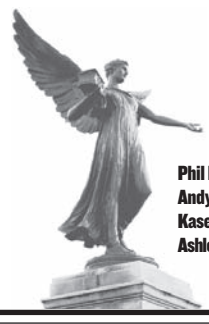
Forum



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"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

OUR VIEW

Communication criss-cross

AT ISSUE: Ball State, city of Muncie must resolve dialogue problems in the interest of public safety

Ball State touts itself as one of the leading universities in accessibility for disabled students. There are ramps and elevators everywhere, and a specially equipped shuttle is available almost all day long.

So, Ball State embraces its population of students with disabilities — as long as they don't want to cross the street.

During Winter Break, the city of Muncie — which controls all the stoplights, including the ones on campus — decreased the time allotted for crossing the street at the Scramble Light from about 30 seconds to about 15 seconds in response to drivers' complaints. Not a problem, until students returned to campus and wanted to cross the street.

It has been tough for able-bodied students to reach the other side of the street before cars revved their engines, but it is even more of a problem for the visually impaired or those unable to walk at a normal pace because of crutches or other obstacles. It has been also a problem for those just not paying attention — in short, for anyone who was used to the 30-second cross time.

But students hurried to get across the street or assisted disabled students in deciding when to cross. Cars were patient. So far, no one has been injured.

And despite the fact that the city "fixed" the cross time at the Scramble LIght, it's still about 10 seconds shorter than it was before break — so the city and university have not completely resolved the situation.

To be respectful of the university, the city of Muncie would have opened up a dialogue with Ball State officials as soon as the driver complaints came in during break, so that the city and university could come to a compromise about the cross signal time frame. Or if the city needed to reduce the cross time, it should have had better communication with the university to give the administration enough time to alert students and offer training to disabled students regarding the shortened cross time. The university, also, has a responsibility to make the city understand that restoring the cross time should have been a higher priority — and that should have been done as soon as the problem was realized.

Instead, the students of Ball State are suffering from another case of town-gown communication breakdown.

When it comes to the safety of Ball State's students, the city and the university cannot continue to get tied up in whose jurisdiction the problem falls within or which set of officials should make the first move. In matters of public safety, the first priority should be fixing the problem.

But that can't happen without better communication. And it won't happen unless both Muncie and Ball State prioritize problem solving over politics.

Logan Braman:
QUESTIONABLE CONUNDRUMS

Stamp-price increase will prove futile due to popularity of e-mail

On Jan. 8, the U.S. Postal Service increased the price of a single first-class stamp from 37 cents to 39 cents. This increase is the first since June of 2002.

Of all the government's initiatives, increasing the cost of mail seems like a fruitless pursuit, overall. I would be all for the increase, but the last time I mailed something via snail mail, I was 12, and I was sending a letter to my pen pal from Germany, who happened to be a cute older girl.

Since I've grown up in the golden age of digital information transmission, the idea of a pen, some paper and an envelope with a stamp on it all seem archaic to me. I would rather spend a few minutes at my computer and rest assured that my message will be sent and received in the time it would have taken me to walk to the mailbox.



Logan Braman is a freshman journalism and business major and writes 'Questionable Conundrums' for the Daily News. His views do not necessarily agree with those of the newspaper.

In fact, I would be more willing to spend money on e-mail if it meant the traditional mailing system would be abolished.

In practice, I do pay for e-mail transmission by buying a computer and paying for an Internet connection. I recommend we eliminate the Postal Service and rely, instead, entirely on e-mail. Packages, of course, could still be sent traditionally — but only when necessary.

The Postal Service has the goal of putting $3.1 billion in an escrow account by October. I'm sure the math on the profits the increase will cause has already been taken care of by the government, but what happens if the increase doesn't create the desired effect? Another increase might happen in the near future, then another and another.

On a positive note, the increase in the price of a stamp has given the specialty stamp a second run in popularity. A two-cent stamp in previous years was unnecessary because one-cent stamps could make up the difference. Now, though, two-cent stamps are again available to make up the difference in cost that normal stamps have incurred. One particular stamp enjoying renewed popularity is the two-cent Navajo stamp, first introduced in 2004. The stamp features Navajo jewelry and is the only available stamp worth two cents.

It is heartwarming to see a stamp being sold that portrays some of the most influential people of our country, and the Navajo stamp now has an important place in our country's oldest means of written communication. However, I wonder why the two-cent stamp was introduced in 2004. Does that mean there was some inkling of the fact the price of postage might be increasing in the near future?

