WHAT IS THE NATURE OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNITIES?

Neuroromancer (1984)
Author: William Gibson
271 pages
UofT Schools Call #: **F GIB**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/2484391

The Book of Genesis for the cyberpunk genre, *Neuromancer* not only won the prestigious triumvirate of science fiction awards (Hugo, Nebula, and Phlilp K. Dick), but coined terms such as "cyberspace" in its prophetic science fiction narrative of information sharing and how we will interact with each other online and the virtual world to come. When a cyberthief named Case has specific brain cells destroyed by his former employer and which cells control his talent for psychically entering the global information Matrix, he has nothing much to live for. He lives recklessly until he is approached by a mysterious organization which promises to repair his brain and grant him access back into the Matrix if he hacks into an artificial intelligence network named Winter Mute. Exploited for all of its brilliant ideas, evocative dystopian setting, bizarre characters and plot points by various films (most egregiously by *The Matrix*) and other books, Gibson's seminal work of cyberpunk speculative science fiction remains essential contemporary reading.

HOW DO DIGITAL MEDIA INTERSECT WITH SOCIAL CONTROL AND INEQUALITY?

Ghost in the Wires: My adventures as the world's most wanted hacker (2011)
Author: Kevin Mitnick
432 pages
UofT Schools Call #: **364.168092 MIT MIT**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/7797639

At his sentencing, the prosecution argued with the judge for solitary confinement because he might call NORAD and whistle the code to start nuclear Armageddon. In the world of computer hacking, Kevin Mitnick was dangerous because he had nothing to gain, other than the thrill of compromising the computer systems of some of the world's biggest companies including Bank of America, Nokia and Sun Microsystems. This character-driven yarn illustrates the compulsion of a man driven to subvert the system by hacking, yet bafflingly fails to understand why he is pursued by authorities. With action movie pacing peppered with both humorous stories of some of the low tech methods he used to hack and procure needed information (he would call employees), and daring escapes, Mitnick's account also provides insight into social engineering and the hubris surrounding security at some of the world's biggest corporations, and the bumbling methods the FBI used to try to capture him.

Air (2003)
Author: Geoff Ryman
400 pages
Robarts Call #: **PR6068 .Y53 A57 2005**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/5489933

In the year 2020, the internet sheds its physical infrastructure and becomes a quantum interface called "Air" that collectively connects all of recorded information and humanity without any apparatus, and is globally imposed upon and accessible to everyone through the air using only one's brain. In Illiterate Chung Mae's poor rural villlage of Kizuldah, in a fictional country which resides between Russia and China becomes a testing ground for this oppressive protocol, which disastrously results in deaths and the transference of an elderly woman's memories, and access to internet, into Mae's mind. Mae realizes she only has a limited amount of time to prepare resistant villagers for the global initialization of the "Air" program. A mesmerizing, award-winning, highly literate and somewhat surreal genre-bending science fiction work has been just as lauded for its grittily realistic portrayal of commentary on technology imposed on third world cultures.

Ghost in the Shell (1995)
Director: Mamoru Oshii
Media Commons Call #: **VideoDVD 750079**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/4220244

In the future, science has enabled humans to merge with machines, but still retain their soul or "ghost"- a quantifiable element that distinguishes one as human over a robot. This influential and acclaimed Japanese cyberpunk animé film follows a half-human cyborg, Motoko Kusangi, and the rest of her team in her Japanese technological crimes unit as they pursue an artificial intelligence of unknown origin called the "Puppet Master" that is wreaking havoc by hacking into Tokyo's network infrastructure, its connected citizens, military machinery and other cyborgs. Kusangi's investigation reveals that the Puppet Master has strangely left remnants of a "ghost" despite being a purely artificial intelligence. This science fiction film combines equal parts mystery, metaphysical philosophizing about humanity, the definition of life, consciousness, and its inalienable rights in a networked cyber world as well as thrillingly realized action-packed scenes that earned rave reviews from critics and filmmakers including James Cameron (*Terminator 2, Aliens*).

Reading guide design, title selection and annotations by: Brendon Foster

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY: A UTL LEISURE READING GUIDE
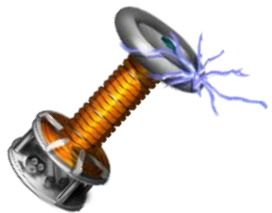
HOW HAS SOCIETY CHANGED WITH (AND SHAPED) TECHNOLOGY?

Lightning : a novel (2011)
Author: Jean Echenoz ; translated from French by Linda Coverdale.
160 pages
Robarts Call #: **PQ2665 .C5 D4713 2011X**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/7644647

A riveting fictionalized account of the life of Nikola Tesla set at the beginning of the 20th century, this book tells the tale of Gregor (a stand-in for Tesla), a dazzling young engineer from Eastern Europe who begins his career working as a troubleshooter for Thomas Edison, to his meteoric rise as he becomes his main rival. A quick, yet compelling character-driven novel, this work of narrative non-fiction chronicles the life and obsessions of the reclusive genius Tesla: a modern day Leonardo Da Vinci whose earth shattering discovery, Alternating Current (which challenged Edison's Direct Current,)and subsequent inventions which demonstrated both his formidable intellect and foresight including radio, radar, remote control, wireless and cellular communication technology, and the electron microscope-reshaped the world. His battles against others are only eclipsed by his own idiosyncrasies which at times lead to tragic results of opportunity lost in this captivating and sympathetic novel.

