â€ A Viewpoint on the FCC Decision on Network Neutrality,â€ February 26, 2015.

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by William Dutton

February 26th, 2015

Net Neutrality by A. Michael Noll

Do not become confused over the debate over net neutrality. The definitions and principles are all quite basic – and simple.

There is a tendency to define the Internet by what services can be obtained over it, for example: email, telephone, video, information. But that approach to definition would work too for the old telephone network, which provided such services as: voice, data, fax, and information. This is not how to define the Internet — or the telephone network.

The network is how access to various services is obtained — it is not the services obtained. Access should be equal to all — thus networks should be treated, and regulated, as common carriers. A big problem for conflict of interest occurs when the network provider is also a service provider, such as the cable companies, and that is why they should be prevented from doing both.

Decades ago, in the early 1970s, when the precursor of today's Internet was invented, government made a big mistake in declaring this kind of network to be a computer-information service – and thus not to be regulated as a common carrier. And now that mistake has become obvious, even to those who lobbied for no regulation. In the end, it is all about video entertainment and the ability to use the Internet to go directly to the video providers, thereby bypassing cable TV.

Finally, the FCC has corrected the past – and the cable companies and Verizon will be gnashing their teeth and threatening chaos and doom. If the FCC has any courage left, it should tackle the separation of content (video entertainment) from the conduit (network access) – and in the cause of competition, break up the media goliaths.

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