CI 2018 B Knox

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Q1:
The ALRC should focus on developing a new framework. Some elements of the existing framework appear to work well. The readily identifiable symbols G, PG, M, etc of mainstream movie and television classification should probably be retained. However, many elements of the existing framework appear to be confounding, bemusing or counterproductive: Why exactly must a static web-page with still images be classified according to film guidelines? How can it be that depictions of legal activity between consenting adults may end up in the same classification as the most abhorrent material such as child porn? Why does this same classification apply to computer games that are classified as being unsuitable for children? Is it really the intention for such computer games to be restricted from sale to adults even when they are clearly aimed at an adult audience? Why is "promotion of crime such as graffiti" enough to push a web page into the RC category when television content that depicts detailed criminal activity (Dexter, Breaking Bad, Burn Notice) is regularly released under the MA15+ rating?

It is very hard to respect or take seriously the classification framework in its current form.
Q2:
A national classification scheme should indicate, wherever possible, the age appropriateness and broad type of content, especially popular content. Clearly, it has become impossible for a small central body to classify all content. The scheme should provide clear, unambiguous guidelines for content producers to provisionally classify their own content. Warnings should probably be given for high-impact content that may disturb the average adult, wherever possible, but it should not be a primary objective to protect adults from offense. It should definitely not be an objective to attempt to censor content that may be distasteful, disturbing or controversial, but not illegal to possess. The "Refused Classification" classification should be removed or curtailed to only the most heinous, clearly illegal material. As it stands this classification seems to include everything from computer games that would be rated R18+, to mild fetish porn, to euthanasia information, to child porn. It should be possible in principle to give a meaningful classification to almost all content, even if it may be impossible in practice.
Q3:
Only in the most obvious and transparent cases. Clearly, content made specifically for a platform marketed to children should be under greater classification scrutiny than not. But just as clearly, written text is written text regardless of platform, and films are films whether they appear in a cinema or on youtube. It is plainly ridiculous to classify written text according to film guidelines, simply because the platform is capable of displaying both film and text. The future technologies and platforms that are sure to arise will no doubt confound any attempt to base a classification system on the platform used to deliver the content.
Q4:

Is the other option to attempt to classify all content?

Q5:

Yes, content designed for children should be carefully classified before it is marketed to children.

"Impact" is a highly subjective term, but in general, high-impact material (that would be extremely confronting for the majority of the audience the content is aimed at) should carry a clear warning, yes.

Q6:

In general, yes. But mass-market content producers tend to self-censor to reach the largest audience possible. Content with a very large audience should have clear, consistent classifications. Content for a niche audience also tends to be classified and rated by the audience themselves through their reviews and discussions. Such audience gauges should be taken into account when reviewing a classification due to say, a complaint.

Q7:

In general, no. Access to artwork at an exhibition should never be restricted unless the aim is to promote the artwork. The classification guidelines should be clear enough so that the artist or curator are able to provide clear consumer advice if the artwork is anticipated to have extremely high impact for a large section of the intended audience.

Q8:

Audio books (that are clearly audio books) should probably be classified similarly to books, if at all. But sound recordings in general should probably not be classified in the same way as films. Sound recordings specifically aimed at children (and in a physical retail package) should perhaps carry clear G or PG ratings if possible, but everything else should probably be understood to be for a mature audience. The existing warnings for harsh language and the like are clearly outmoded.

Q9:

See Q6.

Q10:

In general, yes. Content that one accesses in private, at home may not be appropriate for a public billboard.

Q11:

Q12:

Q13:

Parents can password protect the configuration settings on their home modem, then use a service such as OpenDNS.com when it is time for their children to use the Internet. If the aim is to protect children from inappropriate content, an opt-in, openly maintained whitelist for the end-user such as this is much more secure and effective than the proposed filtering with a secret blacklist ever would be.

Q14:

Q15:

Largely, when the content is aimed at children, or the content has a large mainstream audience. With the understanding that the vast majority of content does not display classification markings (due to not having a tangible physical "box" for example), there may be the need for a general consumer advice

campaign: "If there is no G or PG marking, then the content has not been vetted by the classification system as suitable for children".

Q16:

Government agencies should produce clear classification guidelines that anyone can use (industry or user groups) after consultation with interested audiences and industries (including the adult audience and industry, not merely church groups). Government agencies should review provisional classifications if there is a legitimate complaint or unrest, issuing an official classification if necessary. Provisional classifications should be more heavily scrutinised the wider the audience, and there should definitely be severe penalties if content is knowingly classified a category lower than it should be. The G and PG classifications should not be able to be affixed provisionally.

Q17:

Definitely. So long as the term "industry" extends to niche content creators and the like, and the "suitable code" is not corrupted by commercial, puritanical or political interests.

Q18:

Most, if the guidelines are clear enough, and there is a sufficient default "catch-all" classification such as a revised R18+ or X18+ rating. Communities and content creators (not necessarily "industry") should be able to make use of such provisional classifications also. There should absolutely be penalties for knowingly mis-classifying material, and there should probably not be any such provisional classification down to G and PG level content. Content aimed at children in the G or PG (perhaps even M) range should be centrally, transparently and accountably certified.

Q19:

Q20:

Most seem to be well understood apart from the absolutely confusing maze around R18+, X18+ and RC for content on different platforms.

Q21:

The RC classification should either be reserved for content that is actually illegal or abolished altogether. It has become a catch-all category for a vast array of innocuous material that should in no way be equated with the types of abhorrent illegal material it presumably was intended to quarantine. To pick one of a bewildering number of examples: How can the computer game "Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure", where the player can vandalise virtual objects with virtual graffiti, be in the same category as photographic evidence of a sex crime against a child?

Q22:

Q23:

Q24:

Only the most glaringly obviously illegal material, and not material that may be technically illegal, but contentious (for example euthanasia and abortion information). Prohibition of such material should then only take place if there is little chance of a Streisand effect.

Q25:

No.

Q26:

Q27:

Q28:

Q29:
Other comments: