"The Transparent Society":
Ten Years Later

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Panelists

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Ten Years is Forever In ‘Net Years’

• A lot of people made fun of it when it came out
• Still in print 10 years later
• Routinely cited in legal and communications work
• It’s part of the mental furniture
• Even though almost no one seems to agree with it!
“..the cameras are coming. You can rail against them, shaking your fist in futile rage at all the hovering lenses. Or you can join a committee of six billion neighbors to control the pesky things, making each one an extension of your eyes.”

– TTS, p. 333
Major Themes of TTS

• Information is power
  – In the hands of government
  – But can also be harnessed by the ‘hive mind’
• If information flows are banned, only criminals (& governments) will have information
• Transparency has (many) virtues
  – Perfect law enforcement
  – Better competition
Themes (2)

• Info-reciprocity is better than trying to regulate the information state/firms
  – Don’t blind the state
    • National security
    • More transparency → better crime clearance rates
  – Don’t blind the citizens
  – Be wary of information gathering by firms – make them share too
Themes (3)

• Privacy is fundamentally a matter of taste and social expectations
  – You (or your kids) might not miss it
• Identity of speakers enhances debate
  – Anonymity is not always bad, just usually bad
• Strong crypto gets in the way of transparency
  – It should be discouraged, maybe taxed
• BUT – not all information should be free
  – Protect copyright (or something like it) and keep paying me for my books
A Few Thoughts

• Blind grading
• What does the Bush administration teach us about the Transparent Society?
  – Not a transparent admin, and institutions proved unable to enforce FOIA, etc.
  – Lack of transparency facilitated Gulf War 2 (e.g. WMD claims)
Questions

- Are we willing to surrender to technological determinism?
- Is it plausible to believe that radical transparency will lessen rather than worsen power disparities?
- The US Courts treat anonymity as a core political value – what will a transparent society do to politics?
Questions (2)

• What would the economic consequences of radical transparency be?
  – Rampant Taylorism?
    • For everyone? Just for lower-paid workers?
  – And where does copyright fit in the transparent society?

• What about power:
  – How will turning cameras on bosses help workers?
And Finally…

• Is privacy just a taste? Should we just “get over it”?