

# What's Wrong with “The Internet”

PHIL 4310 - Philosophy of Technology

Fall 2014 - Lecture 6



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# Major Questions

- (1) What's wrong with treating "The Internet" as one big thing?
- (2) Is the Internet politically neutral?
- (3) What's wrong with hyperbolic claims about the Internet?
- (4) What's wrong with Internet-epochalism?
- (5) What's wrong with the way information is organized on the Internet?
- (6) Could we conceivably be better off without the Internet? (in some ways?)



(the concept)

# What's Wrong with "The Internet"?

"Instead of debating the merits of individual technologies and crafting appropriate policies and regulations, we have all but surrendered to catchall terms like 'the Internet,' which try to bypass any serious and empirical debate altogether" (Morozov, p. 17).





# Things that are [part of] “The Internet”

- ✦ Facebook
- ✦ Google
- ✦ Twitter
- ✦ Instapaper
- ✦ Email
- ✦ Facial recognition technology
- ✦ 3D Printing?





# What's Wrong with “The Internet”?

Once part of “the Internet,” any technology loses its history and intellectual autonomy. It simply becomes part of the grand narrative of “the Internet.” (Morozov 18)





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Is the  
Internet  
politically  
neutral?



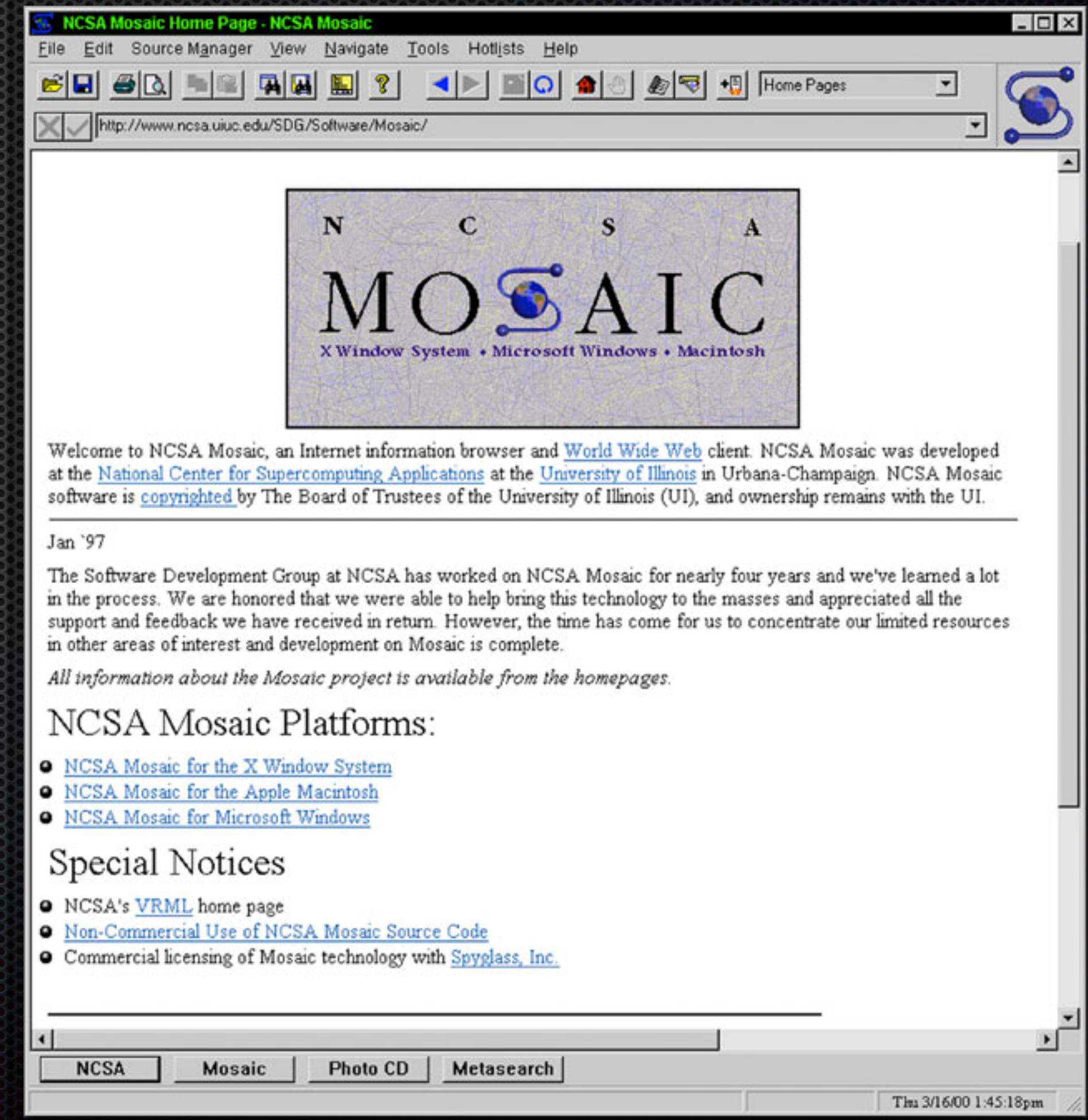


# What's wrong with hyperbolic claims about the Internet?





# What's wrong with hyperbolic claims about the Internet?





# Internet-Epochalism





# Internet-epochalism

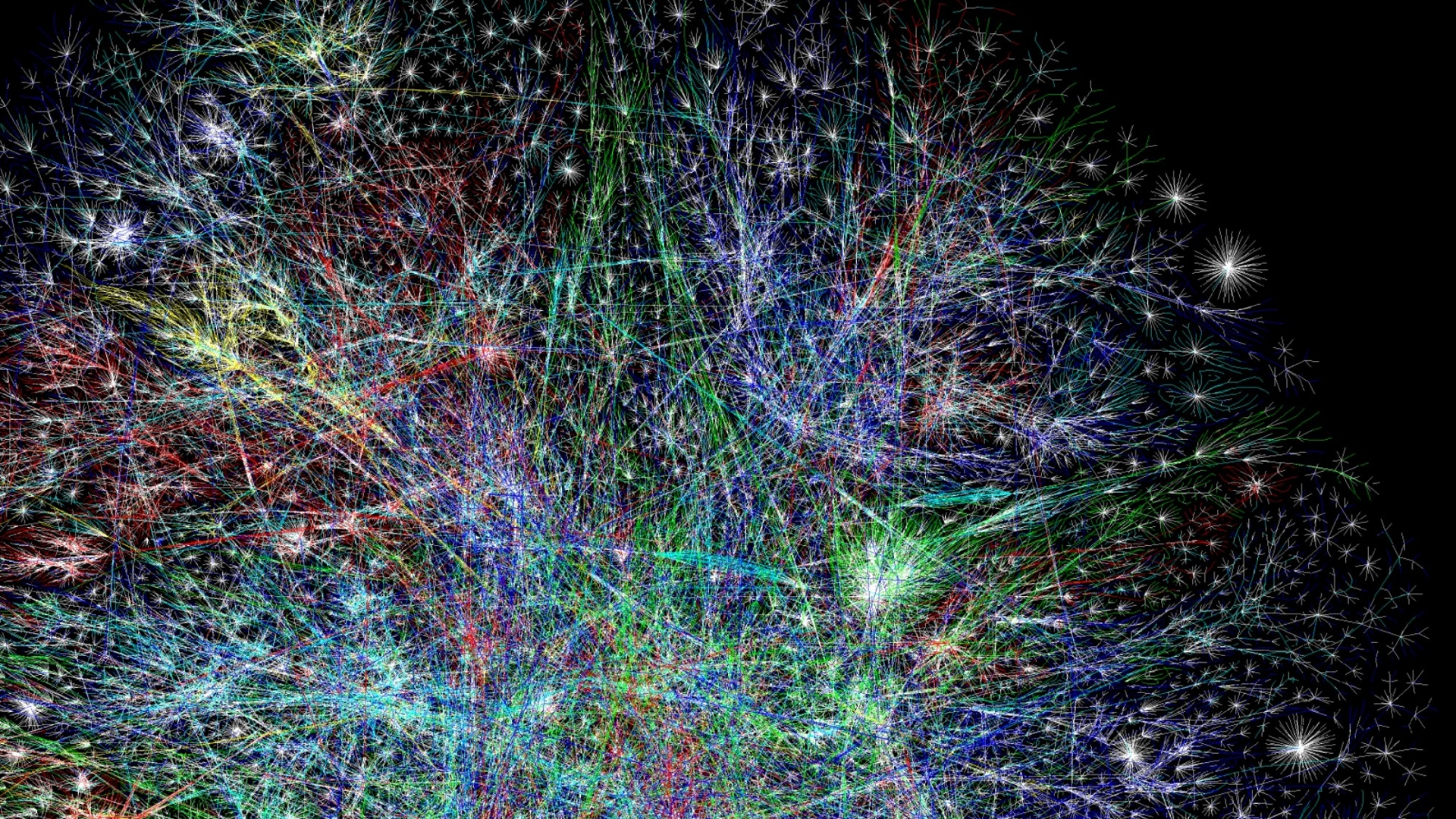
“Technological amnesia and complete indifference to history (especially the history of technological amnesia) remain the defining features of contemporary Internet debate.” (Morozov 35)



