


Down the Tube Sites


The Rise and Fall(?) of Online Pornography

Frederick S. Lane

Indiana University Bloomington ~ The Media School
Webinar
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The Center for
CYBERETHICS



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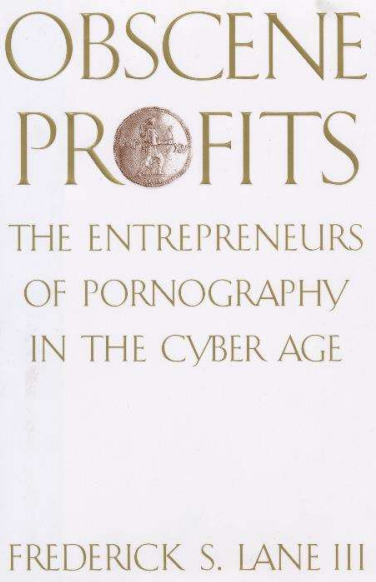
Prospect Park Lake, Prospect Park, Brooklyn



Introduction and Overview

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“Obscene Profits” (2000)



- Inspired by CDA (1996)
- Original Proposed Title:
 - “What’s That Computer Doing Under Your Mattress?”
- Revised Focus for Agent & Publisher
- Online Research
- Interviews by Phone and Email
- Conferences and Conventions
- Led to Publication of “The Naked Employee”
- Twenty Years+ of Computer Forensics

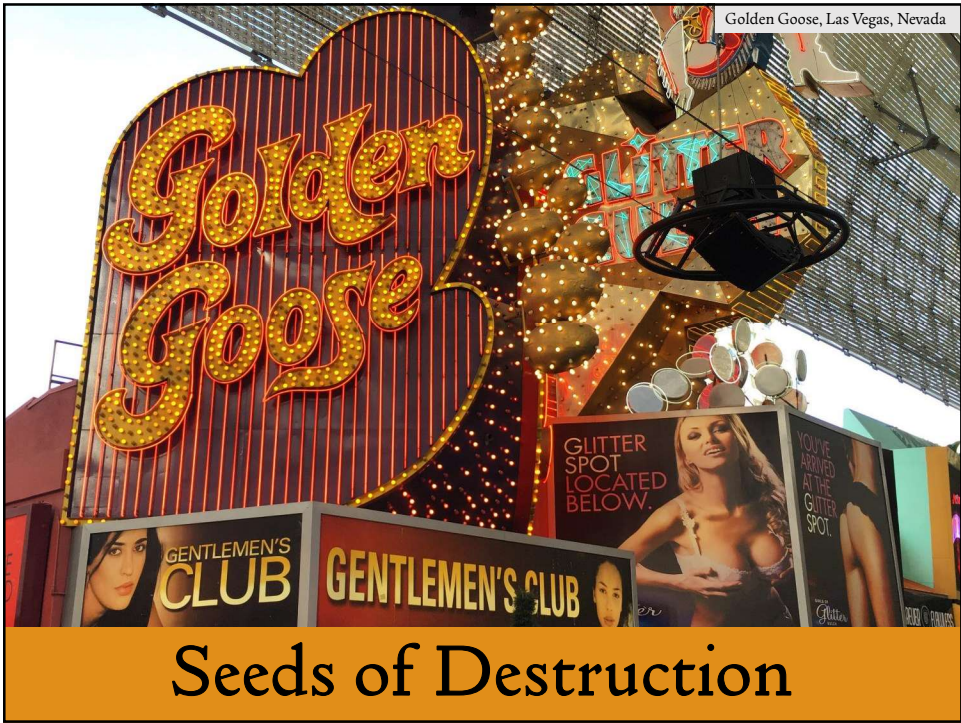
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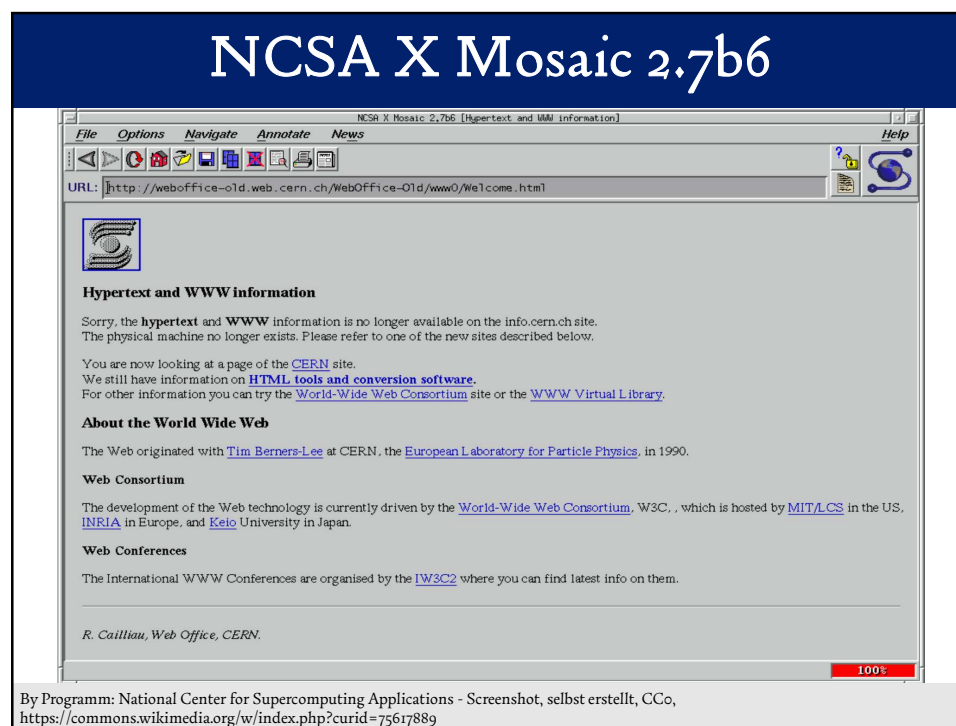


