

The Amateur Computerist

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Netizens: Then & Now

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Table of Contents

Introduction.	page 1
J. C. R. Lickliger to Michael Hauben.	page 2
Netizenship Today: An Interview.	page 3
Jr. GII Web Chat 1995.	page 12
What It Means to be a Netizen.	page 17
Poem about poetry Forums.	page 19
The E-DRUM: An Ode.	page 20
Letter from the Poet.	page 23
In Memoriam: Akos Herman.	page 23
Review of Netizens.	page 27
Letter to the Editor.	page 31
Netizens Then and Now.	page 32
15 Years of the <i>Amateur Computerist</i>	page 40
Communication Not Annihilation.	page 45

Introduction

This year, 2003, is the 10th anniversary of Michael Hauben's posting of his research paper "The Net and the Netizen." Also, on May 1, 2003 Michael would have been 30 years old.

With the continued growth and spread of the Internet and of the concept of the Netizen, it seems appropriate to look back and to reflect on the impact that not only the Internet has had, but also, and perhaps as importantly, that the emergence and consciousness of the Netizen has had on our society.

This issue of the *Amateur Computerist* is a beginning of that project.

In exploring online, it soon becomes evident that the concept of the Netizen has inspired many to actively work to make the online world a better place. There's been at least one art exhibit, an exhibit in Rome, inspired by Netizens, and many other developments.

The literature of the art exhibit explains how the word was chosen to support contributions to the Net. Also an act was introduced into the U.S. Congress, called the "Netizens Protection Act" to deal with online spamming.

There are many other uses, but another that is notable is an article about those in China or who can post on Chinese online sites, who are taking up the challenge of netizenship.

Michael would welcome these efforts just as, in 1992-1993 he welcomed those who wrote him describing their efforts to contribute to the growth and spread of the Internet as a public communications medium. In honor of Michael's life and work toward the development of the Internet, and of the better world that the Internet can make possible, we have put together this issue of the *Amateur Computerist*. We know that Michael would be honored that others continue his efforts.

The netizens and the continuing development and application of the concept of the netizen that we document in these pages, is indeed something to celebrate.

Thank you dear Michael and thanks to all those who have taken up the torch to carry it on.

Netizens: J. C. R. Licklider to Michael Hauben

by William Stewart
billstew@livinginternet.com

[Editor's Note: The following entry, "Netizens," can be found on the informative website <http://www.livinginternet.com> put up by William Stewart.]

Netizens: In April, 1968, Licklider and Robert Taylor published a ground-breaking paper *The Computer as a Communication Device* in

Science and Technology, portraying the forthcoming universal network as more than a service to provide transmission of data, but also as a tool whose value came from the generation of new information through interaction with its users. In other words, the old golden rule applied to an as yet unbuilt network world, where each netizen contributes more to the virtual community than they receive, producing something more powerful and useful than anyone could create by themselves.

Michael Hauben, a widely read Internet pioneer, encountered this spirit still going strong in his studies of online Internet communities in the 1990's, leading to his coinage of the term "net citizen" or "netizen." Newcomers to the Internet usually experience the same benefit of participating in a larger virtual world, and adopt the spirit of the netizen as it is handed down the generations. It cannot be a coincidence that so many Internet technologies are built specifically to leverage the power of community information sharing, such as the Usenet, IRC, MUDs, and mailing lists. The concept of the netizen is also the foundation for the motivation of netiquette.

[\[http://www.livinginternet.com/?i/ji_licklider.htm\]](http://www.livinginternet.com/?i/ji_licklider.htm)

Netizenship Today: An Interview Questions

by Daniela A Baszkiewicz-Scott
dab1@columbia.edu

Responses

by Ronda Hauben
ronda@ais.org

Question #1: Five years ago, you and Michael published *Netizens*, a study of the history and prospects of communication on the Internet, specifically through the most common and popular medium of Usenet. The book added a new coinage to the English language and implied a particular vision of where the net could carry us. What was that vision then, and has your sense of it changed at all over the past decade, and if so, how?

Answer #1: While Netizens was indeed published in a hard copy version in 1997, it was first put on line almost 10 years ago, in 1994. In 1992/1993, Michael did his research and posted the summary in his article “The Net and the Netizen.” So actually Michael’s work discovering net.citizens and then formulating the concept of netizen, is 10 years ago this year.

