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Web 2.0, Internet 2.1?

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Introduction

Welcome to issue 2.0 of the International Journal of Internet Science. The "2" is meant to mark a distinct event, even though articles in the International Journal of Internet Science are continuously uploaded to our "in press" section, as soon as they have been reviewed, editorially lettered, revised, copy edited, and cleared for publication. The continuous flow of the publication process and its matching companion, seamless technologies for Internet-based Open Access publishing, seem to render any distinct "editions" unnecessary. However, now, as the technologies and procedures are in place, we realize: there are no Internet-based Open Access journals without distinct editions (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2007).

The human mind appreciates distinction, categories, points of reference. This is why you are reading issue 2 of the International Journal of Internet Science (another reason is – of course – the deeply rooted need for editors to utter what they consider wise comments), and it likely is the proximate reason for the recent surge in talk about the so-called "Web 2.0". In our opinion the Internet is *not* seeing a paradigm shift that would justify the use of the 1.0 to 2.0 step naming suggestion. (Software developers use figures like these to suggest the significance of improvements in version history of their applications: a 0.0.1 increment is a minuscule improvement, a 0.1 increment is a medium step, and a 1.0 increment is a major jump.) Rather than a revolutionary shift we see continuous progress, with fruitful ideas appearing from time to time that are then copied, varied, and built upon. Some examples of important ideas on the Web were *forms*, *catalogues*, *search engines*, and *tags*. There is one stream of development on the Internet, with great ideas rocking the waters here and there and then.

Alas, "2.0" likely is an overblown marketing attempt. Surely, "Web 1.7" wouldn't catch on as much. The term "Web 2.0" is intricately intertwined with (some say: reduces to) another one: "social software". Recently, the term social software is often used in a narrow sense. "Broadly conceived, there are many older media such as mailing lists and Usenet fora that qualify as 'social'. Most users of this term, however, restrict its meaning to more recent software genres such as blogs and wikis." (Wikipedia, 2007). But the many other inventions that had significant impact on the Internet and its social use shall not be ignored, e.g. Gopher, Dejanews, The Well, irc, Amazon, elbot, ICQ, Javascript, Java, MUD, hoaxes, frames, CSS, open source, listserv, Yahoo!, VRML, pano, plugin, Netscape, PGP, top level domain expansion, Skype, PDF, spiders, open access, wireless, Wikipedia, paperball, meta search, DHTML, https, SPAM, PHP, Webcams… definitely not a 1.0/2.0-able development!

The present issue

The current issue features five original research contributions in the field of Internet science, and one book review. The specific areas covered by the articles are gender and the Internet, virtual teams, the Internet and political participation, Web surveys, and Web-mail mixed-mode surveys. Mark Griffiths reviews the *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*, edited by Joinson, McKenna, Postmes, and Reips (2007).

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Ursula Szillis and Dagmar Stahlberg report two content analyses on *The Face-ism Effect in the Internet: Differences in Facial Prominence of Women and Men.* Their studies involving pictures of university professors and all members of the German parliament convincingly show that even in the very modern medium World Wide Web men are depicted with more focus on the face than women. Furthermore, they find an age effect in females, but not in males. Contrary to earlier accounts, Szillis and Stahlberg's research design and analysis rule out that the face-ism effect can be explained by status.

In their contribution *Social Indispensability in Spite of Temporal and Spatial Separation: Motivation Gains in a Sequential Task during Anonymous Cooperation on the Internet* Marion Wittchen, Daniel Schlereth, and Guido Hertel provide evidence from a controlled experiment featuring a simulated Internet travel agency on one of the great miracles of social interaction on the Internet. Is it true that difficult forms of cooperation work even under the typically highly anonymous conditions on the Internet?

In *Being Early on the Curve: Online Practices and Expressive Political Participation* Eulàlia Puig-i-Abril and Hernando Rojas use survey data on Internet users in Bogotá (Columbia) to examine the relationship between online information seeking and online forms of social interaction on the one hand and political engagement on the other hand. They present some evidence for the hypothesis that certain forms of Internet use facilitate political engagement and place their findings in the context of a society in a political crisis.

Sabina B. Gesell, Maxwell Drain, Paul A. Clark, and Michael P. Sullivan compare the use of almost identical Web and mail questionnaires for the purpose of conducting an employee satisfaction survey. In *Test of a Web and Paper Employee Satisfaction Survey: Comparison of Respondents and Non-Respondents* they analyse the respondents' answers across the two modes of data collection that they were randomly assigned to. The authors supplement the survey data with demographic data about respondents and non-respondents that was provided by the employer. Among other results, they find the respondents to prefer the mode they were assigned to.

Tse-Hua Shih and Xitao Fan present *Response Rates and Mode Preferences in Web-Mail Mixed-Mode Surveys: A Meta-Analysis*. In general, they find the mail survey mode to be preferred over the Web survey mode, but they also report considerable variation in mode preference across the analyzed studies. Six particular study features were shown to contribute to the variation of mode preference across the studies.

The Internet continues to never look the same. Despite of attempts to suggest sudden dramatic change by inventing labels like "2.0", we merely see the same meta-process happening again. New ideas and technologies capture many Internet users' attention and subsequently a share of their Internet time. The current popular trend, triggered by recent technological developments that support simple performance of complex editing tasks, sorting, and linking in an attractive, easy-to-use environment, is an increase in Internet use for purposes of group communication. The current issue reflects these recent changes while at the same time it provides room for longer-lasting academic controversies in the field that should not be neglected. The International Journal of Internet Science will continue to be an outlet for methodological and social research on the Internet.

References

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