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Symposium, Internet Expression in the 21st Century: Where Technology & Law Collide: Introduction

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Symposium

INTERNET EXPRESSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: WHERE TECHNOLOGY & LAW COLLIDE

INTRODUCTION

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In the twenty-first century, the Internet is arguably the most dominant and pervasive medium by which the global society connects; exchanges information; and expresses its views,

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*** Nicole M. Santo is the Symposium Editor for the *Widener Law Journal*.

thoughts, and opinions—often instantaneously. An entire generation of people, enterprises, and even governments is now socialized to live and to conduct business in a virtual reality by participating in Internet-based social media networks, blogging, and the like. We post photos and information to Facebook and MySpace, we tweet, and we blog about every topic known to humankind. Those individuals and organizations who can access the World Wide Web—from the famous to the infamous to the unknown—enjoy unprecedented opportunities for communication and participation in the Internet revolution. And with the proliferation of Internet communications, those who resist are subject to increasing amounts of social and economic pressure to join. Sometimes this participation takes the form of news reporting, sometimes it's personal, sometimes it's private, and sometimes it's defamatory or otherwise violative of a range of existing local, state, and federal civil and criminal laws.

Thus Internet expression has spurred an entire new genre of communication and of consumer expectations about access to and dissemination of information and entertainment in ways that the legal world has only begun to navigate and understand. While many traditional legal principles may apply to Internet expression, new media present innumerable challenges and threaten to force changes in the legal protections and individual constitutional freedoms now in effect in the United States and beyond.

The *Widener Law Journal* has assembled a dynamic and diverse group of preeminent legal scholars to evaluate and discuss the many engaging, perplexing, and unanswered legal and ethical questions presented by Internet expression. These scholars have focused on two primary topics: (1) issues of constitutional law and criminal procedure that arise with Internet expression, including whether the Internet has increased concerns about invasions of other persons' rights and what regulations are necessary to protect privacy rights; (2) the intersection of Internet expression and property law, including issues of ownership, protectable interests, and fair use in the realm of intellectual property law for interests created with the mind.

The distinguished academics and practitioners taking part in this cutting-edge Symposium have already shaped the law's response to the advances of the digital age. Their written

scholarship will both inform us and further aid the law in adapting to the new and challenging issues presented by Internet expression.