What Michael’s research taught him, was that there were people online who functioned as citizens of the Internet and Usenet. These were people who participated in making the Internet something valuable to people around the world. Among those who recognized the importance of the Internet as a new communication medium, there was the special concern to make low cost or free access available to all people who wanted to be online. These were some of the characteristics that Michael recognized of users who were acting as “netizens,” or as citizens of a broader entity than a national geographic entity. Michael’s vision of the potential of the Internet, and the vision of a number of the users who wrote him, was of an online medium that would make it possible for people to be able to participate in the decisions that affected their lives. Michael wrote about this in his article “What the Net means to me” (See ACN Vol. 11 No. 1. <http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/text/acn11-1.articles/acn11-1.a13.txt>)

What has happened in these 10 years?

There are others who are “netizens” in the finest tradition. They are continuing to uphold this vision and to help it to become a reality.

The Internet is going through difficult times in terms of its promise as a participatory global communication system available to all who want access. The conception of the netizen, however, is very much alive and is helpful in supporting those who continue to work toward this goal. Searching online in a search engine under netizens turns up almost 100,000 entries. Michael noted that the netizen was someone who acted as a citizen of the Internet. He also observed that there was another usage that developed after he popularized the term. This second usage refers to any net user as a netizen. There are dictionaries that recognize this distinction, for example, the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It defines a netizen as a participant in the online community. Other sources like the *Glossary of Internet Terms* describes a netizen as: “Derived from the

term citizen, referring to a citizen of the Internet, or someone who uses networked resources. The term connotes civic responsibility and participation.” (<http://www.matisse.net/files/glossary.html#N>)

Still others like the Polish researcher Lesek Jesien examine the essence of the citizen as the ability to participate in the processes of governance. The netizen provides Jesien a model to be investigated. (See for example “The 1996 IGC: European Citizenship Reconsidered.” “Instituets fur den Donauroaum und Mitteleuropa,” March 1997, p. 2.)

Michael spoke about the importance of everyone being able to be online, as part of the vision of the netizen. Also, he noted the need for people to have the time in their lives to be able to participate in the affairs of the Internet’s development. How this can happen, only the future will tell. A possible model exists in the U.S. This is the process set up for citizens to have time in their lives to serve on juries. When citizens are called for jury duty, they are paid by their employer or given some reimbursement by government for the day. This is a model to consider when looking at what will be needed for netizens to be able to participate actively in the Internet’s development.

In these past 10 years, the concept of netizen has been embraced by many people around the world. In our book *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* Michael wrote several chapters looking at various developments. One chapter is chapter 13, about the press, another is chapter 14 about the U.S. government policy advisory online conference held in 1994. In his article on the development of the press, Michael noted that the netizen as a citizen reporter will greatly enrich the news that is available to the public. (See “The Effect of the Net on the Professional News Media: The Usenet News Collective and Man-Computer News Symbiosis”)

While Michael documents instances of this in his chapter on the press, there continue to be many other instances. More recently, for example, on February 8, 2003, the *New York Times* News of the Week in Review section printed a transcript of an online discussion of people monitoring the reentry of the Columbia shuttle back into the earth’s atmosphere. They document their observations of its breakup as it entered the earth’s atmosphere.

What progress has these 10 years brought for the Internet as a

participatory communication medium? Many people around the world try to utilize the Internet to influence their governments on a wide range of issues from local housing concerns to broader efforts to prevent or stop war. The concept and vision of the netizen is developing broadly and widely, though it is not always visible. There are, however, rare times, like the February 15, 2003 anti-war demonstrations around the world, which were possible because they could be coordinated and supported by citizens utilizing the Internet. Citizens could work together to communicate with each other and their government to oppose a war being waged against the people of Iraq.

The vision that Michael documented was of the Internet as a platform for democracy, or as a laboratory for democracy. The Internet provides the medium needed, and the netizens are the researchers who explore how this medium can be helpful. I was invited to a seminar in Finland in December 1999. This seminar was part of a European Union sponsored conference exploring the ability of citizens to influence the decisions made by their governments. There was general dismay at the conference about the inability of most citizens to have an impact on government decisions. The seminar I participated in explored whether the Internet could make such participation possible. A journalism researcher from Finland told of the frustrations of Finnish citizens in trying to get their local government representatives to listen to their views. She proposed that it was important for citizens to document their efforts to influence their representatives before they could expect to succeed. Her research was part of a process of exploring the barriers for citizens to achieve this goal. To have such research ongoing and presented at a conference was an important advance. Also a government official at the seminar responded that after representatives are elected they feel it is appropriate to act according to their own judgement. They are not required to listen to their constituents.

