Peter and Ana Lowens University of Victoria Libraries Special Collections Student Fellow Project Proposal by Asia Tyson, Faculty of Humanities

The Internet was once imagined to be the ideal setting for civil disobedience and resistance. "The Hacker's Manifesto," published in 1986, imagined a utopian digital space where people could "exist without skin color, without nationality, without religious bias" (Blankenship), and "The Crypto Anarchist Manifesto," published in 1988, predicted a "social and economic revolution" brought on by a completely anonymous internet where governments and corporations couldn't interfere (May). Over three decades later, these utopian visions have not come to pass; rather, it would seem the Internet has become a tool for widespread social division and surveillance. Algorithms reproduce and reinforce racism and sexism (Cohn 2019; Noble 2018) and the commodification of personal data has transformed every online interaction into a valuable economic resource for advertisers (Zuboff 2020).

This conflict between the revolutionary potential and oppressive reality of the Internet has been a theme in techno-anarchist writing since the movement first began in the late 1970s. The cypherpunks, for instance, a group of pro-privacy, anti-state-surveillance civilians, often meditated on the fact that digital cryptography, the means for online anonymity, had its roots in the military. While discussions among techno-anarchists typically took place through digital mailing lists, as the movement grew, zines centering around privacy and hacktivism, such as *CrimethInc.* and *Phrack*, began distribution both electronically and on paper. Being the more popular techno-anarchist publications, these zines are easily available online today. Other zines and pamphlets representative of the movement, however, have faded into obscurity.

The goal of my proposed project is to put some of the preserved techno-anarchist publications in UVic's Special Collections into conversation with the more well-known publications in the movement. Some examples of these materials include Jesse Hirsh's 2000 pamphlet "Thoughts On Hacktivism Post-Y2K" from the David Barbarash Collection, *CrimethInc.*'s 2013 piece "Deserting the Digital Utopia: Computers Against Computing" and an anonymous 2009 piece, "Linux for Punks," from the Camas Books Zine Library, as well as *Do or*

Die's 2005 directory pamphlet "From Knapping to Crapping: Running Riot Through the Supermarket of Skills!".

In addition to exploring the struggle between viewing the Internet as both a site for subversive activity and a tool for state/corporate control, this project will discuss the unique relationship techno-anarchists have had with many questions relating to archival studies, including copyright, fair use, the ethics of piracy, digital preservation, and open information access. Support from a mentor knowledgeable about these issues would be a vital resource for me. My public-facing research exhibit will present, situate, and explore primary texts related to the debate surrounding the Internet as a tool for both oppression and resistance. My aim is to make this long-standing debate legible to the public, who are increasingly implicated in this debate as the Internet expands further into everyday life.

Works Cited

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