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Pre-Computer, Pre-Internet

- Brick-and-Mortar Adult Businesses
- Magazines: The Big Three and Gonzo / Niche
- The Great Repurposing, Part I
 - VHS v. Betamax – The Adult Industry Picks a Winner

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The Rise of Online Pornography

- Computer Bulletin Boards
 - 1993 - First digital porn and pedophile scare
- The World Wide Web
 - Mosaic, January 23, 1993
- Porn and Technological Innovation
 - HTML optimization
 - Image processing and acceleration
 - Credit card processing
 - Streaming video
- The Great Repurposing, Part II

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The Golden Age of Online Porn

- ~1997 through 2002
- Enormous (But Disputed) Revenues
- Conferences and Conventions
- Ridiculously Ostentatious Spending

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What Made Online Porn So Successful?

- Novelty
 - Geeks, Nerds, and the Affluent
- Increased Availability
 - What Local Community Standards?
- Increased Privacy
 - No More Potentially Embarrassing Trips to Blockbuster

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Adult Stores Are Disappearing



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The Seeds of Destruction

- Affiliate Programs and Unsustainable Business Models
- Vast Quantities of Free Content
- The Growth of User-Generated Porn (Section 230)
- The Persistence of Porn
- How Much Porn Does One Society Need?

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The Rise of Tube Sites

- 2005 – YouTube launches
 - Free platform for amateur video producers
 - Strict prohibition against adult content
- 2006 – YouPorn launches
- 2007 – Competitors launch:
 - Pornhub
 - RedTube
 - XVideos

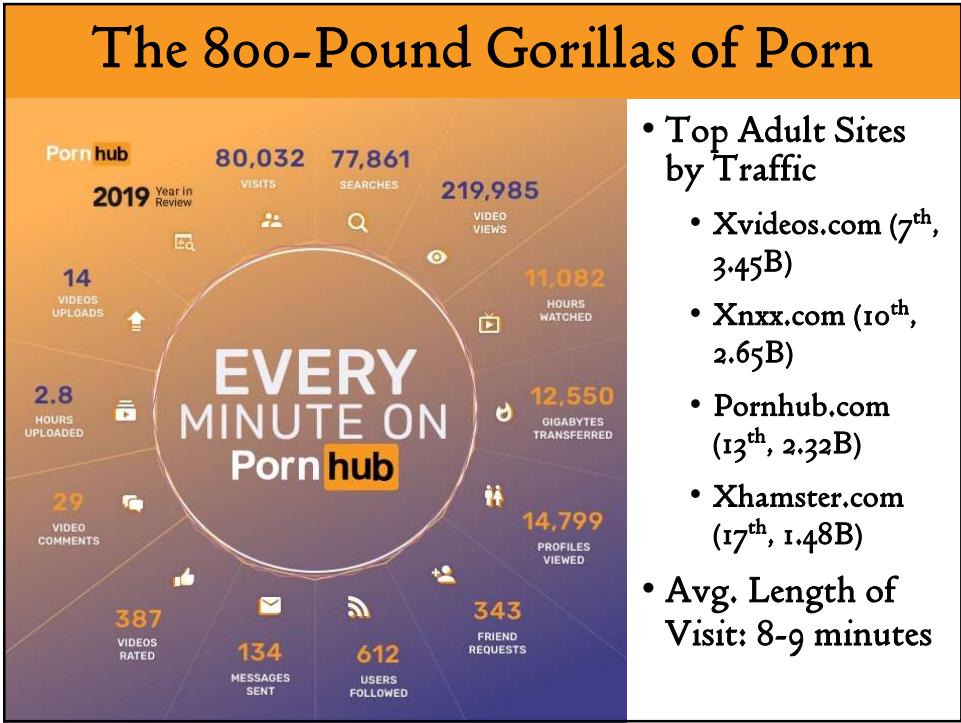


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XXX Marks the Spot

- Early Tube Sites Relied on:
 - Massive Intellectual Property Theft
 - Digital Piracy
 - Predators and Exhibitionists
 - Careless or Indifferent Age Verification
- Eventual Embraced by Legitimate Producers
- 2020 – The Pornhub Purge

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Ownership and Revenues (as of 2018)

- **MindGeek** (originally Canada, now Luxembourg / \$750M) – Pornhub, RedTube, YouPorn, Tube8, PornMD, XTube, and Brazzers Network (top subscription site)
- WGCZ Holdings (Poland / \$100M) – XNXX and Xvideos
- Hammy Media Ltd. (Cyprus / \$62M) -- Xhamster

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Revenue Sources for Tube Sites

- Advertising
- Partnerships with Other Adult Sites (*i.e.*, Channels)
- Data Collection and Re-Sale (75-80% of access is mobile)
- Premium Subscriptions
- Merchandise

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The Democratization of Porn

- Web Sites
- Personal Pornography
- Video Platforms
 - 6.8 million clips uploaded to Pornhub in 2019 alone
- Cam Sites
- Members-Only Sites (*i.e.*, OnlyFans)
 - 16,000 content producers made >\$50K (2021)
 - 300 made >\$1 million (2021)

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The Future of “Online” Pornography

- Technology
 - Niche / Fetish Content
 - Gaming
 - Augmented and Virtual Reality (METAPorn?)
 - Haptics / Biofeedback
 - Dolls / Robots
 - Algorithms / Artificial Intelligence
- Social
 - Demographic and Attitudinal Changes?
 - Ongoing Challenges from Legislatures, Financial Institutions and Religious Activists
 - Global Competition (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Russia)
 - Social Influence


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