The EU Conference was held on December 2, 1999, just days after the protests in Seattle (in November 1999) in opposition to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Some of those attending the European Union (EU) conference in Finland had come from Seattle. They were excited by the breathe and diversity of those protesting in Seattle.

Michael's research, done over 10 years ago this year, has set a basis

for continuing research on the impact of the Internet, not only on its own development, but also on the development of the larger society.

It will be good to see this research continued and enriched.

Question #2: Certainly, one of the things that has changed has been the makeup of the populace of the Internet. Alongside the old elites and normal, peaceful people, a vaster public of less clear ideals and commitments, even including a significant number of hooligans and sociopaths, has appeared. With such a public, can one still dream of a magical civil society for which the net will be the “carrier” of democracy?

Answer #2: This is an interesting question as it assumes that all those who participated in the early development of the Internet were “elites.” This is not accurate. From the early development of the Internet and Usenet there were people who explored how to support collaborative activities and communication versus those who wanted the Internet and Usenet to serve their narrower purposes. Also, contrary to all the myths of the Internet developing apart from government and government regulation, the Internet was nourished by the early forms of government regulation that functioned to protect it. The Internet was born as a government project under the leadership of the Information Processing Techniques Office (IPTO), an office within government. Through much of its 30 year development, there was an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) that specified that the use of the system should be one with public purposes and forbid self serving purposes. Similarly, Usenet had a mechanism for system administrators to hold users responsible for following certain standards of behavior. Those users who violated these standards were limited or deprived of access to Usenet.

The current period is not the first time that there are users who abuse the Internet and other users. Governments like that of the U.S., however, have ceased to provide citizens and netizens with protection from those who are abusive.

There are counter efforts ongoing as well, however. How this will develop, time will show. But there is much to learn from the early development of the Internet and the role played by government and

online administrators to encourage constructive activity by users.

Question #3: There would seem to be other potential challenges to direct democracy and human rights today, but there is one of particular relevance to the net and to Europe, which has been a subject of particular interest to you in your recent study of the internet, namely, that of language barriers. These barriers appear capable of dividing united and still uniting Europe into a society of e-aristocrats and e-outcasts, since, through no fault of their own, some peoples were long cut off from the language which is now emerging as the universal e-language: English. Can an individual learning English as a new language, or for whom English is a “distant second” language have the opportunity of truly free expression, at the same time as the European Union becomes a single society with a common bureaucracy, officialdom, and system of government which will need to be controlled by its citizens?

Answer #3: This question has two parts.

The first refers to the development of English as a standard language online. There are, indeed, many people around the world who use the Internet, but who don't speak or write English. English is clearly not a common language at present, though it is used sometimes to try to make communication possible among those with different languages.

A common language allows people from different countries to communicate. However, this is a burden on those who don't know this language.

Rather than a common language, there are translation programs online. One can put text into these programs and learn some of what is being said in different languages. While these programs are still primitive they are being used by people to communicate with others who speak different languages. Also there are certain words that have developed as part of the Internet's development, like the word netizen, which are being adopted as a common vocabulary in countries around the world.

These are merely beginning steps toward trying to make communication possible among people who have different native languages. On

Usenet and the Internet, there are posts, mailing lists, web sites, and Usenet newsgroups in many languages. This makes it possible for people to participate in the languages that are their own first languages, the languages they are most comfortable in.

The Internet is not only helping to spread the means for people to communicate with those who speak other languages, but it is also beginning to create some common terms used online. Most importantly, however, it is spreading the desire for and the possibility of communication among people who speak many different languages.

The problem of making communication possible among people who speak different languages is a very real problem. It will take the efforts of many people to solve it. The Internet and netizens are contributing to the effort to explore and solve this challenge.

The second part of the question is about how citizens will be able to control governing institutions like the European Union. This is a broader question which I will respond to as part of the promise of e-democracy which you ask about in question 5.

