Who described the prevalence of English on the Internet as a "major risk for humanity"?
The Last Puzzler

Who described the prevalence of English on the Internet as a "major risk for humanity"?

Jacques Chirac
Social consequences:

- Linguistic diversity
- The rise of virtual communities
- Socioeconomic disparities
- Political unity & fragmentation
The Internet:
Social Consequences

Does the internet build communities or fragment them?
The Internet: Social Consequences

Does the internet build communities or fragment them?

Yes.
Social Effects of the Internet

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<th>Cairncross's determined trendspotting</th>
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<td>2. Fate of Location</td>
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<td>3. Improved Connections</td>
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<td>4. Increased Mobility</td>
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<td>5. More Customized Networks</td>
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<td>6. Deluge of Information</td>
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<td>7. Increased Value of Brand</td>
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<td>8. More Minnows, more Giants</td>
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<td>11. Communities of Practices</td>
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One World Language?
The Internationalization of the Web

Initial prevalence of English on the Web

1997 -- Nunberg & Schuetze survey of 2.3 million pages from Web crawl: 85 percent of content is in English, including about 35 percent of content in non-English speaking domains.

Eng. Most common in N. Europe, less-developed nations

2000: Jack Xu Excite@Home; survey of around 600 million pages: 72% are in English
The Internationalization of the Web

Relative size of Eng-speaking population in developed world

Cf. Web penetration, 1997
Fears of English Hegemony...

“The Web is the ultimate act of intellectual colonialism.” Director of Russian ISP, 1999

“Nearly 70 per cent of the world's Web sites are in English, at times crowding out voices and views.” Kofi Annan, 12-Jan-04
And Anglophone Triumphalism...

The Internet is "a great force for the Anglification of the planet."

"[Thanks to the Internet,] English will be the native language of a majority of the world by some time in the next century.” Editor, The Futurist

"There is no retreat from English as the world language; no retreat from and English-speaking world." Sridath Ramphal, chairman of Commission on Global Governance, 1996
Growth of Other Languages on the Web

Top 10 Languages in the Internet
millions of users

- English: 452
- Chinese: 324
- Spanish: 129
- Japanese: 94
- French: 73
- Portuguese: 73
- German: 65
- Arabic: 41
- Russian: 38
- Korean: 37
- All the rest: 258

Estimated internet users is 1,581,571,589 for 2008
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Web encourages the spread of English….

And maintenance and spread of smaller national, regional, and ethnic languages
Where the action is:

The middle range of the powerlaw curve

South of Wilshire
The Biggest Gains in the Middle Range

English
Steven Spielberg
Coldplay
DNC
Trade publishers.

Hungarian
Erich Rohmer
Carlos Varela
Ron Paul
Book resellers
Small presses...
Social Life in a Virtual World

17. Decline of National Authority

22. Communities of Culture
Social Life in a Virtual World

Predictions that Internet/Web will decentralize authority & permit ground-up social & political organization and the development of "virtual communities"

Cf the "virtual corporation," "smart mobs," moveon.org, etc., which are said to facilitate direct democracy
1978-79: Early MUDS (Multi-User Dungeons) enable players of text-adventure games to interact & team up.

1979 > Early BBS’s (Bulletin Board services) allow users to connect via modem to a common server & post messages.

1980: USENET is conceived as “poor man’s ARPANET” to allow users to exchange email & software.

1990: First MOOs ["MUD Object Oriented"] created at Xerox Palo Alto Research center. Permits participants to create objects, rooms, etc.
The Rise of “Virtual Communities,” II

1985: Stewart Brand & Larry Brilliant found the BBS The Well (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), which becomes an influential “virtual community” providing email, forums, etc.

WELL participants go on to found Craigslist, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Salon.com, etc.

1986: Matchmaker dating service begun as text-based BBS, adding to groups like soc.singles, etc. By 2003, US Web-based online dating services draw 40m annual visitors.

1995 Craig Newmark founds Craigslist in San Francisco for posting of local events; by 2000, expanded to 9 cities.
The Beginnings of Social Networking Sites

1997: Slashdot created to provide user-generated “News for nerds.” Becomes wildly popular antecedent of blogs.

1997 Sixdegrees.com founded, social networking site that achieved 1m members and anticipated Friendster, MySpace, LinkedIn & FaceBook etc.
The Rise of "Virtual Communities," III

1998 Moveon.org founded to militate for moving past Clinton impeachment hearings. In 2003, becomes important channel for opposition to Iraq war, major source of funding for antiwar candidates.