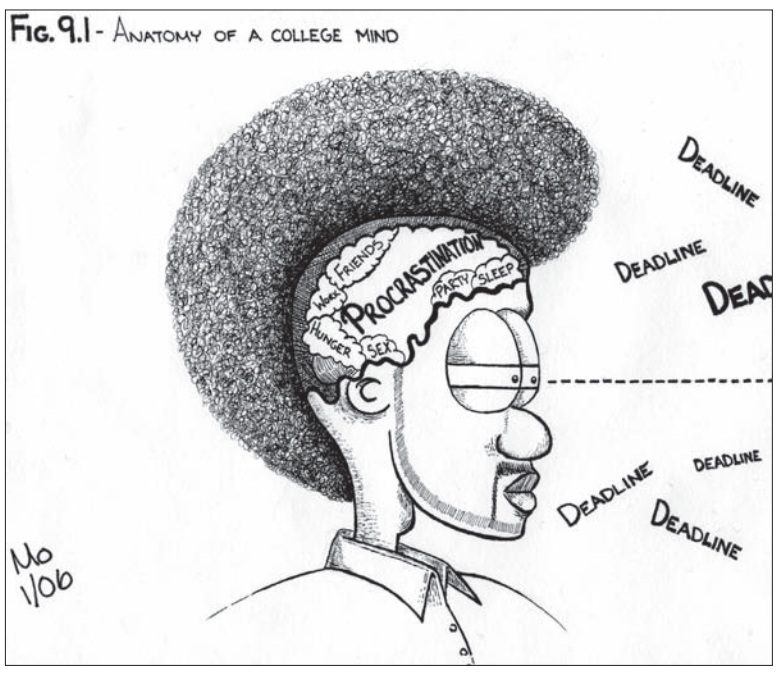
Either way, I have been thinking it might be a good investment to start a stamp collection now, because the day stamps are no longer printed could be coming soon.

But if the Postal Service continues the old-fashioned ground mail system that has been in place for more than two centuries, rather than moving into the digital age, there will be a void to be filled in the way of two-cent stamps. So I propose a new stamp: In light of the amazing amount of money two-cent stamps stand to make the Postal Service, the theme of the stamp should be $3.1 billion. Imagine what a novelty it would be to have a stamp with so many tiny zeros on it that it would be hard to discern what the theme actually was.

And to help the Postal Service earn that money, feel free to write to me the old-fashioned way, if you find an urge to visit the past. Good luck finding my address, though, and I would rather e-mail you back, so be sure to include your electronic mail address.

But if you happen to use one of the Navajo stamps, I will save it and hopefully make a good investment for the uncertain future.

Write to Logan at lmbraman@bsu.edu



Mo Hammond is a Ball State Student. His views do not necessarily agree with those of the Daily News.

Tim Sukits: BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS ...

Stealing art not respectable in any format

Imagine walking into an art gallery and strolling past the paintings, admiring the keen sense of detail the artists incorporate. All of a sudden, you turn the corner and find yourself face-to-face with the most brilliantly colored, masterful piece of art you have ever seen. This piece of art connects with you on such a high level you realize you can't live without it — you must have it in your home, to be there any time you feel the need to connect with it again.

You realize the artist spent hundreds of dollars for the materials to create the piece. You also know the artist spent hours upon hours bickering within his or her own mind about miniscule details — whether a stroke of red in the upper right-hand corner will liven or kill the piece. You are certain this artist is just as passionate about the work as you are, if not more.



Tim Sukits is a senior journalism major and writes 'But Seriously, Folks ...' for the Daily News. His views do not necessarily agree with those of the newspaper.

Unfortunately, you are a poor college student. So you walk over to the wall, take the piece off its stand and run out of the gallery.

Many of you are thinking, "I would never take a piece of art without paying for it. After all, if I respect the artist, I want to support him."

Unfortunately, thousands of college students do the equivalent of this on a daily basis — and feel absolutely no regret for it.

The only difference between artists of the canvas and artists of sound is the medium with which they create.

Music artists spend thousands of dollars on equipment, studio time, producers and everything else that goes into making music. They put their whole lives into their work to create music people can connect with.

But in the past few years a phenomenon has swept the nation, encouraging people of all ages to steal musicians' art — and what's worse, they feel no guilt for it.

It's known as downloading.

It started with Napster and Kazaa, which quickly had lawsuits brought against them from a number of recording studios and artists. Soon, these companies had to start charging people to download, but numerous other sites have popped up in their places.

BearShare, Morpheus, Blubster ... the list goes on and on. The question is: Can this piracy ever be stopped?

Album sales have dropped 21 percent since 2000. Apple's iTunes has encouraged people to actually pay for downloads, and as of last fall, iTunes became one of the 10 biggest music retailers in America. But even the popularity of iTunes has done little to soften the blow taken by recording artists over the past five years.

Think about it: For every 99-cent single someone downloads, that is most likely one $15 album that was not sold in a record store.

Even though iTunes is better than all-out piracy, downloading is killing the chance for musical artists to make a living off of their art.

However, the people who are hurt most by this are not the record stores; it's not even the record labels. It is the artists.