Question #4: Another significant brake on e-democracy would appear to be the uneven system treatment of freedom of expression in different countries. In the United States and, more recently, Great Britain, a set of civil liberties are in force, in which a particular emphasis is placed on freedom of speech. However, in many countries of Western Europe and Central Europe (now seeking membership in a united Europe) a person can go to jail for opinions about a politician expressed on the net, since harming the “good name” of the politician is punished by the criminal code. In Poland, for example, “slandering” a politician is addressed not by the civil courts, but by the prosecutor paid by the taxpayers. In this way, free exercise electronic media can be treated as an instrument of crime. What are your thoughts about this problem?

Answer #4: Will the internet and netizens be able to help netizens in Poland fight these restrictions? This is a question to be explored. This is needed for the further development of the Internet in general, and in Poland, in particular.

Both the origins of the Internet and its continued development

require the ability to freely discuss diverse views via a grassroots connection of people. Michael documented this in chapter 2, and 7 of *Netizens*. The U.S. government was trying to outlaw the freedom to express one's views on the Internet when the U.S. Congress passed the Communications Decency Act, (CDA) in 1995-1996. There was much protest online and offline against the law. This pressure was helpful in setting a basis for the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court when they voted that the CDA was unconstitutional in the Summer of 1996.

Those online, whether in the countries of East and Central Europe, or in the countries around the world, value the Internet and the ability to explore diverse viewpoints online.

It is a serious problem that in Poland a person can be tried for their criticism of a politician. I would hope a way could be found to have an online campaign against such laws as they not only harm people in the present, but they will make it more difficult in the future to develop both the technology and the social environment for the technology and the people to flourish.

Perhaps the ability to publicize such problems via the Internet will make it possible to change such laws, like the experience of the online community in overturning the CDA.

Question #5: Do you expect the United States, as a country which at least has the right of the citizen to free expression included in its constitution, to move more quickly toward e-democracy than other parts of the world as a result of technological progress, or do you see barriers blocking a movement toward e-democracy here as well? To put it differently, what conditions must be realized for society to move toward the model of e-democracy that has been sketched out at various international gatherings recently devoted to this subject?

Answer #5: There are a variety of e-democracy models, from putting government administrative functions and services on the Internet to cheapen the cost of government, to encouraging citizens to discuss problems from a broad diversity of viewpoints in order to find the means to solve them. Examples of the latter are included in the chapters in *Netizens* on the online processes to involve citizens in policy discus-

sions. (See chapters 11 and 14)

The 1999 European Union conference in Finland raised the question of how citizens could have more say in the decisions of their governments. The researchers and other participants in one seminar descried how citizens in many countries around the world faced this problem. The U.S. is no exception. Despite the constitutional right to protest government activity in the U.S., the city and federal government refused to allow a march in New York City on February 15, 2003 to protest war against Iraq. Also the police prevented massive numbers of people trying to attend the legally sanctioned rally from being able to get to the rally.

What conditions are needed to make e-democracy a reality? People need low cost or free access to the Internet. They need enough leisure time or paid work time to participate in forums on public questions. For example, in the U.S. citizens are paid by their employers to participate in jury activity. A similar process is needed for citizens to have the time and income to be able to participate more broadly in public affairs.

Another condition is the need to have this participation affect the decisions made by government officials. If there is no sign that citizens' efforts have any effect, then it appears fruitless to make the effort.

In a paper "The 1996 IGC: European Citizenship Reconsidered" published in March 1997, Lesiek Jesien explored the views of a number of political theorists to determine what is essential for citizenship. His conclusion is that the ability of citizens to participate is critical. Comparing the development of netizenship on the Internet and citizenship, Jesien writes (Jesien, 15): "Almost in front of us, and almost unnoticed the new kind of citizenship is evolving.... But using the Internet today is a sign of belonging to the elite, to those who exchange ideas, who participate in something important, in a common cause. There is no question of governance there, nor the question of representation, but there is a full, ultimate and direct participation.... At the time the European Union struggles to shape the European citizenship with much effort and little success, the other citizenship – Netizenship – emerges. The IGC negotiators and European political leaders should perhaps look at this phenomenon with sympathy and attention."

