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Internet Science and Open Access: First Day of a Honeymoon

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Introduction

The last dozen years have seen the birth of two developments that became possible with the advent of the Internet: Internet Science and Open Access publishing. This journal seeks to combine both for the first time.

Internet Science is a research field that combines two interests that profit from each other. On the one hand it analyzes the experience and behavior of individuals and groups on the Internet. On the other hand it focuses on the possibilities of the Internet as a setting or means for research (Reips & Bosnjak, 2001). Unlike many other sciences, the root disciplines for Internet Science (see below) have been affected by the Internet on a full range of scientific activities. Behavioral and social scientists have not only seen a change in their *communication*, *search*, and *publication* options, but also in *content* and *methodology* of their work. The number of scientific studies conducted via the Internet has dramatically risen from a handful to several thousand within just ten years (Reips & Lengler, 2005), and Internet-related topics are hot. However, there is a lack of outlets in Internet Science on the traditional journal market.

Thus, the International Journal of Internet Science publishes empirical findings, methodology, and theory of social and behavioral science concerning the Internet and its implications for individuals, social groups, organizations, and society. It provides an outlet for articles on the Internet both as a medium of research and an increasingly important entity in daily human live.

Science is moving fast towards adoption of Open Access publishing and institutional or individual self-archiving that has long been advocated by Stevan Harnad (e.g. Harnad, 1995, 2001). In his analysis of "Zeno's paradoxon" (Harnad, 2001) he writes:

> "Researchers, librarians, publishers and university administrators have so far been held back from self-archiving by certain prima facie worries, all of which are easily shown to be groundless. These worries are rather like "Zeno's Paradox": "I cannot walk across this room, because before I can walk across it, I must first walk half- way across it, and that takes time; but before I can walk half-way across it, I must walk half-half-way across it, and that too takes time; and so on; so how can I ever even get started?" This condition might better be called "Zeno's Paralysis."

It seems time to state the end of Zeno's paralysis in scientific publishing. From a few pioneering Open Access journals like Harnad's *Psycholoquy* their number has now grown to more than 2200 (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2006). Self-archiving of peer-reviewed publications is en vogue: 95% of authors will comply with institutional self-archiving mandates, as reported in an international author survey (Swan, 2005) and 93% of journals already officially endorse author self-archiving, according to a registry of over 9000 journal policies (University of Nottingham, 2006). Papers that are available online do get cited more often (Lawrence, 2001), probably because they are simply more accessible (Hitchcock, Brody, Gutteridge, Carr, & Harnad, 2003). While it may be doubtful to expect that all fields of research converge to similar publication practices (Kling & McKim

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1999, 2000) in the field of Internet Science the open access approach offers a large potential. Certainly, we hope that researchers in Internet Science will realize the International Journal of Internet Science's potential to increase the visibility of their work.

Internet Science

Internet Science is highly interdisciplinary. With the inception of the WWW, the medium has fascinated mostly young researchers across many different disciplines. For many it seemed obvious to make its fascinating possibilities a part of their job. In doing so, they influenced colleagues within their home disciplines to consider using the Internet's opportunities in their daily scientific work. More importantly, however, due to the medium's nature they quickly gained contact to the small number of researchers in other disciplines who were driven by the same motivation: to put the Internet to use in research.

Consequently, Internet researchers are rooted in basic disciplines like the behavioral sciences, communication sciences, economics, media science, the social sciences, survey research and applied disciplines like computer science, market research, opinion research and the private industry. What are the goals researchers have in conducting Internet Science? These may be theory testing, researching behavior in online communities, or validating pre-Internet results with the powerful new methods offered by Internet Science (Matzat 2004a, 2004b; Reips, 2002).

Since 1997 many of these researchers met at the General Online Research conferences that were organized by the German Society for Online Research (DGOF, http://www.dgof.de/). These conferences, later complimented by the conferences organized by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR, http://aoir.org/), were considered the major meeting opportunities for those interested in research in and about the Internet. Some discipline-based conferences also included large numbers of presentations on topics that are considered Internet Science, for example the conferences by the Society for Computers in Psychology (SciP, http://www.scip.ws). SciP conferences included Internet Science papers as early as 1994. Moreover, there have been meetings of the national academic associations within the different disciplines of the social and behavioral sciences that included special sessions on topics in the field of Internet Science.

The new interdisciplinary and integrative research field evolves quickly, with its own terms and a wide spectrum of methods. Methods used in the home disciplines are re-created and implemented in a way that adapts to the methodological and technological challenges of the Internet. The dialogue about the network technology that is necessarily part of the basic knowledge in all of Internet Science *en passant* increases the researchers' knowledge about the methods used in other disciplines. Internet scientists are weaving a common methodological ground. Consequently, Internet Science does not suffer from or contribute to what has been termed "balcanization of science" as a consequence of Internet use (Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 1996). In Internet Science, we observe an opposite, integrative process. This journal will hopefully serve as a central place for the community of Internet Scientists that further supports this process.

Acknowledgements

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