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distinct community.

**Emergence of Electronic Commerce**

The phenomenal growth of the Internet spelled success for companies that were positioned to take advantage of the growth.

This included companies such as America Online, which provided a system that helped many "newbies" (a term used to refer to new Internet users) get online, and vendors of the core Internet technologies, such as Netscape.

As consumers flocked to the Internet, businesses with goods to peddle soon followed. Companies such as Cisco and Dell Computers soon discovered that they could use the Internet to sell billions of dollars worth of hardware directly to end-users. Retailers such as Egghead Software discovered they could run their business more profitably in cyberspace than they could through the thousands of retail locations. Start-up companies like Amazon.com

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such as domain names (some of which have reportedly sold for over \$1 million), has led to increased conflicts over rights and conduct in cyberspace. While it is clear that existing laws apply to activities conducted using electronic networks,

such as the Internet, it is not always clear whose laws should apply when the conduct or its effects involves multiple jurisdictions, each with their own courts and laws (for instance, whose laws should apply to conduct, such as gambling, that may be legal in the country where the server is located but may be illegal in the country where a player may be located). The global nature of the Internet also causes conflicts when different parties have legitimate but conflicting rights which are territorially-based (such as parties in different countries each having rights to similar trade-marks registered in their respective countries).

The growth of electronic networks and the increased interconnection of various databases has also raised public

leapfrogged ahead of the big traditional booksellers who were slow to recognize the potential of the Internet.

After some of these early success stories, the investment community began to reward companies that undertook electronic commerce initiatives. Many investors, after having missed out on Microsoft and then America Online, now eagerly pump money into all sorts of Internet ventures. Many initial public offerings for Internet-related businesses easily doubled or tripled in value on the first day of trading.

**Electronic Commerce Law**

Information technology lawyers broadened the scope of their work to address the new challenges posed by the Internet and Electronic Commerce. These days, IT lawyers may be found drafting agreements relating to the development and operation of Web sites (Web site devel-

concern regarding the collection and use of personal information. This concern regarding privacy has, in part, prompted proposed legislation such as Bill C- 54. It has also encouraged many Web site operators to voluntarily adopt privacy policies.

Finally, it is not always clear whether a new type of activity falls within the scope of existing rights. For instance, does a link from one Web site to another Web site require the permission of the site being linked to? What about providing access to another Web site by means of a window on the user's browser, while leaving the user connected to the original Web site (a technique called "framing")?

These are just some of the many issues relating to Electronic Commerce which will be covered in future columns. ☺