The ability of netizens to participate in the activities of the Internet is a fruitful model for the future of citizenship around the world. The

“netizen” online is the networking citizen who accepts the obligation to contribute to the Internet’s development and to the direction of its future growth. The Internet functions as a laboratory of democracy. It has done this best, however, when there have been prohibitions against the abuse of online processes, like the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) that helped to support constructive activity online from 1985-1995. There is a continuing need to learn how to support and protect the online user and the netizen, to make it possible to realize the potential for e-democracy that the Internet provides.

Junior GII Discusses Netizens Web-Chat With Michael Hauben

[Editor’s Note: In 1995, teenagers from around the world were invited to participate in a debate and discussion regarding the potential of the GII (Global Information Infrastructure). Michael was asked to attend an online session. Below is the log from that web-chat.]

January 25, 1996

Michael Hauben: Ohaiyo Gozaimasu. :-) Sorry for the delay.

Junko: Hi, Michael! Nice to see you again!

Darren: Hi Michael! I’m Darren from Hawaii.

Michael: Hi Junko, how are you? Hello everyone else. Nice to meet you.

Michael: Hello Darren, I am writing you from New York City.

Richard: I’m here. Sorry I’m late.

Sheila: Hi, Michael. My name’s Sheila.

Michael: Hello Sheila and Rich! Nice you could be here today.

Michael: It is interesting to see people are connecting from a wide variety of places. I am at home on a computer newly connected via SLIP to my University.

Michael: Someone asked before I connected what a Netizen is. That is a good question.

Darren: Okay, we are connected from an Elem. school LAN with frame relay access.

Michael: wow – I prefer IRC to this. Anyways, I was saying that I was doing research into how people used the Net, Internet, Usenet, etc.

Richard: Also, a question from the communications group: What do you think about “Internet addiction?”

Michael: And people felt they were part of a global cooperative community. Net.citizen was used in Usenet speak and this really represented what people were telling me – they were really net citizen – which Netizen captures.

Sheila: So what did you find in your research, Michael?

Darren: A question from the Communications group – Do you think that a universal language is necessary for such netizenship?

Michael: To be a ‘Netizen’ is different from being a ‘citizen.’ This is because to be on the Net is to be part of a global community. To be a citizen restricts someone to a more local or geographic orientation.

Michael: About the Q of the need for a “universal” language. I do not think that a universal language is necessary.

Darren: So the members of the JR. Summit are netizens? :-)

Michael: This is because the new global community is best made of the particular contributions that each different language and culture can contribute to the whole of the net culture.

Richard: Then what do you think is the solution to the language barrier?

Darren: What do you think about control/censorship of material on the ‘Net’ and about the CompuServe deal in Germany?

Michael: An example is a friend of mine who recently was quoted in a German newspaper because of a Usenet post she made.

Michael: Her post described how she started to try and learn different languages – German, Italian, Japanese, because of the connections to people with other languages on Usenet.

Junko: Did she learn all of those?

Michael: About the Q about if Jr. Summit Participants are Netizens? Please tell me. Netizens are people who make a contribution to the Net and the development of the Net.

Michael: Netizens give to the Net, and receive back through the contributions of others.

Michael: Junko, she has begun to learn parts of the languages. Not

a 100% crash course, but a beginning that she will continue.

Michael: About the language question again – language is a difficult thing, but people on-line try to help each other.

Junko: So to speak, the Net motivated her to start learning different languages, right?

Junko: If you start living in the Net, you notice that a different style of life exists.

Michael: In different newsgroups you will see people posting in languages other than English, and sometimes others translate or the original poster posts a translation.

Darren: I think we are netizens.

Darren: On our lists we try to solve problems of language, control, and access

Michael: I am interested in hearing other people's thoughts about how to deal with the language difficulties too.

Michael: The connection between Netizen and the language question is that Netizen is global and thus there is not the tie to the local language and there is consideration of others in other places.

Richard: Some participants have suggested machine translation. Do you think that will be an option in the near future?

Junko: Are those translation done on voluntary basis?

Michael: How are you trying to solve these problems or what has been talked about so far about Language, control and access?

Darren: My sister found some web sites on electronic translators.

Michael: Junko, yes these messages are translated on a voluntary basis.

Darren: The group was divided – half for universal lang. – half for trans.

Michael: Automation of translation is a good thing to explore. I do not know how good they are now though. If however they are like interactive spell-checkers...

