

Writing Assignment 2: Technology and the Law

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Due: July 6, 2006 by the start of class

1 Introduction

In class we read the article, “Reason, Relativity and Responsibility in Computer Ethics,” by Moor who argued that new technologies (especially computers) bring out situations where no existing policy exists, creating a *policy vacuum*. In this paper, you will choose a pre-Computer Era (pre-1945) invention or technology that introduced a policy vacuum, and compare it to a technology or issue that we have, will, or might discuss in this course.

2 A Pre-Computer Era Invention

It is often said that the law trails technology long enough to create situations that existing laws never anticipated. For instance, the printing press led to the first copyright law ever, the Statute of Anne in 1710.¹ This, of course, is mirrored in modern times with the proliferation of digital media that can be copied with an ease that even surpasses a printing press.

Your task is to find a similar (but not identical) technology or invention, show its influence on the law, and compare it to a modern, computer-oriented invention.

3 A Modern Invention

Much of this course has revolved around the influence that computers and the Internet have had on society, and how this is reflected in the laws that have been enacted. You may choose any topic that we have or will cover in the course. You may also choose a topic that we might cover if we had more time.

4 Suggestions and Style

There are a wide variety of technologies that you can write about. Transportation, military, manufacturing, and communications all have had significant technological advances in their history.

¹<http://www.copyrighthistory.com/anne.html>

Please remember that anything that is not common knowledge or your opinion must be cited appropriately. Please make sure that if your source is a web page, that it is trustworthy. The outcome of the first assignment is that no Wikipedia or Encyclopedia reference will be accepted.

If you want to vary from a guideline or requirement listed here (for instance you have a great post-1945 invention that is not computer related) please see me as soon as possible so we can discuss it.

5 Requirements

By Thursday, June 22, 2006, by email or in person, I want to know what topics you have decided to write about. I will approve them or help you find one more in line with what I expect. This is a requirement, and will be factored into your grade.

This assignment should be no less than 8 pages and no more than 10 pages in length. You should exclude the bibliography from the page count.

When done, submit a `.zip` file containing your `.pdf`, source `.tex` and `.bib` files by uploading them to your UNIX account and copying them to:

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~jrmst106/submit/
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6 Acknowledgements

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