Anatomy of the Adult Entertainment Industry

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Indiana University Bloomington, Herman B. Wells Library, Room LI001

Talk preceded by an informal gathering with cookies, tea, and coffee, available at 1:45pm. A reception for the speaker and graduate students will follow the talk.

ABSTRACT

Constitutional lawyers wrestle with definitions of pornography and behavioral scientists debate the putative effects of pornography on society, but the adult entertainment industry itself has little interest in ontological and etiological issues: it is too busy making money. Despite the dubiety of many of the revenue claims made by and about this rapidly maturing industry, and despite the general difficulty of gathering reliable data on web use, there is little doubt that the Internet, with its global reach, interactivity and massive channel capacity, has transformed the market for pornographic goods and services. In this talk I provide some historical background on representations of sexuality in everyday life, describe the emergence of mass markets for both soft- and hard-core pornography, and acknowledge the mutual shaping of Eros and technology. I next identify a number of developing trends in the adult entertainment industry, both supply and demand side: diversification, consolidation, globalization, substitution, domestication, democratization, segmentation, customization, commodification, legitimation, corporatization, and ‘prosumption’. I review some of the frequently cycled statistics on the dimensions of the adult market and its constituent parts and also discuss the pyramid-like structure of the industry, the constellation of established firms and new entrants, and the factors that seem to confer competitive advantage (e.g., brand salience, proprietary digital asset base, access to investment capital, lifestyle positioning, technological innovation capacity). To illustrate some of my general points I profile the organizational and financial structures of a number of publicly traded and privately held bellwether companies.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Blaise Cronin is the Rudy Professor of Information Science at Indiana University Bloomington, where he has been Dean of the School of Library and Information Science for 14 years. He is concurrently a Visiting Professor in the School of Computing, Napier University, Edinburgh. From 1985-1991, he held the Chair of Information Science in the Strathclyde University Business School, Glasgow. His books include The Citation Process (1984), Elements of
Information Management (1991, with E. Davenport), The Scholar’s Courtesy (1995), The Web of Knowledge (Ed. with H. Atkins, 2000), and The Hand of Science (2005). He has conducted extensive research on scholarly communication, collaboration in science, and citation analysis; and published widely on these and other subjects, including digital pornography. For the last six years he has been Editor of the Annual Review of Information Science and Technology. He was a consultant and expert witness for the U.S. Department of Justice with respect to the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). See Dr. Cronin’s web site for more information:
http://www.slis.indiana.edu/faculty/cronin/index.html