Major-label artists see between five percent and 10 percent of the royalties of their albums — and only after a half-million copies have been sold. According to Downhill Battle, a nonprofit music activism Web site, Apple takes a 35 percent cut from each song sold on iTunes, leaving the record label with 65 percent. Out of that amount, most major-label recording artists end up with between 8 cents and 14 cents for each 99-cent song sold.

Even though iTunes is better than all-out piracy, downloading is killing the chance for musical artists to make a living off of their art.

The next time you go to download a song from your favorite band, think about if you are really supporting the artists or if you are hanging them out to dry.

But seriously folks ... thieves are bad people.

Write to Tim at tjsukits@bsu.edu

Matthew Stephenson:
THE LEFT SIDE OF THE COUCH

Google threatening to monopolize media

Every day millions — if not billions — of people around the world use the Internet for work and play. More than likely, the typical Internet user comes across Google at least once in his journey around the World Wide Web.

Here at Ball State University, Google is quickly becoming a best friend to the thousands of us who are studying to move up the socio-economic ladder. It is a study buddy, dictionary, messenger and librarian. It has our e-mail, the news and even an interactive world map. Soon, it will have even more to offer.

In addition to being a pop-culture phenomenon on the level of Windows 95 and the early days of both Yahoo! and Amazon.com, Google is now moving into media that should create concern within our generation.



Matthew Stephenson is a junior history major and writes 'The Left Side Of The Couch' for the Daily News. His views do not necessarily agree with those of the newspaper.

According to MediaPost Publications, Google made the announcement on Tuesday it is in the process of obtaining dMarc Broadcasting, "a provider of automated ad delivery platforms for radio stations." This comes on the heels of Google selling ad space in a Chicago newspaper and inventory in several magazines.

Google has maneuvered to become one of the largest megacorporations in the world — rivaling Microsoft, Apple, Dell and IBM as one of the most recognizable names in technology. Even Microsoft has been unable to beat down the popularity and stardom of the Google behemoth with the new technology powering its MSN Web search.

However, Google is moving out of its realm of technology and further into the vast world of journalism and telecommunications.

Google Print even offers search and view of entire literary works online, which is complicating and blurring the copyright laws for the authors of the works — causing some controversy in the publishing world.

Much like Microsoft and Anakin Skywalker, Google is being tempted by the "Dark Side, " but for Google, the "Dark Side" is greed and monopolization.

How much longer until Yahoo! is purchased by Google? Or until Google launches its own television station? How much longer until Google creates its own operating system to rival Windows?

The sky is the limit with Google, but the sky is not always blue: Sometimes it is black and full of lightning and destruction. But the American public would rather have a great blue sky than the storm-ridden grey sky American capitalism has often seen this decade.

While we should embrace the competition Google might create for tech companies here in America and the rest of the world, there should be a greater limit on the monopolization Google is exploring. The company has the ability to set the rules and standards for the Web, and perhaps soon for radio, print and television. But how much power will we allow Google to have?

Google has no doubt provided a great service to current and prospective Ball State students with the improved search engine on the university's Web site.

However, some people should note that while Google might be the next great tech company, it could be harmful to the American public and to capitalism.

While we should continue to monitor the current and future power of Google, we as college students still benefit from using the services Google provides — because they are the best. So, after you finish reading the paper, go check your G-Mail, search the web with Google Search, edit your pictures with Google-created Picasa software, then find the Eiffel Tower with Google Earth — but watch out for those Google logos creeping into your newspapers, television broadcasts and other media.

Write to Matthew at mlstephenson@bsu.edu

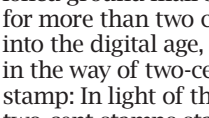
FORUM POLICY

The Daily News opinion page aims to stimulate discussion in the Ball State community. The Daily News welcomes reader viewpoints and offers four vehicles of expression for reader opinions: letters to the editor, guest columns, feedback on our Web site and phone responses.

Letters must be signed and appear as space permits each day. The limit for letter length is approximately 350 words. All letters must be typed. The editor reserves the right to edit and condense submissions for length as well as clarity.

The name of the author is usually published but may be withheld for compelling reasons, such as physical harm to the author. The editor decides this on an individual basis and must consult the writer before withholding the name.

Lengthy letters that focus on an issue affecting students might be considered for "Your Turn" columns at the editor's discretion. Those interested in submitting responses can submit a typed copy to the Daily News office, located in AJ 278.



The Daily News encourages its readers to voice their views on legislative issues. The following legislators represent the Ball State community:

U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar
306 Hart Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-4814

U.S. Rep. Mike Pence
U.S. 6th District
1208 Longworth Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-3021

Rep. Dennis Tyler
Indiana Dist. 34
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, Ind. 46204
1-800-382-9842

Sen. Allie Craycraft Jr.
Indiana District 26
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, Ind. 46204
1-800-382-9467

U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh
B40-2 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-5623