new computers. But he stops short of doing so. As anyone who's fiddled with the latest educational software or explored the vast learning resources on the Web can attest, there is good reason to continue trying. But it's important to recognize that those who tout computers as miracle cures for ailing schools are no different from proponents of vouchers and privatization, who promise the same thing.

Technology alone is no panacea for problems like inequitable funding, overcrowded classrooms, and crumbling, antiquated schools. Only through a commitment to working with teachers and developing programs aimed at kids will computers fulfill their potential as a teaching aid. Any approach that limits teacher involvement to flipping classroom computers on in the morning and off in the evening is guaranteed to leave a valuable resource untapped. To pretend otherwise would be as silly as teaching today's students FORTRAN.

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Pedophiles.com

By John Schwartz

LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT FROM the outset, in case anybody might possibly be wondering: Child pornography is evil. Because it involves child abuse and molestation, the laws of every country prohibit it. The ACLU, which defends the right of adults to view X-rated fare, abhors it. The fact that such stuff can be found online is one of the facts most often trumpeted by those who warn that the virtual world is a wicked place, whether they be ministers preaching to the flock, law enforcement officials looking for bigger budgets, or politicians drumming up votes

BEYOND TOLERANCE:
Child Pornography on the Internet
by Philip Jenkins
New York University Press, $24.95

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(George W. Bush himself has used the overdrawn phrase: "the dark dungeons of the Internet").

So anyone who picks up *Beyond Tolerance: Child Pornography on the Internet*, might well ask what Philip Jenkins, a professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, can bring to the topic.

What he brings to it is a sense of scale. Like so many aspects of the Internet, child pornography has become the center of a debate packed with hidden agendas. Jenkins, in the context of describing the fight over the 1996 Communications Decency Act, describes the problem with real elegance: "The debate over the CDA tended to become polarized between two extreme stances: Conservatives held that a vast amount of Internet business involved the most horrifying pornography, while liberals all but denied that such material existed."

The key, Jenkins suggests, lies in finding a middle argument that neither exaggerates nor downplays the problem. He writes, "A third and less publicized position was possible, namely, that although pedophile interests and images account for only a small proportion of life on the Web, this was still a substantial volume, maintained by a small but very active underworld."

Jenkins hates hype. His previous works have been earnest attempts to deflate what he sees as statistically warped hysterias about the prevalence of serial murder, of pedophilia by priests, and of designer drugs. He calls this "deconstructing public perception of social problems." And, in fact, Jenkins admits toward the beginning of this slim volume that he had gone into the project intending to debunk certain myths again. He defines himself as "a libertarian" who believes "criminal law should be kept as far removed as possible from issues of personal morality. I am in no sense an anti-smut activist, and I reject efforts to restrict

sexually explicit adult material, whether these attempts derive from religious or moralistic believers on the right or from feminists on the left. I know of no convincing evidence that pornography causes harm or incites illegal behavior where both subjects and consumers are consenting adults and I believe there are convincing arguments that adult porn can be actively beneficial and liberating for both sexes."

As he did his research, however, he found that child pornography indeed exists and that the subculture is thriving thanks to the easy, anonymous global distribution made possible via the Internet. All the screaming of the anti-porn activists has made this sound like a multibillion-dollar annual industry. But Jenkins presents evidence that belies the myth of a kiddie-porn financial empire. What he found: obsessive collectors passing around the same pictures, thousands of them, again and again.

Jenkins's exploration led him into a world of here-today, gone-tomorrow sites that help tens of thousands of collectors amass collections of thousands of images of children and adolescents in every conceivable sexual permutation. Although he continues to believe that it is wrong for anti-pornography activists to use the specter of kiddie porn to try to ban constitutionally protected adult materials, "I now found myself in the disconcerting position of seeking to raise public concern about a quite authentic problem that has been neglected."

Don't you just love it when those libertarians get whupped upside the head with something that they believe government actually ought to do?

Beyond Tolerance is a useful introduction to the methods that the kiddie-porn community uses to hide its activities. It provides a smart history of the child-porn industry, which flourished in the loose and floppy '70s and was almost wiped out by tough government intervention, only to resurface and flourish with the advent of PCs and modems. Jenkins is also careful to make a distinction

between the penumbral world of teenagers, who may be older than the age of consent in many jurisdictions but who are still considered children by the legal standards of pornography, and true children.