Darren: We were also divided on the issues of control – governmental or commercial/free market.

Michael: and if the person using these automated translation is also a student of the language, then it can be an interactive speller where the user can see about the translation.

Michael: The question of commercial vs government access is important. It is a very live question this moment in the U.S.A. It is one of the topics that I try to cover with a co-author in a book that is online called the Netizens netbook. The URL is <http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/>.

Richard: The European participants seem to favor government regulation.

Michael: The history of the Net is important to examine to understand how “Netizenship” or a cooperative community is possible.

Michael: It is possible to make voluntary contributions to a larger group, if the person involved does not expect something to be given to him or her because that person paid for access.

Rich: How do you instill that sense of “selflessness” that’s required to expand the net?

Michael: Once access becomes “a service” as provided by the market, there is little incentive to create original material or make a contribution. Rather the service model builds expectations of receiving something from others. This is different then a Netizen.

Michael: The Net should be like a utility – akin to postal/telephone/water not a commercial process.

Richard: So it sounds like you favor govt. regulation to a certain extent.

Darren: Our Think Quest project requires that we create new information, not just links

Michael: Rich – that is a good question. The “selflessness” grew out of the fact that technology required cooperation and helping each other to succeed – for people to develop and further computing technologies; like UNIX, timesharing, etc.

Darren: I have seen people share URLs, information, advice on the ‘Net.’

Michael: The public access (in the USA) of the ARPAnet and Internet came with a public obligation of research and sharing in science and other aspects. There was the government partnership with academia.

Richard: Do you think the current trend of net commercialization will decrease or get “worse?”

Richard: And do you see any benefits to the commercialization of

the net?

Michael: It is not that I necessarily favor regulation. It is that it is important to have equal access available and provided by government. The “market” would not make the Internet available in areas where it could not make a profit. Well the Net would lose if all potential contributors were not able to participate. Regulation does not mean censorship, even if it is sometimes described as such. Rather regulation means putting the public interest over the commercial or private interest. The Net is a shared commons, which means it is important to make it available to the many, and not grabable by the few.

Richard: The Rand Organization just completed a study on universal E-mail access. I ordered it through their web at www.rand.org. It’s \$20. There’s a brief overview available for free.

Michael: Sheila, and others – do you have any thoughts about Netizenship or commercialization or government supported access?

Richard: ...and I just figured out the trick to using web chat is to write your message in a text editor and paste it into the web browser instead of trying to play “beat the clock.”

Michael: Commercialization – is the old way trying to take the new way and use it for the old. CompuServe is an example – which is not the Internet or Usenet. It is important to struggle to keep this public channel open for the whole public to use. This would be through non-commercial development.

Richard: I posed the commercialization question to the lists and no one seemed to think it was a bad thing. The education group favors companies sponsoring online educational projects in return for advertising space.

Darren: I think that we will be Netizens

Michael: There have been previous communications channels that had potential to give a voice to the many – which were taken over by commercial interests trying to make money – and to some extent certain governments do or do not allow this. (Examples of TV, radio, etc.)

Darren: And I think the government should provide access.

Michael: Rich – that is what I am doing. :) (text editor)

Richard: Do you think it would be possible in any way for businesses or governments to actually “take over” the Net? (This is an open

question to all you quiet folks too.)

Michael: Advertising will (and is) polluting the online world. Those with money will quickly take over the spaces that those without would not be able to. And those thinking of money are not thinking about a global cooperative community – they are thinking about themselves.

Junko: I'll be really upset if commercial (ization) take(s) over the Net! It should not happen.

Michael: There is a battle over the soul of the Net. However, this medium (as opposed to TV, etc.) allows people to organize on-line and to come to grips that there are others who feel the same way. If you look to Usenet groups, mailing lists, web pages, etc. – you can see people organizing and trying to understand how to join together to struggle for what they feel is right.

Michael: The question is to figure out how to contribute in this battle. I am sorry, but I need to sign off now. However, I hope I was able to contribute to help people to join in these discussions and trying to figure out what role governments, people and companies and other organizations should be playing.

Darren: Maybe our peace game can deal with control of the net instead.

Junko: Thanks a lot, Michael.

Richard: Michael, I really appreciate you showing up today. Thank you for coming.

Junko: You contributed a lot for us today!

