Cyberspace Is Made Out of People

I agree with Benedikt's assessment that none of the included descriptions of cyberspace accurately defines the idea of cyberspace on their own. A reasonable, yet still incomplete, explanation of what cyberspace is requires a little chunk of each definition Benedikt poses. However, the one that immediately stood out and generally encapsulates my impression of cyberspace is definition three:

> "A common mental geography, built, in turn by consensus and revolution, canon and experiment; a territory swarming with data and lies, with mind stuff and memories of nature, with a million voices and two million eyes in a silent, invisible concert to enquiry, deal-making, dream sharing, and simple beholding."

Some of the other definitions resonated with me due to their mentions about information storage, pervasive connections, and reliance on technology/electricity, but this idea of the internet as a hidden and inescapable "place" full of shared experiences, information, truth, lies, friends, and foes is more important than how cyberspace is organized or what information is in it.

Cyberspace is comprised of many different features currently present in the web and other Internet services. Beyond these technological features, cyberspace, at its core, is made of competing, evolving, and sometimes flawed people and ideas. We could have the most impressive network of technologies connecting us to the greatest collection of information ever, but without a common space for open interaction between individuals and the resultant new ideas, we would simply have an electronic version of a library. A scenario like this gives us a great resource, but it does not reflect the idea of cyberspace as a place where someone can exist, which seems to be an implied part of the definition noted by Benedikt. Rather than being a place to store, find, and access information, cyberspace is a place where users can freely engage with that information and with other individuals who are exploring this shared, open, and data-rich environment.

Granted, people can explore information and interact with one another in a library. I do not completely disagree with this, but cyberspace is not simply a digital version of the staid physical library. A restrictive set of parameters defines access, behavior, and other factors in the library environment. This is not something that applies, or should apply, to cyberspace. Cyberspace should be a space where people can explore ideas and share new conclusions. This is not to say that cyberspace should be anarchic, but the flow of information should not be so tightly constrained that users are merely consumers (as is the case in libraries). Cyberspace should encourage a constant, dynamic, bi-directional flow of information between consumers and producers. This largely democratic flow of information develops an ever-changing pool of people, information, and ideas created by those who have access to and use cyberspace.

Without a venue for people to share their own content on the fly and make it available, somewhere people can yell at each other about competing ideas, or simply a place to carry on a simple conversation, cyberspace would be just another quiet sterile place that we could go to tackle some sort of individualized intellectual problem. This is fine and I think a system like this has a place within

cyberspace, but warehousing and making existing information available is a small part of cyberspace; the individual users are what define and shape cyberspace.