

## **About the Authors**

### **Preface**

vii The Internet Tree

MARITA MOLL AND LESLIE REGAN SHADE

### **The Big Picture**

3 From Canada 2.0 to a Digital Nation:  
The Challenge of Creating a Digital Society in Canada

CATHERINE MIDDLETON

### **Towards a National Digital Strategy for the Public Interest**

17 10 Internet Rights and Principles

INTERNET RIGHTS AND PRINCIPLES DYNAMIC COALITION

21 Canada's Digital Economy Strategy: An Openness Framework

MICHAEL GEIST

29 Towards a National Strategy for Digital Inclusion: Addressing  
Social and Economic Disadvantage in an Internet Economy

GARTH GRAHAM

37 Manifesto: A Digital Framework for Quebec

COMMUNAUTIQUE

### **Competition and Foreign Ownership Debates in Telecom**

45 Foreign Ownership in Canadian Telecommunications

MONICA L. AUER

61 Structural and Functional Separation in Broadband Networks:  
An Insufficient Remedy to Competitive Woes in the Canadian  
Broadband Market

CATHERINE MIDDLETON

73 Barriers to Competition in Canada's Residential Broadband  
Internet Market

ANNEMIJN VAN GORP

### **Security, Surveillance and Sovereignty**

83 Is Your ISP Snooping on You?

CHRIS PARSONS

- 93 Trading Sovereignty for Surveillance in the  
Telecommunications Sector

MARITA MOLL

**Accessibility, Social Inclusion and Openness  
in Telecom Infrastructure**

- 103 Basic Service at the Crossroads: Will Universality be Saved?

MICHAEL JANIGAN

- 113 Net Neutrality in Canada: Closing in on Internet Openness

STEVE ANDERSON

- 123 Spectrum Policy: Squandering the Digital Dividend

GRAHAM LONGFORD

- 137 Fibre Not Satellite for Local Economic Development

MARITA MOLL

- 143 Making Traffic Public: A Proposal for a Public Study of  
Internet Usage in Canada

FENWICK MCKELVEY

- 153 Swimming Upstream:  
Accessibility and Telecommunications Policy

DEBORAH STIENSTRA

**Communication, Privacy and Copyright**

- 163 Communication Rights and Canada's Government Online:  
Principles for Policy and Social Diversity

MICHAEL FELCZAK, RICHARD SMITH AND GEOFFREY GLASS

- 175 Children's Online Privacy: Policy Concerns

VAL STEEVES

- 187 ACTA: A Copyright Story

OLIVIER CHARBONNEAU

**Afterward**

- 195 A World on Edge and the "Crisis of the Media"

DWAYNE WINSECK

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INTERNET RIGHTS AND PRINCIPLES DYNAMIC COALITION: An international multi-stakeholder coalition that provides a platform for the emergence of and agreement on definitions of internet rights. One of the goals is to achieve a more prominent position for rights in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

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# The Internet Tree

## Preface

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*Marita Moll and Leslie Regan Shade*

Canadians are creatively finding ways to access what has rapidly become an essential service for our everyday lives — whether for education, entertainment, edification, civic participation, commerce or access to government information. Less than 30 minutes from Parliament Hill in Ottawa, there is a peculiar tree on the banks of the Ottawa River. It has boxes, cables and antennae stuck to it. Nearby residents call it the internet tree and until very recently it was their only source of internet access. Although it might be unusual so close to a major urban area, such do-it-yourself internet access installations are not at all uncommon in some of the more remote areas, where local internet providers find innovative ways to pull 21<sup>st</sup> century communications through some very rugged terrain.

Our government, on the other hand, has been hiding behind the political equivalent of rocks and trees when it comes to developing a digital strategy that can unleash the social and economic potential of its citizens. Entering into the second decade of the new millennium, Canadian digital policy is in disarray. Studies by various international bodies show us rapidly sliding down the scale of connected nations. There have been consultations and hearings, most of which feature privileged industry players. While the issues are complex

and interconnected, Canadians, though rarely asked, have shown their interest and knowledge. But, amidst the highly anticipated announcement in Spring 2010 of a federal digital economy strategy by Industry Minister Tony Clement and a series of controversial, if not potentially rancorous, digital policy initiatives related to copyright, broadband as a basic service, internet traffic management practices, piracy, privacy, ‘lawful’ access and metered internet service, it is becoming clear that the federal government has no coherent plan. It is time to end this game of hide and seek.

As Ottawa prepares for a new government with the Conservatives as the majority party and the New Democrats as the official opposition, it is time to speak up, once again, for a digital economy strategy that is in the public interest. We note that, during the recent election, the Conservatives were the only political party which did not respond to OpenMedia.ca’s *Digital Future Survey*, save for one tweet from Tony Clement, while the NDP received top marks for their stance on issues including digital empowerment, internet transparency and choice, mobile diversity and regulatory reform. Working together to forge digital policy issues in the Canadian interest will be necessary.

To forward a vision for a Canadian digital future, this collection presents a public interest and community-centric vision of the digital economy. It is a call for a national digital strategy — a call that is eloquently addressed by Catherine Middleton in the opening article, an address to the Canadian Federation for Humanities and Social Sciences.

*The Internet Tree* is a collection that supports a digital economy strategy based on:

- openness
- broadband as an essential service
- community engagement and inclusion
- national sovereignty
- digital literacy programs

In the collection noted experts and public interest groups address structures of participation in policymaking, and specific policy is-

sues such as copyright, net neutrality, privacy, and security. The collection seeks to demystify some of the more arcane digital policy issues and make the technical minutiae of the infrastructure that we depend upon more comprehensible.

Canadians know that the resolution of these issues will dictate our telecommunications landscape for many years to come. They are deeply concerned about the lack of government accountability and transparency in the policy making process. In presenting these public interest perspectives of digital policy issues, we hope to support more sustained and robust structures of participation that would see Canadians have a broader impact on these crosscutting policy issues.

*Marita Moll and Leslie Regan Shade*  
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