



Register No:

Date:

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE – 27
BCA/BVC - II SEMESTER
SEMESTER EXAMINATION – APRIL 2018
GENERAL ENGLISH (MCT 214) – Media, Culture & Technology

Time: 2 ½ Hours

Max. Marks: 70

INSTRUCTIONS

*Answer questions according to the section you have been assigned to.
Please mention the section on the front page of your answer scripts.
You will lose marks for exceeding suggested word-limits.
You are allowed to use a dictionary.*

THIS BOOKLET HAS NINE PRINTED PAGES AND TWO SECTIONS

SECTION A: FOR MCT 'A' – ONLINES LIVES IN WEB 2.0

I Read this feature published by the Australian news website *The Conversation* that was published in April 13, 2015:

Is downloading really stealing? The ethics of digital piracy

Many millions of people throughout the world will illegally download the fifth season of Game of Thrones, released today by HBO. Legally speaking, what they will be doing is a violation of intellectual property rights, or “piracy”. But will they be doing anything morally wrong?

It might seem obvious that what they will do is wrong. After all, it is illegal. But there are many things that have been illegal that people don't think are morally wrong. Same-sex relationships, divorce and many other practices that are now widely accepted as morally acceptable were once outlawed and criminally sanctioned. Few people think they were wrong just before they were legalised. Rather, they tend to think the laws governing these behaviours were unjust. So appeal only to the illegality of downloading doesn't settle whether it is okay, morally speaking.

Two rival camps dominate public discussion around the ethics of illegal downloading. On the one hand, there are what might be called “fundamentalist libertarians”. These think that all ideas and artistic creation should be held in common and be freely accessible to all. In their view, intellectual property, in the form of copyright and patents, unfairly restricts access to ideas and expression. They consider illegal downloading to be victimless crime, and do not think it imposes significant cost on anyone. In their view, the serious criminal sanctions that sometimes attach to illegal downloading are draconian and unjustified.

On the other hand, there are what might be called the “fundamentalist protectors”. This camp thinks that illegal downloading is equivalent to common theft. This view is vividly expressed in the aggressive message that often precedes films in Australia:

You wouldn't steal a car, you wouldn't steal a handbag, you wouldn't steal a television, you wouldn't steal a movie. Downloading pirated films is stealing.

According to fundamentalist protectors, owners of intellectual property deserve just as much protection and means for redress as those who have had their handbags or televisions stolen, including civil and criminal sanction against those who have violated their intellectual property. For them, the massive penalties that are sometimes attached to illegal downloading are important because they send a clear message that this practice should not be tolerated. This seems to be the view of much of the entertainment industry, as well as public officials and legislatures in countries that produce and export a lot of intellectual property.

Despite their currency, both of these positions are overdrawn and seem at odds with moral common sense. The fundamentalist protector position is problematic because there are clear and morally relevant differences between stealing someone's handbag and illegally downloading a television series.

In common theft, the owner of property is entirely deprived of its use, as well as their ability to share it and dispose of it as they choose. Common theft is zero-sum: when I steal your handbag, my gain really is your loss. The same is not true when I download a digital file of your copyrighted property. In downloading your film, I have not excluded you from its use, or your ability to benefit from it. I have simply circumvented your ability to exclude me from its use. To draw an analogy, this seems more like trespassing on your land than taking your land away from you. Criminal sanctions seem warranted in thefts where one person's gain is very clearly another person's loss. But things are not so clear when the relationship between gain and loss are more complex. And of course there are ways that owners of intellectual property can gain, overall, from infringements of their rights. The more accessible their products become, the more people may want to consume them. This certainly seems to be the case with products like Game of Thrones, a fact recognised by its producers.

On the other hand, the fundamentalist libertarian position is problematic because it treats all intellectual property infringement as a victimless crime. For one thing, intellectual property rights are an important means by which people gain profit from the effort that they put into the production of creative works. That they can profit in this way provides an important incentive – aside from the intrinsic value of the productive activity itself – for them to engage in socially useful productive activity. This is evident in other fields, such as research and development of medical treatments: firms have little reason to invest the time and resources in developing vaccines and other public goods if they cannot benefit from their distribution.

Thus, not protecting the rights of the producers in some meaningful way is bad for everyone. Infringing intellectual property rights can also increase cost to those who pay for the good, in the form of higher prices. Those who pay for intellectual property are effectively subsidising its use by those who do not pay for it. In most cases this seems unfair.