Michael: By the way – my E-mail address if anyone is interested in talking more is hauben@columbia.edu.

Darren: Bye Michael! Thank you!

Michael: Thank you. It was interesting to hear some of what the Jr. Summit participants are discussing.

Michael: Bye Bye. :-)

Darren: Bye everyone!

What It Means To Be A Netizen In 2002

by Steve Hoff

Steve_Hoff@allianzlife.com

[Editor's Note: It is an important question to figure out what has happened with our online world – for those of us who were here at least 10 years ago. We thank Steve Hoff for the following submission on this

question. Interestingly, TCP/IP development actually began about 30 years ago, in 1973. So both the Internet and the netizen are still quite young. It has been a hard period of growing.]

Date: Thu, 12 Sep 2002 12:48:49 -0500

To Whom It May Concern,

The early adapters of the technology we call the “net” were, more often than not, the renegades. The geeks, freaks, prophets and pharisees. Those unafraid of new untested waters, as long as it was in the privacy of their own homes. The net was an adventure, all at once vast and scary, yet safe and personal. We harnessed our saddles onto an electron’s back and zoomed across the globe. Each click of the mouse, held possibilities never before dreamed. Suddenly the world was at our doorsteps and we at theirs. We typed and chatted, discussed and cussed. Sometimes we agreed, more often not. We snickered and scoffed at the strangeness we found so far away and reflected upon the strangeness, not so far away. Crackpots, kooks, fanatics and freaks...every last one of them, the nine o’clock news dutifully warned us, repeatedly. We listened, repeatedly, like teenagers to their parents. Usenet was king, Microsoft a rebel and IBM a has been. Spam was packaged meat and I preferred my cookies with milk thank you. Our biggest discussions? Frames or no frames, reply with the whole text or only quote the relevant, pictures or text and the evils of bandwidth waste.

We accelerated our understanding of the world around us and shortened the distances between us. To be a netizen meant to take personal responsibility for your actions and guide the “newbies” when they floundered, just like we had. It meant to share what you had found and to doubt what was shared. Though we had heard of Michelangelo and understood the concept of a firewall, we never really bothered to use one. Everyone knew the only way to get a virus was by trading floppies. “DOOM” came on seven of them you know. “Duke Nuk’em” on fifteen. It took me three weeks to write my auto dialer/uploaded script. My BBS allowed for a five to one upload ratio, but it worked (I think). Much easier to upload when I slept than pay the twenty dollars per ten hours of net time they charged. Thank God I had found a cheap service.

There aren’t any “newbies” left to guide. I sort of miss them. I try

to avoid sites that are across the globe, or rather I try to remain hidden from them. The crackpots, kooks, fanatics and freaks have left the net for the most part. A friend in Idaho told me they all went to Washington. Usenet is still king, but no one talks there anymore. IBM is a rebel and Microsoft...well, they're just evil. Frames or no frames, Flash or HTML, reply to be removed? (even though we know not to reply). I still hate Spam, all kinds and I don't do cookies, any kind. Bandwidth?

In the ten years past the world has grown smaller still, yet strangely more distant. The net is less personal, but more invasive. The wires I plug into my hyper-tweaked machines twice as thick, the connection one-hundred times faster, and the content...well, I seem to have lost it under a pop-up. Amazingly, violent games are still causing us all to degrade into an army of slathering zombies with assault rifles, though I fear our freedom to corrupt ourselves with these games may not last much longer. It took me three weeks to write my firewall script. Much easier to block all traffic than to let in worms and crackers. My firewall is secure (I think), and my system is free of viruses (I think). I could be prosecuted if I unknowingly transmit a vicious worm. Thank God I found Linux.

Through all of our understanding we have gained, we haven't really grown that much. I don't cuss and discuss with exotic people, they are all too busy reading books. The net isn't anonymous anymore, but the nine o'clock news doesn't tell us. I don't think we would listen to them anyway. Our next machines will protect our "digital rights" (my friend in Idaho was right I think), and bring us closer together. Cell blocks are 8 x 10 right?

We have come a great distance in those ten years, some would say not far enough, other's too far.

