Finally, the book takes a broad sweep through issues like the illusion of privacy in E-mail, E-mail harassment, copyright and flaming—all issues which are not necessarily given enough *gravitas* in the academic literature.

It is difficult to be critical of this book because it is not written as an academic treatise on the theory of CMC. It is in essence an everyday user's manual or style guide. What I think is important about *Netiquette* from an analytical point of view, is that it has no underlying reliance on, or assumptions derived from a technological determinists perspective. There are, for example, no richness or bandwidth analyses which seek to place limitations on CMC based on the technical characteristics of the black boxes involved. Indeed, the only bandwidth seen as worthy of a concerted discussion by Shea is the bandwidth or information reception ability of people. It is therefore, a welcome reminder that whatever communications happen between people on the Internet, it is ultimately the product of human behaviour, and socially constructed conventions, rather than the machines and computers which after all only mediate that communication.

In making an evaluation of *Netiquette*, it must be kept firmly in mind that it is a book which is really only concerned with the practical issues of written communication via the Internet. As a user's manual or style guide it is very useful, easy to read and understand, and covers a wide range of E-mail communication situations. The appearance of the core rules of netiquette, as Shea sets them out, as being common sense is not surprising given the nature of this kind of publication. However, common sense must not necessarily be taken as a pejorative term because in taking this approach Shea has touched on many interesting and important issues. Despite having no intention of entering into academic debate, *Netiquette* reminds us that it is people and institutions which should be the main topic of discussion and focus of analysis when CMC research is being carried out.

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**On the Cards: Privacy, Identity and Trust in the Age of Smart Technologies**

Perri 6 & Ivan Briscoe

*London, Demos, 1996, 128 pp., £9.95, ISBN 1-898309-72-8*

*On the Cards* is a relatively short text published by Demos, an independent think-tank based in the United Kingdom that focuses on radical solutions to long-term problems facing the UK and other countries. With this background, *On the Cards* must be seen as a policy advocacy document as opposed to a scholarly book. It concentrates on the British situation but its conclusions are sufficiently broad to be applicable to other countries.

This book is about the smart card and its social, economic and political implications. A smart card is described as 'a tiny computer . . . a portable, credit card-sized device that carries a tiny chip with the capacity not just to store information, but to process it according to instructions' (p. 19). Smart cards are being used by companies and governments at an ever increasing rate to manage information processing aspects in many fields such as shopping, finance, transport and health. The data flows that arise from these information transactions have considerable privacy implications that have not been adequately discussed in public forums in the past. The book argues that the introduction of smart cards will raise serious challenges to data protection law and our

fundamental ideas about privacy. The authors focus on smart cards since they believe that this technology will provide a visible focus around which these issues will be discussed initially. The problem with the debate so far is seen to be an unhelpful polarity that has developed between 'civil libertarians'—who tend to oppose any greater use of smart technologies—and those in government and business who too often dismiss concerns about misuse of information out of hand' (p. 9).

The central claim of this book is that neither the civil libertarian nor the government and business positions are helpful. What is advocated is a new framework to govern smart cards and information more generally. This framework is based on securing reasonable privacy that relies on market-based instruments and the lightest possible regulation.

The structure of the book is designed to advocate its central claim. First, factors shaping the smart card revolution are discussed. It is argued that technology trends will be giving consumers more power of what information is held on their smart cards. Second, the issue of public trust is discussed. Here, it is put forward that consumers are cautious of privacy invasion and that they have a hierarchy of information with respect to privacy. Third, policy arguments are surveyed and in this section the arguments of both civil libertarians and business and government groups are outlined. Fourth, an attempt is made to establish the case that the risks of abuse have to be dealt with but progress will not be made if the extreme policy prescriptions of the civil libertarians or the business and government lobbies are followed. Fifth, the UK case of the recent attempt to introduce government identity cards is discussed. Finally, the authors set out a framework of policy goals that buttress two crucial privacy rights: the right to remain anonymous, at least in certain transactions: and the right to control the uses others make of personal information they hold about one. The key to implementing this policy framework depends on the following instruments: strengthening data protection law such that unless the data subject specifically consents to the specific use or disclosure of information, that use or disclosure should not be permitted; the creation of a structurally separate and independent market in data access services as a discipline on data users; the availability of consumer-owned multi-function cards alongside issuer-owned cards; data users should be persuaded or compelled to use privacy-enhancing technologies; and allowing private individuals and companies access to strong cryptography. The authors describe this five-pronged strategy as a clear and sensible course avoiding the errors of the civil libertarian and the pro-business groups.