The question of the morality of illegal downloading is so difficult because it takes place in an environment in which the penalties attached to this behaviour ordinarily seem to be overkill, but where there are pretty clear social costs to engaging in it.

What, then, should be done? For starters, it seems important to stop treating intellectual property infringement as common theft, and to develop different legal remedies for its protection. Various kinds of property are different, and warrant different forms of protection. This is hardly a novel idea. In his fascinating book, *13 Ways to Steal a Bicycle: Theft Law in the Information Age*, the legal philosopher Stuart Green has pointed out that treating all infringement of property as theft subject to the same legal rubric is a relatively new development. Prior to the 20th Century, theft law consisted of a sort of ad hoc collection of specific theft offences and specific kinds of property that were subject to theft. Different rules applied to different offences, and intangible forms of property, like intellectual property, were not included in theft law at all. We may need to return to rules that are well suited to protecting different forms of property.

In the meantime, it seems incumbent on consumers to try to respect intellectual property unless doing so imposes unreasonable cost on them. Refraining from accessing patented essential medicines that are inaccessible due to price does seem unduly costly. Refraining from watching the latest season of Game of Thrones, the ardour of its fans notwithstanding, does not.

At the same time, we should also strongly resist massive penalties levied on downloaders when they are caught. The practice of “speculative invoicing” – whereby people are sent threatening letters that offer the opportunity to pay a sum to prevent legal action seeking vast sums – is seriously objectionable. Even if what the downloaders have done is wrong, it is much worse to over-punish them.

I A Answer any FOUR from the following questions in about 150 words each. [4x10 marks=40 marks]

1. What is the central argument in the feature? What do you think is the author's position on digital piracy? What is your position on the debate? Justify your answer.
2. Have you felt afraid or guilty while downloading content online? Are you aware of the threats posed by viruses and malwares, and insecure connection, during downloads, especially over torrent sites? How have you dealt with such fears and insecurities and ploughed ahead in search of content that is 'free'?
3. If a person is financially capable of paying for original content, do you believe she should engage in illegal downloading and digital piracy? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean for the creators of content if there are no legal sanctions over downloads? Does making content free benefit and emancipate knowledge creation and sharing? Justify your answer with examples.
5. There has been an increased crackdown on torrent sites and free online streaming sites over the last decade. This is also complemented by the rise of paid streaming sites such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Hotstar. Do you think such websites form a viable alternative for illegal downloading and streaming? What do you think the future holds for massive file sharing platforms such as torrents?

II Read this excerpt from a news story, along with screenshots from social networking platform Facebook, that appeared in the Indian edition of The Huffington Post on October 18, 2017

Over the last few days, social media has been used as a powerful tool by people of all genders and sexual identities across the world to bring attention to the problem of sexual harassment and abuse. Shocking revelations shook Hollywood in the wake of multiple allegations against Harvey Weinstein of being a serial abuser. It led to actress Alyssa Milano's call to victims of sexual abuse to put up a post with #MeToo on social media.

Closer home, Indian social media was grappling its own Weinstein-like conspiracy of abuse, silence and cover-up as Khodu Irani, the owner of High Spirits, a popular local bar in Pune, was accused by dozens of women of sexual misconduct that his friends and employees had been covering up for years. Even as accusations against Irani piled up and evidence of his guilt mounted, some dismissed the issue by saying that the girls must have been asking for it if they chose to return to High Spirits after their ordeal.

