EDITORIAL

Technology and regulation: which is the tail and which is the dog?

The articles in this special issue arise from papers presented at the Socio-Legal Studies Association Annual Conference in Cardiff in 2021. This was the SLSA's first ever virtual conference, and this reformed approach was necessitated by the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, which had led to the cancellation of the conference at the University of Portsmouth the previous year. That the Conference could proceed at all serves to reinforce the role of technology as an integral enabling tool and it is this context in which the special issue is located.

As the world looks towards resuming a "new normal" in more recent times, it is clear that technology will likely exceed its current prevalence with even more importance and relevance. Accordingly, it is apposite that the articles contained in this special edition were all delivered in the Information Technology, Law and Cyberspace stream of the Annual Conference in Cardiff in 2021. The articles explore a variety of discussions and debates involving the regulation of cyberspace and new information technologies.

In their article, "Online Safety and Identity: Navigating Same-Sex Social 'Dating' Apps and Networks", Chris Ashford et al provide a multi-faceted exploration of the digital male same-sex dating world in the shadow of the Online Harms Bill and White Paper. The article explores not only recently proposed UK law reforms, but also policy documents, earlier legislation and recent academic contributions to the topical debate in this area. Additionally, a selection of interviews with members of the LGBT community provides unique insights into user expectations and experiences of this constantly evolving arena.

Michael Dizon explores the concept of encryption, and how people's conceptions of privacy and information security in that context align – or do not align - with the legal protections provided by the law. While the article approaches the matter based on New Zealand data, it provides a useful example of broader application as to how social understanding and law could be better connected in this space.

Privacy Boundaries in Digital Space is the field in which Mo Egan's informative article is located. It begins with an analysis of the concept of privacy in digital space and reflects on the usefulness of Altman's and Hughes' theories of privacy regulation in this area. It also compares the approach of the UK and South Africa in addressing privacy interference particularly in the area of data protection, and considers the implications of the fracturing of responsibility between state and non-state actors within such approaches.

Hibah Alessi evaluates the role of Artificial Intelligence in Online Dispute Resolution, exploring the interaction between humans and machines in this context and asks whether online dispute resolution facilitates individuals' access to justice. Her conclusions provide a mix of nuanced expectations with respect to the benefits of AI in dispute resolution while also seeing the need for ongoing critical evaluation of its mechanisms.

The article "Drafting Video Game Loot Box Regulation for Dummies: A Chinese Lesson" details Leon Xiao's fascinating insight into this form of technology which is akin to gambling with many of its negative consequences. The experience of China in regulating this area is

discussed as it provides a possible model for other countries considering law in this area, specifically in relation to loot box probability disclosure.

Finally, in "Electronic communications media: how to regulate the hate!", Lisa Collingwood examines recent UK law reforms in order to explore the appropriateness of amending legislation to meet the complexities of new communications media. There is a particular focus on the amendments to The Malicious Communications Act 1988 and the Communications Act 2003, with conclusions drawn about how an area which represents an enduring challenge for the law might best be tackled.

Ultimately, all the articles in this special issue evaluate the degree to which legal regulation can respond to complex and challenging situations. In essence, these articles all question the extent to which legal concepts need to be developed to address the far sweeping effects of new technology – particularly in uncertain or unpredictable times. The articles also represent a variety of perspectives from a global and multi-jurisdictional perspective, also assisted by the virtual nature of the 2021 conference. The editors wish to thank all contributors for their important and timely contributions to this field.

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Brian Simpson
aFormerly Professor, School of Law, University of New England, Armidale, Australia
✉ brian.h.simpson@gmail.com

Lisa Collingwood
bSenior Lecturer, School of Law, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Kingston University, UK