WHAT TYPES OF INTERMEDIARIES EXIST?

Intermediaries play a crucial role in the functioning of the Internet. They perform complex and diverse functions. Global and national efforts at formally defining and regulating such entities are visible in many countries.

In her manuscript dedicated to the types of Internet intermediaries, Dorina Gyetván refers to subjects such as Telecom Service Providers (TSP) that supply network infrastructure, such as optic-fiber cables and spectrum bandwidth over which Internet data is transmitted; Internet Service Providers (ISP) that use its infrastructure to offer Internet connectivity to the users; web-hosting platforms providing platform on which Internet data is stored; search engines that sort through and index huge quantities of data for easy retrieval, as well as the online services that assure ways for end-users to exploit the power of the Internet for the efficient use of commerce, governance,education, entertainment, and social networking.

It is evident that intermediaries operate in many different forms. Various intermediaries require specific technical backgrounds as well. For instance, search engines are part of the World Wide Web and act as a connection between websites and Internet users. Social networks such as Facebook connect users by providing a platform for chatting, exchange of photos and videos, and allowing posts on its platform.

Possible business models further differentiate these categories. ISPs are highly dependent on state permission and must abide by local laws when establishing facilities in various geographical locations. In comparison, social media remain distanced from state control as networks do not necessarily need to locate staff, equipment or other physical resources in the same geographical area as the users they target.
To illustrate her classification Gyetván proposes the following table:

OECD	APC	General Assembly	Report	Examples
Internet access and service providers (ISPs)	Network operators, mobile telecommunications providers, access providers (ISPs) in the narrow sense	Internet service providers (ISPs)	Internet Service Providers (ISPs)	Verizon
Data processing and web hosting providers, including domain name registrars	Website hosting companies, including portals, dedicated server space and domain name registrars		Web hosting providers or 'hosts'	Easyspace
Internet search engines and portals		Search engines	Search engines	Google
	Information location tools and content aggregators			
E-commerce intermediaries, where these platforms do not take title to the goods being sold	E-commerce platforms and online marketplaces			eBay
Internet payment systems				Paypal
	Providers of online services, such as email and cloud computing, which allow user-to-user communications or host user-generated content			
Participative networking platforms		Blogging services Online communities Social media platforms	Social media platforms	Facebook
	Network-related hardware manufacturers, such as computer and mobile manufacturers			
	Network-related software and applications developers, such as companies designing anti-virus programs and filtering technologies			

Gyetván's own composition and design (Table idea from: Rebecca MacKinnon and others, Fostering Freedom Online: The Role of Internet Intermediaries (1st edn, UNESCO Publishing 2014), 21)

The table shows how different organizations perceive Internet intermediaries and states specific examples of the various categories of intermediaries. The classification also helps users understand the diverse functions exercised by the intermediaries today, and how important they are for our professional and leisure activities.

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