Distinguished Speaker Series

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Title: Why net neutrality is a bad idea

Speaker: John Crowcroft

Affiliation: University of Cambridge

Abstract: Net neutrality is touted as essential for innovation. However, we have not had net innovation (in the IP layer of the Internet) for 23 years (not since IP Multicast in 1988). Why not? BGP is certainly a retrograde step. We have seen the failure to deploy IPv6, the failure to deploy ECN, the failure to deploy a decent mobile IP layer solution.

Innovation has abounded in the higher layers, but is dismally absent in IP. I claim that this is because net neutrality chills innovation in the net. It kills any first-mover advantage, where a new service can use discriminatory pricing to charge disproportionately more to early adopters and get them to pay for the deployment.

I propose we remove net neutrality as an experiment in empirical economics and see if the right to charge arbitrary amounts to different users (not just differential pricing, but actually arbitrary, and superficially "unfair" prices) causes more net innovation.

The place to try this is where it is most urgent, which is in the USA.

AT&T Labs - Research
C050, 180 Park Ave, Bldg 103
Florham Park, NJ 07932*
Tuesday July 5, 2011
3:30pm
Reception follows
in Cafeteria at 4:30pm

Biography: **Jon Crowcroft** is the Marconi Professor of Communications Systems in the Computer Lab, at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of Wolfson College. He graduated in Physics from Trinity College, Cambridge University in 1979, received an MSc in Computing in 1981, and PhD in 1993 both from UCL. He is a fellow of the ACM, the British Computer Society, the IE[ET] the royal academy of engineering, and the IEEE. He received the ACM SIGCOMM award in 2009 for lifetime contribution to the field of communication networks.

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