2002 Meetup.com founded to facilitate offline meeting and networking of interest groups. During buildup to campaign, it becomes an important source of grassroots political organization for Howard Dean campaign, later for Kerry & Edwards.
The Triumph of Social Networks

2003: myspace founded, rapidly becomes largest soc. networking site. Complaints about stalking, exploitation, spam, etc. lead some schools to block site.

2003: Second Life launched by Linden Labs.

2004: Facebook launched by Harvard undergrad Mark Zuckerberg, extended to other colleges, high schools, & general public. By 2009, claims 200m members worldwide.

2008: Helped by Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes, Obama campaign's use of new media ("MyBo") enables it to raise $200m by end of primary season and recruit numerous volunteers.
The complications of “community”

“Community” usually implies rich interaction around common interests.

Online interaction creates or strengthens groups organized around significant common interests; e.g., sexual orientation, political activism, diseases…

But "community" is also used for almost any kind of group formed online… so long as it's judged positive.
Varieties of Online Community

Relation of online media to social groups

Supports  Amplifies /extends  Transforms  Creates
Varieties of Online Community

Relation of online media to social groups

- Supports
- Amplifies /extends
- Transforms
- Creates

Grade-school alumni group
Book History list
MeetUp
Leukemia dl
Varieties of Online Community

Relation of online media to social groups

But what about Facebook?

Supports  Amplifies /extends  Transforms  Creates
But what about Facebook?

Public, Private, and in between ("in public")

We didn't take away any privacy options. [Your privacy options remain the same.] The privacy rules haven't changed. **None of your information is visible to anyone who couldn't see it before the changes.** If you turned off your wall to non-friends, no one who is not your friend will be able to see a post on your wall. Your friends can still see it; it hasn't changed. Secret groups and secret events remain secret from other people. Pokes and messages remain as private interactions. **Nothing you do is being broadcast; rather, it is being shared with people who care about what you do—your friends.**
Public, Private, and in between ("in public")

700,000 - 750,000 members; 8% of Facebook population

4000 discussion board threads
Reinforcing Social Divisions

Percent on Internet and by Connection Type by Socio-Economic Level

Big SES Gradient:
44% in 1st to 99% in 5th
Reinforcing Social Divisions

Percent on Internet and by Connection Type by Age Categories

Big Age Gradient:
90% to 32%
Reinforcing (some) Social Divisions

Percent Using Social Networking Sites by Socio-Economic Level

Social Networking Less Stratified by SES:
18% in 1st to 33% in 5th
Does the Internet Unify Community?
Is the Internet a Community?

Social implications of ‘cyberspace’, ‘the infosphere’ etc.

**A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace**

Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone…..You have no sovereignty where we gather.

…I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. ...

...You have not engaged in our great and gathering conversation, nor did you create the wealth of our marketplaces. You do not know our culture, our ethics, or the unwritten codes that already provide our society more order than could be obtained by any of your impositions.

John Perry Barlow, Electronic Frontier Foundation, 1996
Is the Internet a Community?

Cf. James F. Moore (Berkman Center), on "the global consciousness of the second superpower":

The Internet and other interactive media continue to penetrate more and more deeply all world society... The collective power of texting, blogging, instant messaging, and email across millions of actors cannot be overestimated. Like a mind constituted of millions of inter-networked neurons, the social movement is capable of astonishingly rapid and sometimes subtle community consciousness and action... the emergent democracy of the second superpower is alive with touching and being touched by each other, as the community works to create wisdom and to take action....
The Consequences of Disaggregation:

The "siloing" of public discourse: a vanishing Common Ground?

From Lada Adamic & Nathalie Glance, 2005, "Divided They Blog"
Polarized Language

Lexical Choice:

Ideological: contested concepts
Lexical Choice:

"Stylistic":

cf frequency of political epithets

Daily Kos (l)
Free Republic (c)

- wingnut
- moonbat
"Effective with this sentence, Wired News will no longer capitalize the "I" in internet. At the same time, Web becomes web and Net becomes net. Why? The simple answer is because there is no earthly reason to capitalize any of these words. Actually, there never was… a change in our house style was necessary to put into perspective what the internet is: another medium for delivering and receiving information. That it transformed human communication is beyond dispute. But no more so than moveable type did in its day. Or the radio. Or television." Wired, 8/16/04

(Cf earlier capitalization of "the Radio" and "the Cinema.")
Social Effects of the Internet

The Internet potentially amplifies and enhances all forms of social organization

… But doesn't eliminate basic conflicts and oppositions…
Good Bye and Good Luck