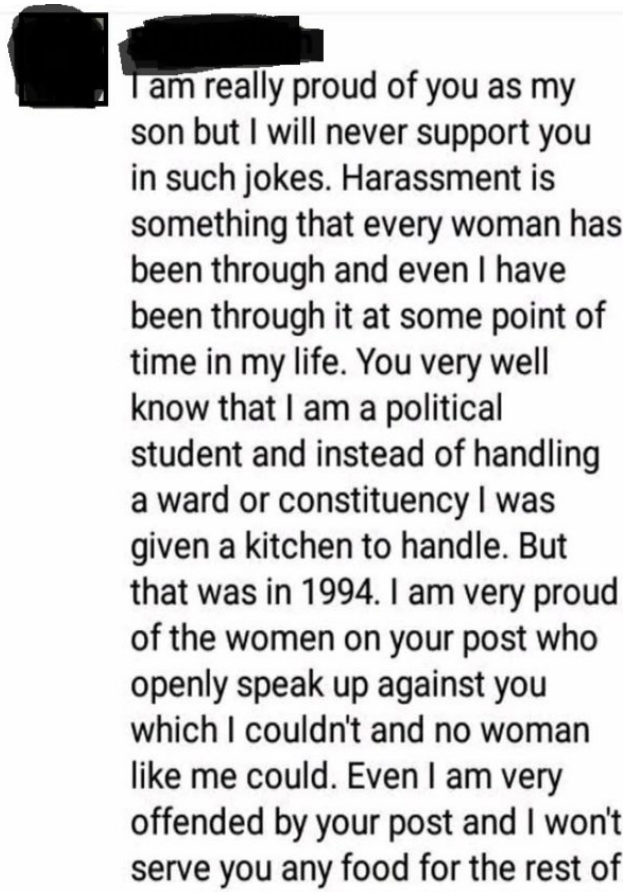
One Facebook user, made the terrible choice of joking about the matter.



There's nothing new about ill-timed, sexist jokes in poor taste on social media. We find them gleefully circulated on Whatsapp groups and lurking around our Facebook news feeds and Twitter timelines on a daily basis. Sometimes we make the time to call out the person responsible. More often, they are just ignored.

Until a mother steps in and takes matters in her own hands.

Responding to her son's shameful joke, the user's mother wrote a comment telling him without mincing words what she thought about his sense of humour and how he could prepare to go hungry for the rest of the month until he apologised for ridiculing a problem as endemic as sexual abuse.



like me could. Even I am very offended by your post and I won't serve you any food for the rest of the month. I wanted to talk to you about it in person but since you like writing about everything on facebook I thought I should answer you here. And before you go complaining to your father about me i want to thank him for helping me write this. Sorry for my grammar mistakes.

4 hours ago · Wow · Reply ·



Write a comment...



What could have been a beautiful learning moment for the woman's son and all the others who had cheered on his awful joke, quickly turned sinister, thanks to overzealous social media activists. The mother's comment quickly went viral as screen shots started making the rounds of social media. Duly chastised and publicly shamed, the son owned up to his mistake and apologised on Facebook. But by then, the matter had snowballed into something much bigger.

II A Answer the following questions in about 200 words each. [2x15 marks=30 marks]

1. What is the nature of the anonymity enjoyed by social media users? What power or freedom does it confer on the user? In the above scenario, would the incident have backfired on the son if the mother hadn't responded? Justify your answer.
2. The mother's online response to the son's derogatory post served as a moral compass for the latter, leading him to issue an apology. This brings into question the changing notions of morals and values, and, by extension, the etiquette that people follow in social media. What is your opinion regarding this? In the absence of a personal motivation to maintain a moral compass and follow proper etiquette, what are the measures that can be taken to monitor behavioural etiquettes online? Give examples wherever necessary.

SECTION B: FOR MCT 'B' – WRITING A PERSONAL HISTORY FOR TECHNOLOGY

I Read this article that appeared in the *Guardian* on December 16, 2014:

Handwriting vs typing: is the pen still mightier than the keyboard?

In the past few days you may well have scribbled out a shopping list on the back of an envelope or stuck a Post-it on your desk. Perhaps you added a comment to your child's report book or made a few quick notes during a meeting. But when did you last draft a long text by hand? How long ago did you write your last "proper" letter, using a pen and a sheet of writing paper? Are you among the increasing number of people, at work, who are switching completely from writing to typing?

No one can say precisely how much handwriting has declined, but in June a British survey of 2,000 people gave some idea of the extent of the damage. According to the study, commissioned by Docmail, a printing and mailing company, one in three respondents had not written anything by hand in the previous six months. On average they had not put pen to paper in the previous 41 days. People undoubtedly write more than they suppose, but one thing is certain: with information technology we can write so fast that handwritten copy is fast disappearing in the workplace.

In the United States they have already made allowance for this state of affairs. Given that email and texting have replaced snail mail, and that students take notes on their laptops, “cursive” writing – in which the pen is not raised between each character – has been dropped from the Common Core Curriculum Standards, shared by all states. Since 2013 American children have been required to learn how to use a keyboard and write in print. But they will no longer need to worry about the up and down strokes involved in “joined-up” writing, less still the ornamental loops on capitals.

