

I am writing to voice my concerns over the AOL / Time Warner merger. (If you are short on time, please, at least read the conclusion.)

It appears to me that allowing this merger would only increase the stronghold that large corporations have over each individual Internet user that is trapped into using their service because there are no viable alternatives. This merger would lock anybody that needs high speed Internet access into one ISP and their unexceptable practices. This also removes the motivation of the ISP/carrier to increase or maintain quality of service. A clear loss for us consumers.

Let me explain some of the situations I have experienced with my ISP/carrier, @home.com / AT&T that recently merged with Excite.

- * The mailservers are down or slow most every night. This has gone on for over a year. There appears to be no remedy in the works. My only option is to use another ISP's server. I have to pay twice for mail service because I can't switch ISPs.

- * @home/AT&T/Excite no longer feel that they need to provide special nitch services. For example, they have shut down the IRC (Internet Relay Chat) server because it was too much trouble for them to maintain. If you wish to have any interconnectivity between your home computer and your work computer, something that all ISPs support, you risk losing your service. @home/AT&T/Excite only wishes to take the "cream off the top" and not provide services that we Internet users have come to expect with other ISPs.

- * @home/AT&T/Excite only support Windows and Macintosh computers on their network. This means people that are using Unix, are out in the cold if they want to have high speed access to the Internet. Unix users have to purchase Windows or a Mac if we want to have the cable modem even installed. Even after you have your cable modem installed, the account configuration tools are unavailable to you. Basically, if you want to use the @home/AT&T/Excite service, you have to purchase a windows computer.

- * @home/AT&T/Excite track and sell information about Internet usage habits of it's users. I have no choice in selecting another ISP that doesn't do this. My Internet life is up for sale.

- * @home/AT&T/Excite has tried to control what I want to do with my computer. For example, @home/AT&T/Excite tried to prohibit the purchase of stocks on-line . They wished to prohibit the sale of anything through the use of e-mail. Sending a file to a friend using something other than mail would have been prohibited. If it would not have been for the heavy press coverage, @home/AT&T/Excite (at the time, TCI) would not have rescinded this user agreement.

In conclusion,

I feel that since the cables and fibers that run through my yard and throughout the public streets are public property, the services that travels the same should be as well. It has come to my knowledge that some cities receive kickbacks from cable service providers when a user connects to a cable modem. This is not the way to treat a public franchise. Where does the voice of the citizen get heard! Are we all lost to the whim of the large corporations that control what we see and what we hear because our access is being sold?

High speed access to the Internet should be open to other ISPs and should not be exclusive to a few large corporations. Please do not allow the merger of AOL and Time Warner.

Glenn Valenta