Jenkins encountered a problem that anyone who hopes to research this shadowy world must deal with: Since the laws against possessing child pornography can be interpreted even to mean viewing it on a computer screen, how does a researcher explore the subject without making a reservation at Sing Sing? His answer is ingenious, though a bit unsatisfying: He simply set his browser software to download Web pages without loading any photographs on the pages. This feature, a holdover from the times when slow modem speeds meant that image-rich pages would take forever to load, kept Jenkins on the right side of the law. But any reporter who has spent time looking into online forums where pornography is traded knows that descriptions of images alone can't always be trusted: That file offered up as "young pussy" could well turn out to be a picture of a kitten posted by some joker.

If this world were just images and their brief descriptions swapped at 3 a.m., Jenkins's methods wouldn't reap much. But in fact, it's a chatty little community of "Loli-Lovers" who seek out each others' virtual company in the message boards and chat rooms that many of the Internet portals offer as a free service, comparing notes on their compulsively built collections, filling in the gaps of the series of better-known photographs and videos of certain children, and tipping each other off to online addresses where more can be found.

Law enforcement has a tough time in this pseudonymous environment; the researchers' needs are somewhat easier, since the "pedos," people passing under such online handles as "Godfather Corleone" and "Love2See," are likelier to share their stories and methods than their identities. Some of them argue that the images they see keep them from actually touching children; some of

them argue that the best pictures show that the children are enjoying the acts depicted; all of them say that only the stupid get caught.

Jenkins's proposed solution, which includes a call for a truly international effort to crack down on the trade in these heartbreaking images, is ambitious and, he admits, daunting. Comparing child pornographers to fish in the sea, he concludes, "There is no easy way to catch the fish without draining or poisoning the entire sea. We have to find means of killing or crippling the subculture without destroying the Internet, with which so much can be accomplished." Trying to set the terms of the discussion realistically, as Jenkins has done, is a start.

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Gofer Broke

By Nicholas Thompson

SPEAKERS' CORNER, A GATHERing for crazed and inspired orators every Sunday in London's Hyde Park, represents true freedom for Lawrence Lessig.

Everyone meets in a public park. They give speeches in English, a language free for anyone to use. They say whatever they want and don't copyright their rants.

Cable television, on the other hand, represents complete control. One company owns the wires that run into your home, other companies decide what to send through those wires, and still other companies copyright that content. Lessig, now a law professor at Stanford, uses this example in *The Future of Ideas* to describe the three layers that make up the Internet: physical, code, and content. The fiber-optic lines running across the country and the broadcast spectrum used for wireless

THE FUTURE OF IDEAS:
The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World
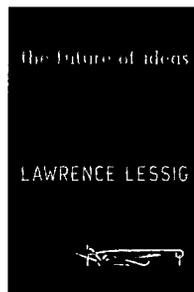*by Lawrence Lessig*
Random House, $30.00

Internet represent the physical layer. The programs and languages that run the network—HTML, Microsoft Windows—represent code. The documents we create and the Web pages we use represent content.

Lessig's thesis in this manifesto is that each of these three layers has become less and less free as the Internet has matured, stifling innovation and giving power to big, bad corporations. He writes: "The forces that the original Internet threatened to transform are well on their way to transforming the Internet ... the future that promised great freedom and innovation will not be ours. The future that threatened the reemergence of almost perfect control, will."

Lessig is surely right about the Internet's early days. Tim Berners-Lee, for example, spawned the World Wide Web by writing HTML and HTTP, the protocols we all now use to access the Web, in a way that would allow anyone to transfer any file or program across any computer attached to the government-created Internet. The University of Minnesota's text-only Gopher system was the biggest competitor back in 1993. But the university wanted to restrict use. Berners-Lee didn't, and he put all of his licenses into the public domain.

Soon, everyone started to use HTML, and a young graduate student named Marc Andreesen created a program that would work with HTML, called Netscape Navigator, which allowed us to view the Web in a user-friendly windowed environment. Andreesen and his peers didn't work with Gopher because they feared that the University of Minnesota could gobble up their work. Suddenly, we had what we now call the Web, and soon we had online booksellers, search engines, and auctions. The online innovators used HTML in ways that Anderson hadn't conceived of, but they all benefited from the free and open base that