This reform prompted lively controversy. In an editorial published on 4 September 2013, the Los Angeles Times hailed a step forward. “States and schools shouldn’t cling to cursive based on the romantic idea that it’s a tradition, an art form or a basic skill whose disappearance would be a cultural tragedy. Of course, everyone needs to be able to write without computers, but long hand printing generally works fine [...] Print is clearer and easier to read than script. For many, it’s easier to write and just about as fast.”

Some states, such as Indiana, have decided to go on teaching cursive writing in school. Without this skill, they assert, young Americans will no longer be able to read birthday cards from their grandparents, comments by teachers on their assignments or the original, handwritten text of the constitution and the Declaration of Independence. “I have to tell you, I can’t remember the last time I read the constitution,” countered Steve Graham, a professor of education at Arizona State University.

This minor revolution is causing quite a stir but it is by no means the first of its kind. Ever since writing was most likely first invented, in Mesopotamia in about 4000BC, it has been through plenty of technological upheavals. The tools and media used for writing have changed many times: from Sumerian tablets to the Phoenician alphabet of the first millennium BC; from the invention of paper in China about 1,000 years later to the first codex, with its handwritten sheets bound together to make a book; from the invention of printing in the 15th century to the appearance of ballpoint pens in the 1940s.

So at first sight the battle between keyboards and pens might seem to be no more than the latest twist in a very long story, yet another new tool that we will end up getting used to. What really matters is not how we produce a text but its quality, we are often told. When we are reading, few of us wonder whether a text was written by hand or word-processed.

But experts on writing do not agree: pens and keyboards bring into play very different cognitive processes. “Handwriting is a complex task which requires various skills – feeling the pen and paper, moving the writing implement, and directing movement by thought,” says Edouard Gentaz, professor of developmental psychology at the University of Geneva. “Children take several years to master this precise motor exercise: you need to hold the scripting tool firmly while moving it in such a way as to leave a different mark for each letter.” Operating a keyboard is not the same at all: all you have to do is press the right key. It is easy enough for children to learn very fast, but above all the movement is exactly the same whatever the letter. “It’s a big change,” says Roland Jouvent, head of adult psychiatry at Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. “Handwriting is the result of a singular movement of the body, typing is not.”

Furthermore pens and keyboards use very different media. “Word-processing is a normative, standardised tool,” says Claire Bustarret, a specialist on codex manuscripts at the Maurice Halbwachs research centre in Paris. “Obviously you can change the page layout and switch fonts, but

you cannot invent a form not foreseen by the software. Paper allows much greater graphic freedom: you can write on either side, keep to set margins or not, superimpose lines or distort them. There is nothing to make you follow a set pattern. It has three dimensions too, so it can be folded, cut out, stapled or glued.” An electronic text does not leave the same mark as its handwritten counterpart either. “When you draft a text on the screen, you can change it as much as you like but there is no record of your editing,” Bustarret adds. “The software does keep track of the changes somewhere, but users cannot access them. With a pen and paper, it’s all there. Words crossed out or corrected, bits scribbled in the margin and later additions are there for good, leaving a visual and tactile record of your work and its creative stages.”

But does all this really change our relation to reading and writing? The advocates of digital documents are convinced it makes no difference. “What we want from writing – and what the Sumerians wanted – is cognitive automaticity, the ability to think as fast as possible, freed as much as can be from the strictures of whichever technology we must use to record our thoughts,” Anne Trubek, associate professor of rhetoric and composition at Oberlin College in Ohio, wrote some years ago. “This is what typing does for millions. It allows us to go faster, not because we want everything faster in our hyped-up age, but for the opposite reason: we want more time to think.”

Some neuroscientists are not so sure. They think that giving up handwriting will affect how future generations learn to read. “Drawing each letter by hand substantially improves subsequent recognition,” Gentaz explains. Marieke Longchamp and Jean-Luc Velay, two researchers at the cognitive neuroscience laboratory at Aix-Marseille University, have carried out a study of 76 children, aged three to five. The group that learned to write letters by hand were better at recognising them than the group that learned to type them on a computer. They repeated the experiment on adults, teaching them Bengali or Tamil characters. The results were much the same as with the children. Drawing each letter by hand improves our grasp of the alphabet because we really have a “body memory”, Gentaz adds. “Some people have difficulty reading again after a stroke. To help them remember the alphabet again, we ask them to trace the letters with their finger. Often it works, the gesture restoring the memory.”

