

The more I learn about Comcast's merger plans for TWC and AT&T's plans for DirecTV the more concerned I grow over the impact these mergers will have on wireline telecommunications market including the Internet. Comcast's proposed merger opened a Pandora's box for AT&T aka Ma Bell to gobble up pay TV provider DirecTV which it currently competes with using its UVerse TV service. Now Rupert Murdoch of News Corp., wants to acquire Time Warner Inc. Currently Time Warner management is refusing to sell but Murdoch may make a hostile takeover bid.

Increasingly, our media, telecommunications and cable companies are becoming increasingly consolidated and it is bad for consumers and the open Internet Online we have information monopolies like Apple's iTunes Store/App Store for music, movies, TV and apps, which is branching out into e-books and has been sued by DOJ for collusion with the publishers. Amazon.com, which has become a dominant provider of digital books or electronic publishing is also a major player online. A few big companies control most of the content we access over the Internet and increasingly when service providers like Comcast become content providers with acquisitions like the. 2011 Comcast NBCU takeover they

have a conflict of interest to prioritize what content is allowed to flow through its pipes.

AT&T's DirecTV merger would reduce competition in the pay TV market and could have serious repercussions also for the Open Internet. Do we really want a few big corporations to control all our media?

In the case of Amazon on the one hand they are fighting to keep prices low for e-books and are selling them at a loss to expand market share. Amazon is now the dominant seller of e-books. This is a good thing for consumers as the big publishers are fighting to protect an outdated and antiquated business model of print books which cost more to produce by pricing e-books the same as print or near print prices. They want to keep the huge margins from print books even with digital and not pass of any savings to the consumer.

If you buy movies, music or TV from Apple iTunes your locked into Apple's mobile devices - cost of switching is prohibitive when you have to re-purchase your content for a rival platform. The same situation applies on Microsoft Windows RT tablets incapable of running the desktop iTunes app for MS Windows you have to buy from Xbox Music and XBox Video, XBox Games etc. The Google Play App Store is similarly limited to working only with Android devices.

Initially, users did not even have iOS apps for Google Play Music, Google Play Movies & TV or Google Play Books. They were limited to

having a Chromebook, Chromebox or Android device to buy and access content from the Google Play Store.

If users initially bought content from Amazon your content in some instances may only play on Amazon's forked version of Google's Android OS.

Even now some content on Amazon's Kindle Store requires a Kindle to buy and use. Some digital publications are only available for sale to Kindle device owners. Amazon's App Store for Android works across all Android devices – it can be easily installed on non-Amazon based Android devices and comes preinstalled on Amazon's mobile devices.

Users can even buy Kindle apps directly from their personal computer but a registered Kindle device linked to your Amazon.com account is required to make the purchase. Google Play Apps on the other hand can only be purchased from and downloaded to an Android device.

Fortunately, there is some content even in Amazon's Kindle Store, which can be accessed via iOS devices. Amazon has its Kindle app for reading e-books and digital magazines on the iOS App Store for iPhone/iPod Touch and iPad. Amazon Instant Video for iOS lets you download movies to your iOS devices you purchased digitally from Amazon or stream them over the Web. Amazon's Prime Music App formerly Amazon Cloud Player lets you access your music purchased from Amazon on any Apple iOS device.

Unfortunately, sometimes if content disappears from any of these digital storefronts it can disappear from a user's cloud library of purchased content. By the way Xbox Music and Video will only work on Windows 8 devices and up plus the XBox One and possibly MS's XBox 360.

Last year Apple discontinued its iPhone web apps gallery, which it launched with the original iPhone to enable app developers to build rich HTML 5 web apps for the iPhone in the days before Apple released the iPhone's SDK and created the App Store. They want to lock-in iOS users whether they have iPhones, iPod Touches or iPads into the App Store and iTunes Store for all content purchases having decided they can make more money off iCloud by shuttering their web apps gallery.

Apple also discontinued further development of its Safari web browser for Microsoft Windows users and forces Windows users to sync their iCloud bookmarks using Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, or Microsoft's Internet Explorer. In this case they are taking away user choice, in this case it is the choice of Microsoft Windows users who prefer Apple's web browser to continue using their software to browse the World Wide Web.

Amazon instant Video is the most interoperable service across devices as is Amazon MP3 but Google Play Movies and TV is more restrictive. It works across Android and iOS but while Amazon also works on game consoles like the Nintendo Wii/Wii U etc., plus Sony PS4 and MS Xbox systems Google Play Movies and TV are unavailable for consoles. The downside though is Amazon like Apple, Microsoft, Sony, and Netflix thinks they make money by closing off the Web.

This is a good thing Amazon is doing but it often is criticized of Wal-Mart style labor practices exploiting workers and some suggest it's bullying of publishers and movie studios etc could harm consumers by depriving them of acquiring content thru the online retailer they want and expect should be made available.

Online Google is also an information monopoly when it comes to search and Facebook a monopoly in social search and social networking.

Microsoft's monopoly position has long eroded on the Web but it is still a big player and after agreeing to play nicer following its antitrust settlement it is attempting through innovation to catch up.

The point is losing Net Neutrality and allowing more mergers which would further erode Network Neutrality the concept of a free and open Internet is

antithetical to democracy, it is bad for consumers, and bad for the market to have fewer competitors. Irrespective of Comcast's claim it does not compete with Time Warner Cable this merger gives it more market power.