



Local high school students give a talk on net neutrality at the Rockland Sail, Power, and Steam Museum.

By Hayden Crowell | May 26, 2015

ROCKLAND — On Friday, May 22, the Rockland Sail, Power, and Steam Museum hosted a discussion of net neutrality by students from Lincoln Academy, Medomak Valley High School, and Oceanside High School.

About 50 members of the community gathered to learn from the 15 high schoolers in what museum founder Jim Sharp declared “south Rockland’s finest maritime museum, no question about it.”

The presentations were in the form of Pecha Kucha, a style of slideshow where speakers explain a topic with 20 slides and only speak 20 seconds per slide. The Informed Young

Leaders Series chose this format to encourage students to explain their ideas with simplicity and focus.

“All data is created equal,” said Lincoln Academy student David Kim, speaking on Net Neutrality and Monopolization. “It is essential to maintain net neutrality to prevent Internet service providers from acting as monopolies.”

Net neutrality is the principle of maintaining equality among all Internet sources, meaning that watching a TV show, reading the news, or chatting online should all receive equal bandwidth. The companies that provide internet access want to be able to restrict users’ speed based on what site they are using, in order to take more money from the content provider, as well as the customer.

“(FCC Chairman) Wheeler’s latest proposal reportedly allowed for a fast lane, which would disadvantage creators, innovators and entrepreneurs who rely on a level playing field,” said Anton Kalmysh,

The way they would do this is by downgrading the Internet experience of those who do not pay a premium. Some websites could run slower than their more well-funded counterparts, some customers could be put in an Internet slow-lane, while some information could be removed by companies that oppose it.

“Without net neutrality, countries could censor what their people can access, said April Setaro, speaking for Oceanside High School on Net Neutrality and Censorship. Her partner, Andrew Brann, continued: “Internet censorship is not only something you would see countries do, but you could see companies doing it as well.”

The program began with introductory remarks by Chris Rector, the former state senator, who now works for Angus King. He provided context for understanding net neutrality as it impacts Mainers, and highlighted key points of the political debate over neutrality. Husson University professor Laura Gurney was guest presenter, providing a short presentation to allow the audience a brief lesson on the issue.

After introducing the audience to the topic, the students took the stage to delve into the specific implications of net neutrality. Student groups spoke on the international scope of American Internet laws, others on how neutrality impacts online gaming, with one group taking the perspective of a company and viewing the issue from a capitalist standpoint. The impact of net neutrality on the Internet will be enormous, said Rector. “To say the Internet changed everything would risk being an understatement. The impacts are enormous and continue to challenge our imagination.”

Courier Publications was a media sponsor for the event.