Although learning to write by hand does seem to play an important part in reading, no one can say whether the tool alters the quality of the text itself. Do we express ourselves more freely and clearly with a pen than with a keyboard? Does it make any difference to the way the brain works? Some studies suggest this may indeed be the case. In a paper published in April in the journal *Psychological Science*, two US researchers, Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, claim that note-taking with a pen, rather than a laptop, gives students a better grasp of the subject.

The study focused on more than 300 students at Princeton and the University of California, Los Angeles. It suggested that students who took longhand notes were better able to answer questions on the lecture than those using a laptop. For the scientists, the reason is clear: those working on paper rephrased information as they took notes, which required them to carry out a preliminary process of summarising and comprehension; in contrast, those working on a keyboard tended to take a lot of notes, sometimes even making a literal transcript, but avoided what is known as “desirable difficulty”.

On the basic issue of handwriting France has chosen to take the opposite course from the US. In the early 2000s the ministry of education instructed schools to start teaching cursive writing when pupils entered primary school [aged six]. “For a long time we attached little importance to handwriting, which was seen as a fairly routine exercise,” says school inspector Viviane Bouysse. “But in 2000, drawing on work in the neurosciences, we realised that this learning process was a key step in cognitive development.”

“With joined-up writing children learn words as blocks of letters, which helps with spelling,” Bouysse explains. “It’s important in a country where spelling is so complex! However, the ornamental capitals

in the patterns published in the 2013 exercise books have been simplified, with fewer loops and scrolls [...] They are important, though, because they distinguish proper names or the start of a sentence.”

Some handwriting advocates regret the disappearance of these ornamental effects. “It’s not just a question of writing a letter: it also involves drawing, acquiring a sense of harmony and balance, with rounded forms,” Jouvent asserts. “There is an element of dancing when we write, a melody in the message, which adds emotion to the text. After all that’s why emoticons were invented, to restore a little emotion to text messages.”

Writing has always been seen as expressing our personality. In his books the historian Philippe Artières explained how doctors and detectives, in the late 19th and early 20th century, found signs of deviance among lunatics and delinquents, simply by examining the way they formed their letters. “With handwriting we come closer to the intimacy of the author,” Jouvent explains. “That’s why we are more powerfully moved by the manuscript of a poem by Verlaine than by the same work simply printed in a book. Each person’s hand is different: the gesture is charged with emotion, lending it a special charm.”

Which no doubt explains the narcissistic relationship we often entertain with our own scrawl.

Despite omnipresent IT, Gentaz believes handwriting will persist. “Touchscreens and styluses are taking us back to handwriting. Our love affair with keyboards may not last,” he says. “It still plays an important part in everyday life,” Bustarret adds. “We write by hand more often than we think, if only to fill in forms or make a label for a jam jar. Writing is still very much alive in our surroundings – in advertising, signing, graffiti and street demonstrations.” Certainly the graphic arts and calligraphy are thriving.

Perhaps, in their way, they compensate for our soulless keyboards.

**I A Answer any THREE from the following questions in about 150 words each.
[3x10 marks=30 marks]**

1. What is the central argument in the feature? What, according to you, is the author’s position on the debate? Justify your answer.
2. How often do you use the computer to write instead of writing with a pen? How has a shift towards writing using a computer changed the way you think while you write? Has this affected your attitude towards writing? Explain with examples.
3. How do the United States and France differ in their approach towards writing? Is the approach of one country better than the other’s? Justify your answer.
4. Texting and instant messaging on smartphones is another mode of typing. How has this mode of typing influenced your use of language, be it your mother tongue, English or any other language? Do you think this influence will enrich languages? Justify your answer.

I B Imagine that you are writing an informal letter to the novelist Charles Dickens (1812-1870), describing the delights of using a computer to write, expressing wonder at the generations of writers like him who lived before the invention of even the typewriter (1868).The body of the letter should contain 300-350 words. [20 marks]

II Examine the following cartoons carefully:



[Text in speech bubbles:

Cartoon 1: What am I doing with my life?

Cartoon 2: Amazing what a few days without heat and electricity can do to a neighbourhood.]

II A Answer the following questions in about 150 words each. [2x10 marks=20 marks]

1. Explain the two cartoons. How do you cope when you are cut off from technology during a power outage? Do you think such a 'break' from technology helps you introspect about yourself and the world around you? Justify your answer.
2. In the present age, access to technology is considered to be a part of being 'civilized'. What is your opinion?