There is little doubt that the increasing use of smart card technology will exacerbate our concerns about privacy and trust. The policy principles put forward by Demos would appear to be universally acceptable but what I find less convincing are the instruments designed to achieve them. This is so because I believe the authors, in their desire to advocate a particular course of action, do not adequately address some very fundamental philosophical questions. Their inherently pluralist approach to describing the factors shaping the introduction of smart cards says little about the underlying trends in society and the economy that demand that governments and businesses collect more and more information about people. The pluralist approach says nothing about the fact that information systems are expensive and some groups will have a huge advantage over others in processing and managing information. The problem of ensuring consumers have enough information about the privacy features of a technology before they make a choice in the market is likely to remain very daunting.

These trends and structural biases need to be understood and accepted as a basis for policy formulation. Not identifying them or subsuming them in a framework that obscures them weakens *On the Cards* final policy prescriptions. As a consequence, the

market-based approach may very well further bias things in favour of the interests of large business and government.

Another area which the authors skirt around is the nature of technology itself. Is the smart card inherently neutral so that it can be put to both good use and bad, or is it designed with certain political features in-built? Will consumers develop dependencies on the technology that will affect their ability to make free choices some time in the future? Into what sort of technological or social system do smart cards fit?

To be fair, answers to these fundamental issues are perhaps the subject of another type of book, certainly not an advocacy book. However, one must be cautious in accepting what appears to be an attractive solution based on a less than explicit account of 'information society'. Despite this, *On the Cards* is an accessible text covering some very complex issues. It provides a good introduction to issues involved in law and technology and advocates a course of action that could well be attractive to many governments in the near future. Whether or not the 'light-handed' regulatory approach furthers the principles on which it is based remains to be seen. This review has been reprinted with permission from the Spring 1996 issue of *Policy* (Center for Independent Studies, Sydney).

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**Evaluation of Commonwealth Support for MFP Australia**

Bureau of Industry Economics

*Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996, xv + 150 pp., ISBN 0-644-36222-7*

This is one of the latest of a long series of reports, articles and books on the ill-fated Multifunction Polis (MFP) since the concept was suggested to the Australian government by the Japanese government in 1987. The Bureau of Industry Economics (BIE) was asked by the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism to review the Commonwealth's support for this South Australian based project. Following its terms of reference, the BIE's focus was on both the impact of the project on Australian industry and its international linkages, as well as on the effectiveness and need for further Commonwealth support.

In carrying out their review, the BIE relied both on qualitative data arising from submissions and consultations with stakeholders, and on more formal, quantitative cost-benefit analyses. The latter suggested costs of about $59 million since 1994/95, while discounted net social benefits were in a range between minus $94 million and plus $6 million. Given the uncertainties associated with a highly complex, long-term project as the MFP, the BIE, quite correctly, did not base their final judgement solely on these figures.

While the report acknowledges that the MFP has made a contribution to the achievement of environmental and industry development objectives in South Australia, in terms of its national and international impacts, the project has not been effective in dealing with business and other interests outside South Australia. Thus the BIE concludes that 'MFP Australia has not so far had any positive impact on Australia as a whole nor its international linkages' (pp. 60–61). Quite a damning conclusion, really, for something that in its heyday was meant to be a grand city of the future/fifth sphere/technopolis/Japan–Australia 21st-century project.

To its credit, the MFP during the feasibility study in the late 1980s did manage to