Q&A: Miscellanea

Well, it does say “Ask me anything”!

Not all questions will find there way to having a post of their own. Some, which I think are frivolous or significantly irrelevant or obviously spam etc. will be ignored. Others will be lumped together in occasional “Miscellanea” posts like this one.

1) Anonymous asks: Can you enlighten me as to the idea behind these “Daily” on-line publications such as this one (http://paper.li/ozdj/gadgetsandgeekery) I have three or so on my subscriptions.

It seems to me that these are the internet equivalent of your Women’s Weekly or other specialist magazine. Or perhaps the internet equivalent of Infomercials and Direct TV Shopping. I don’t rate them as particularly valueable.

[Update: Having been prompted by a friend I have since taken a closer look at the top level http://paper.li site and the machinery behind the site makes use of social networking in a way that it is actually a lot more of a web-of-trust site (below) than the commercial-collation analogy (above). I review it here.]

The philosophy behind keeping the internet useful is not about the amount of information that’s out there but the trustworthiness of the information that’s out there. Sites like this (and many blogs) do little more than collate and arrange information from other places. If the do this well and link to information that is useful and reliable then they are a good addition to your web of trust.

Having had a look at the link you reference, I can’t say it’s something that would appeal to me particularly.

2) Anonymous asks: I am wondering why I can access a portable Wi-Fi hotspot in some places? In particular for a great many miles out from Launceston/Deloraine where there are no houses/buildings in sight.

Three possibilities:

1) Are there phones and other portable devices in sight? Particularly on public transport someone may have set their phone up as a wifi hotspot so as to share their 3G connection with their laptop or their friends.

2) Many phones will detect an open network when passing a motel or coffee shop etc. and will then display the notification for some time, long after you have passed by.

3) There are suggestions that topographical anomalies in that area can induce an interference pattern so that access points located in the near-equilateral triangle referencing Launceston, Elizabeth Town, and Poatina can experience near random and sudden increases in amplification.