Open or closed: how the net will be won

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In the 1990s, the internet was often regarded as some sort of wilderness, akin to the one discovered by the first American settlers. Howard Rheingold?s 1993 book The Virtual Community had the subtitle ?Home-steading on the electronic frontier?. The internet appeared as virgin territory, to be shaped, occupied and governed by whoever could get there first.

But the net already had a history, including bodies who designed it, used it and stipulated various rules. So if the analogy was inappropriate then, it is completely redundant now.

New data published last week revealed that Europeans spend an average of 10 hours 15 minutes using the internet every week, and the British considerably more.

The internet is so deeply entwined with our everyday lives that it makes little sense to talk about it as some fantasy world, with its own set of laws and freedoms.

And yet the metaphor of the American West still resonates strongly in one particular area: the battle going on between content industries and open access projects.

Full Story [2].

Web

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