

Escaping the “Enshittification” of the Internet. Cory Doctorow

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“We don’t care. We don’t have to. We’re the phone company.”

Lily Tomlin, (the telephone operator on Saturday Night Live, September 18, 1976) [1]

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An amazing window of opportunity opened up with the dawn of popular internet activity.

Suddenly, we could explore new insights far more effortlessly than before the internet when television, radio and the newspapers were the knowledge based weapons of choice. And as we have seen, markets and the rights of property owners shape and drive the actual information laying about for the masses to digest.

New platforms started to appear on the landscape of the world wide web. They managed a lot of information. They connected us to friends in far away places. Does anyone even remember using postal mail anymore?

But that window is closing. Nowadays, internet platforms like Facebook provide great business for users. But with time, they abuse users in various ways in order to satisfy and attract more business customers. At a certain point, they claw back on benefits for the business-people as well and incur more profits for themselves, leading to the demise of the original platform. [2]

The process somewhat resembles Walmart, the retail giant which based on its global size outsells local competitors with lower prices. When they close, they are the last market standing and then close up extras. Giants can essentially eliminate the competitors to the detriment of everyone else. Amazon behaves in a similar way. [3]

These giant firms are active on the internet as well, where they are no longer constrained by competition.

We don't care. We don't have to. We're google.

This process is known in tech circles by the common name "Enshittification." Applications abound in Facebook, Uber, and so on. Is there a way of reversing this condition and making internet platforms more accountable to us, the common people?

Cory Doctorow believes there is! He sees the process as resulting from encouraging digital monopoly platforms to exploit both users and business customers while leaving them locked in with trace amounts of utility to keep them locked in. He also sees a means by which it can be reversed by seizing the means of computation and building a new internet suitable for confronting a world plagued by environmental collapse, genocide and rising fascism.

The talk on this week's Global Research News Hour was from the well attended talk he presented at Knox United Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, on the second of May, 2024. His talk was sponsored by the [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba Branch](#), and radio station CKUW.

Cory Doctorow (craphound.com) is a science fiction author, activist and journalist. He is the author of many books, most recently THE BEZZLE (a followup to RED TEAM BLUES) and THE LOST CAUSE, a solarpunk science fiction novel of hope amidst the climate emergency. His most recent nonfiction book is THE INTERNET CON: HOW TO SEIZE THE MEANS OF COMPUTATION, a Big Tech disassembly manual. Other recent books include RED TEAM BLUES, a science fiction crime thriller; CHOKEPOINT CAPITALISM, nonfiction about monopoly and creative labor markets; the LITTLE BROTHER series for young adults; IN REAL LIFE, a graphic novel; and the picture book POESY THE MONSTER SLAYER. In 2020, he was inducted into the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame.

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The [Global Research News Hour](#) airs every Friday at 1pm CT on [CKUW 95.9FM](#) out of the University of Winnipeg.

The programme is also broadcast weekly (Monday, 1-2pm ET) by the [Progressive Radio Network](#) in the US.

The programme is also podcast at globalresearch.ca .

Other stations airing the show:

CIXX 106.9 FM, broadcasting from Fanshawe College in London, Ontario. It airs Sundays at 6am.

Campus and community radio [CFMH 107.3fm](#) in Saint John, N.B. airs the Global Research News Hour Fridays at 7pm.

CJMP 90.1 FM, Powell River Community Radio, airs the Global Research News Hour every Saturday at 8am.

Caper Radio CJBW 107.3FM in Sydney, [Cape Breton](#), Nova Scotia airs the Global Research News Hour starting Wednesday afternoon from 3-4pm.

[Cowichan Valley Community Radio CICV 98.7 FM](#) serving the [Cowichan Lake](#) area of Vancouver Island, BC airs the program Thursdays at 9am pacific time.

WZBC 90.3 FM in Newton Massachusetts is Boston College Radio and broadcasts to the greater Boston area. The Global Research News Hour airs Global Research News Hour excerpts infrequently during Truth and Justice Radio which starts Sunday at 6am.

Notes:

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3DYN_86Xss
2. <https://www.wionews.com/trending/what-is-enshittification-the-term-for-decay-of-online-platforms-is-facebook-going-through-it-689212>
3. https://www.salon.com/2014/02/23/worse_than_wal_mart_amazons_sick_brutality_and_secret_history_of_ruthlessly_intimidating_workers/

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