BONUS:
The Invention of Everything Else (2008)
Author: Samantha Hunt
272 pages
Robarts Call #: **PS3608 .U585 I58 2008X**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/6196461

A fantastical, genre-bending, non-linear novel that jumps through time and space, this is the story of a young chambermaid who forms a friendship with Tesla as he recounts his life to her during his final days as guest at a New York hotel.

HOW DO INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AFFECT EVERYDAY LIFE?

The Cybergypsies: a true tale of lust, war, and betrayal on the electronic frontier (1999)
Author: Indra Sinha
320 pages
Robarts Call #: **HM851 .S56 1999X**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/3145737

This is an engrossing, humorous and touching non-linear first person account of the pupal internet circa 1984, and those who become obsessed with a "Multi-User Dungeon" online game called "Shades". A British copywriter becomes hopelessly consumed with both the game and its users as his marriage becomes the collateral damage in its wake. A fascinating documentation of the internet in the dial-up era, this book is oddly prescient in its portrayal of online gaming and internet addiction, social networking and its sometimes problematic translation in real world contexts, and the psychology of its denizens who engage in both bizarre and disturbing online and offline behaviour. The insight the author gains permits him to recognize the internet's potential as he goes on a multipronged global mission to institute political change, save lives, and most importantly to rescue his marriage and reconnect with the family he so recklessly sacrificed at his digital altar.

The Accidental Billionaires: the founding of Facebook, a tale of sex, money, genius and betrayal (2009)
Author: Ben Mezrich
272 pages
UofT Schools Call #: **006.754 MEZ**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/7263776

This enthralling narrative non-fiction weaves an almost biblical account of the treachery, greed and need for acceptance which underpinned the creation of Facebook. Providing easy to follow insights into the technical workings, personal and business relationships behind Facebook in a pulpy fictional yarn, the book provides an entertaining, if embellished, read. From their humble beginnings the book traces the story of best friends and Harvard undergrads, Mark Zuckerberg, a reclusive computer genius, and Eduardo Saverin, a math geek desperate to fit into the social life of Harvard. Through a drunken act of sabotage of their school's computers, they create the first social networking website and unwittingly usher in the new era of the web: Web 2.0. However, once the Pandora's box is opened, the expiration date on their friendship and the beginning of vicious litigation with each other and multiple other parties who claim a piece of the billion dollar intellectual property pie relentlessly barrels toward them.

HOW DO INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AFFECT EVERYDAY LIFE?

BONUS:
The Social Network (2010)
Director: David Fincher
Robarts Call #: **VideoDVD 756617**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/7357464

Oscar winning film adaptation of *The Accidental Billionaires*. Contains rapid-fire witty dialogue couched in ruthlessness, rendering it a close cousin of *Glengarry Glen Ross* for Generation Y.

Inside WikiLeaks : My time with Julian Assange at the world's most dangerous website (2011)
Author: Daniel Domscheit-Berg with Tina Klopp ; translated into English by Jefferson Chase
282 pages
Robarts Call #: **JF1525 .W45 D66 2011**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/7458646

This is a gripping non-fiction narrative about Julian Assange, the man behind the organization and website that changed the world by releasing classified documents from the world's dominant countries. The former second in command and spokesman for Wikileaks, Daniel Domscheit-Berg, recounts his relationship with Assange, the beginnings of, and the scope of the organization that allegedly has more secret documents than the rest of world's press, combined. As Wikileaks' profile suddenly exploded on the world's stage, the relationship between the two men began to sour which resulted in the author's decision to start his own website. Domscheit-Berg paints an unfavourable picture of Assange whose misguided megalomania were only superceded by his maintenance of the illusion that Wikileaks was bigger than a two-man operation. A deftly written account of how Assange created a brilliantly organized, yet self-contained, headless global organization of anonymous hackers and contributors (no one knew each other), and its continuing impact on the world.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNITIES?

Eastern Standard Tribe (2004)
Author: Cory Doctorow
224 pages
Free download:
www.gutenberg.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ebooks/17028
OR: craphound.com/est/download.php

In the near future, there will be groups of people who refuse to identify themselves by country or geographical region; instead they will affiliate themselves by a specific time zone, and reorganize their sleep cycles and lives accordingly in a virtual nation unified by social networking, e-mail and instant messaging. This is the fragmented and non-linear story of the young and iconoclastic Art Berry, a programmer who lives according to Eastern Standard Time but who lives in London, conspiring with his "synchronized" friends to sabotage the Greenwich Mean Tribe. Simultaneously, Art finds himself hopelessly entwined in a complicated love relationship with a woman whom may not be all that she seems. Art grapples with this while having to deal with betrayal from his fellow citizens in a kinetic, suspenseful, and a witty narrative which provides a parable into the nature of computer-mediated communities and the nature of online versus offline relationships.

The Restoration Game (2011)
Author: Ken MacCleod
259 pages
Robarts Call #: **PR6063 .A2515 R47 2010**
UTL link: go.utlib.ca/cat/7230065

Lucy Stone, originally born in Krassnia, a fictional region of the former Soviet Union, now lives in Edinburgh as a computer game programmer. Her life changes when her mother reveals she used to work as a double agent for the CIA during the Cold War, and secretly requests that she create a level in her Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) accurately modeled upon Krassnia and based on its folklore so that rebels can covertly meet online and plan a revolution. As Lucy performs research into Krassnian geography and history as she programs the game, she unearths startling secrets about her family's and the region's past and her own possible involvement in a far reaching conspiracy. This suspenseful, international espionage thriller combines a social dissection into online gaming, regional politics, and an existentialist search for personal and cultural identity in a harrowing and readable award-nominated work of speculative fiction.