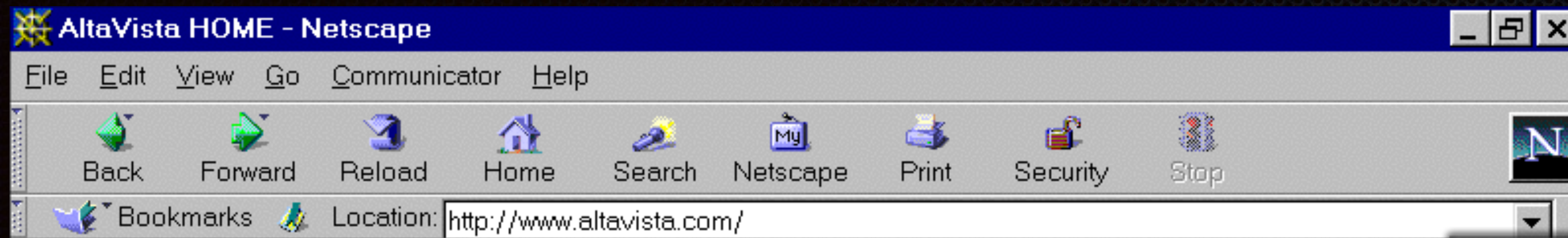


What's wrong with the way information  
is organized on the Internet?









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Could we be better off without  
the Internet?



# Could we be better off?

“There is never going to be a moment when we as a society ask ourselves, Do we want this? Do we want the changes that the new flood of production and access and spread of information is going to bring about?” – Clay Shirky

(qtd in Morozov p, 49)





# Could we be better off?

“It would be nice to think that this battle [Net Neutrality] is a David and Goliath story, but instead its probably just a Goliath story.” (Ian Bogost)





# Could we be better off?

“Choosing one set of disreputable billionaire overlords over another hardly counts as freedom... We’re choosing checkout lines, not foreclosing communal futures.” (Ian Bogost)





# Could we be better off?

“So as you proceed with your protests, I wonder if you might also ask, quietly, to yourself even, what new growth might erupt if we let the Internet as we know it burn. Shouldn’t we at least ponder the question? Perhaps we’d be better off tolerating the venial regret of having lost something than suffering the mortal regret of enduring it.” (Ian Bogost)

