All's WELL That Ends: The Origins and Future of Online Community

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This presentation is focused on the connections between online community and commerce/economics, particularly the rhetoric of community as it has been taken up by those in e-commerce endeavors. It makes the case that the most influential symbol for online community, the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link) should be examined in light of sociocultural trends apart from Internet-related ones, most importantly those that began to shape the social mores of the Baby Boom generation in the late 1960s. Of particular importance is the borrowing of language and ideas from Sixties literature and song in subsequent structuring of community discourse. Examining the rhetoric of online community in this context will add a missing link to ongoing debates about the construction of online community. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of the consequences of telepresence and immersive technologies for online community.

For more information see: http://info.comm.uic.edu/jones