the Website of the makers of that $100 laptop: www.laptop.org


Here's a summary of a UofM study that girls do pretty much as well as boys in math in grades 6-12 (they actually do slightly better), yet their interest is far lower, indicating a possible cause for the paucity of women in IT education (a recent book by Fischer and Margolis, Inside the Clubhouse, exhaustively documents how women's interest in computing majors declines through college as well).


This article poses a damning critique of simple dichotomies of info "haves" and "have-nots," proposing that differences within groups (by class, race, or gender) are probably more important than those across groups, and that we need to recognize systematically that "technical fixes" won't work unless we understand underlying social dynamics.


Hermann Chinery-Hesse, a Nigerian software entrepreneur, has had considerable success in "negoiating" a solution between leading-edge technology and the local
conditions in West Africa. Here's his story.
Module 6 Reading


The Pew Trust has sponsored a body of quality research on the impact of the internet on American life; here's a recent Pew report on Internet Social Networks. It's long, so feel free just to read the summary of findings if you lack sufficient time.


Lest you believe that US businesses are fighting the good fight for free speech in China, see this piece.


Peter Morville, a close ally of the School of Information, suggests that with ubiquitous connectivity, we can look for objects, informational and physical, in something he calls "Ubiquitous Findability."


For a sense of the fear and paranoia about the "dangerous" Web, try the eerily titled, "The Underground Web."

Wesch, Michael. "The Machine is Us/ing Us (Final Version)." *YouTube*. Google. Web. 31 Oct. 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLIGopyYT_g>. This video is embedded in this week's lecture, but you should take some time viewing it, as it offers a lot of info on what we're addressing this week.
Module 7 Readings


A good example of how poor interfaces inhibit business-process efficiency.


An easy intro to the ideas of HCI's top guru.


Some of us have criticized mainstream HCI for having its focus limited to what could be considered "cognitive ergonomics;" now that cultural studies people are looking at HCI, we can now think about "culturally embedded computing," as a research group at Cornell does.


An elegant call for "seamless" interfaces.


Once Apple's interface guru, Tog is now a top consultant and critic of UI design.
Module 9 Reading


As a very useful primer on the need for students to get a better sense of searching on the Web.

Finally, lest you believe that reference librarians' role as the gold standard for answering questions of fact has been obviated by the Web, think again: reference librarians still have a vital role in the info world.

Here's a fascinating research report on how information users pay more attention to purchased information than they do to free stuff, regardless of its actual usefulness.

Module 10 Reading

A central set of issues this week involve the heated debate sparked by Nicholas Carr's article, "IT Doesn't Matter"

Robert Darnton of Harvard worries that the settlement between Google and the authors and publishers will give Google a monopoly, and what was once free will become metered, and for-pay.

In his recent article on the music business, bob frost examines the promise of disintermediation.

Richard Lanham's book isn't really economics per se, but it provides a radical break in the way we think of value?here's Chapter 1.

Here's but one response to Carr's article (there are myriad others).

A good example of a highly IT-oriented firm transforming manufacturing (under the rubric of "flexible production") is Flextronics. (It should be noted that UofM is a leader in research on reconfigurable manufacturing and even has a major facility dedicated to it - http://erc.engin.umich.edu/).
Module 11 Reading


Collaborative work over a distance is one of the new ways work is now done; here's a piece about SI's own Stephanie Teasley and her work in developing a "collaboratory"


Intra-firm collaboration is often easier than one might think, and it goes a long way to reduce the "stovepiping" of an organization's knowledge; group decision support systems (GDSS) are one variety of useful tools?maybe, but do they accurately map real-world social relations and cognitive processes?


Another major issue centers on the question of IT outsourcing overseas; Robert Cringley (of PBS) defines the contours of the outsourcing issue; others worry about the national security implications of letting "foreigners" have access to mission-critical code.

<http://www.salon.com/books/int/2002/06/06/florida/>.

Here's an in-depth review of Richard Florida's book, The Rise of the Creative Class, on how IT is reshaping social geography.


This is a bit long, but Christopher May argues that work in the information economy might be even worse than it was in the industrial age.


And here's an article by Teasley herself.
Module 12 Reading


A genuine "breakthrough" article by John Seeley Brown


This article invites you to ponder the dilemma: where should public demands for open access to public documents end and concerns for citizen privacy begin?


A piece on the dilemmas of accessing and preserving electronic records.
A team of researchers at Google, led by Monica Chew have done a fine investigation of constructive invasions of privacy in venues such as Facebook and Flickr. The article is to be presented at the Web 2.0 Security and Privacy 2009 conference.

Automated biometric threat identification systems - face recognition cameras and software, for example - pose deep civil liberties threats, according to Margaret L. Johnson.

In Mark Monmonier's book, we are offered an analysis of how GIS and GPS, so powerful and useful for opening up new ways of making information, can be used to invade our privacy.

Airline travel used to be relatively anonymous, but post-911, passengers might worry about how DHS accumulates and aggregates information. In Budget Travel, Sean O'Neill found what DHS has on him.

A very nice, very recent piece on who has what powers to snoop on you; it has a nice table showing the odd and uneven power to snoop on private individuals. You'll be surprised (perhaps) to find that record companies looking for pirates have better access than do the cops looking for criminals!

A solid survey on the history and use of Web "cookies" to track users' browsing activities.

In this week's swamp of cyber-skepticist material, here's a somewhat-dated piece by Joyce Cohen that I find fascinating: we think of computing as an activity that raises the bar for precision, but as I've argued in my own work, humans seem to love ambiguity--it's the dynamic of the unsaid and suggestive--and email systems seem to serve our goals of "ambiguation" quite nicely, thank you.


Mizuko ("Mimi") Ito is an emerging star in the world of networked sociability; here is the Introduction to a volume she edited with Daisuke Okabe and Misa Matsuda


In a very important debate opened up 15 or more years ago by Donna Haraway, many of us debated whether the emergence of cyborgs--post-human syntheses of our own wetware and IT--signalled a profound redefinition of gender. Deborah Tannen was never convinced, and this article by Anne Eisenberg shows how humans cannot shake gendered ways of communication. You'll probably conclude the same after surfing the sites noted above.


You are probably more familiar with the myriad different "social networking" sites, but we invite you to visit and think about Friendster, facebook, and MySpace. Here's a piece by Teresa Riordan on how social networks can be leveraged (insidiously, I believe) to pursue viral marketing. If you're feeling bold, you might want to google for sites that offer sexual intimacy without guilt.


An interesting piece by legal scholar Cass Sunstein on how the personalization of commerce in the electronic environment threatens to reinforce centrifugal tendencies in our civic culture, turning citizens into [narcissistic] consumers.