Why Old Mores Are Not Relevant to Internet Poetry Forums

by Peter Richards
pe-richa@online.no

You think that I got here by backing down?
You think you'll find your voice by saving face?
We have no voices and there is no place

or volume, here the listeners can drown
one input by selecting other sounds.
So by whose standards do we kneel, who says?
A busted maestro in a leaded case;
a jester buckling beneath a laurel crown.

I hate diplomacy. It creeps along
the veins of peace engendering mistrust
and fear of words, a province of the old
world. With pioneering courage, may the bold
young bard's blade not be blooded yet, nor thrust,
but held out, open, to be run upon.

The E-Drum

by Niama Leslie Williams
NiamaNitewriter@aol.com

I really don't want to write this ode. Cause the brotha came to town and didn't like my s***. Mentioned me in his report, the element of his list serv I most look forward to, but misspelled my name and grouped me in with a bunch of other spoken worders who he said were "[not] as bad as many I have heard at open mikes, and at the same time there was no one who really, really knocked me out."

So by all rights I should be in Louisiana with my never been South ass lookin' fo' him. To do some damage. And I admit; it took some emotional doings for me to get back to readin him. Emotional doings. But like that step fellowship I belong to, I never really left.

Cause see, he done done what no other force on this planet has been able to do. Let me talk to you for a moment about the *L. A. Times*. My parents only knew daily and Sunday. Wasn't nothin else happenin in my house. After my daddy left, the habit still continue. We all three readers, my brothers and I, cause every time we looked at our parents there nose was stuck in a newspaper, a book, or a magazine.

There was also the element of escape. I mean, incest, divorce,

physical abuse; that a lot of s*** to deal with on any average day. I dealt by doing what my parents had done; picking up a book. And so words have meant salvation to me. When I started dealing them, gathering them up, tossing them, shelling them out for sometimes money, it was no little thing I was doing. This was tradition, heritage; hell, my mother one of the few people got Bernie Casey's book of poems in her library, and all three of us read it.

Look at the People; I never forgot the title or the cover. I still prefer the cover of a hardback to a computer printout; there's just something so tactile, so permanent, about a book. But this man, this man' list serv has gently seduced me into putting down the newspaper. At a pivotal time. A time when we cannot count on traditional news outlets to give us the real story.

I don't find Yasser Arafat's words on why he will not cease the Palestinian struggle in the *L. A. Times*. I do not find Michael Moore's delightful and terribly sarcastic essay on whiteness there. I did not read the Afghani woman's essay, sharply on the heels of 9/11, in its pages. I read all of the above on my screen. On e-drum. For free. www.topica.com/lists/e-drum. I am put in the midst of a jivin' discussion between Kevin Powell and Charlie Braxton, me, the budding Black Studies scholar, by Kalamu, the humble, quiet, stealthy perpetrator of neo-griot. I understand griot, even neo-griot, as literary terms. What Kalamu does with them via his traveling computer and portable theory on new media mystifies me. I know that he speaks to the young, puts the tools, the power, the idea of expression, the idea of access to the tools of expression, the responsibility of recording expression, in their hands, cooks it into their brains. I think he has cooked mine also. Because I was a woman of the page.

Only now do I look back on my life and understand that if not for the funny papers and the *TV Guide*, I would have no subscription to the newspaper. Those are the only two things that keep my hand in. I have gone from a heritage of daily and Sunday to Sunday only, and saving about four sections of that Sunday only, none of them the front page.

I have seven five-shelf bookshelves in my house, each packed to the gills with books. Books are the first thing anyone who enters my sanctum sanctorum notices. I want to someday have tomes with my own

name on the spine.

But I have relinquished print for something else. I spurn four, five, six and eleven for this strange new creature I do not fully understand. It brings me Mardi Gras and festival in Brazil from the lips of a barely twenty-something. It brings me calls for submissions that Poets and Writers would never think to run. It brings me the pulse beat of life from places I cannot yet afford to visit, connects me to writers and outlets that even if I had a check to write, I could not afford the multiple subscriptions.

All of this for free. This e-drum, this place, is a powerful tool because it has helped me turn my back on a media that has been co-opted, that does not tell the Blackman's truth, or the Latino's or the Asian's. Or the Afghani's for that matter. It gives me something the corporate media, for that is what they have become, no longer seems to understand: balance, balanced reporting. I see, when I check it once a week, 100 to 150 messages at a time, my own perspective reflected back through someone else's pen.

This is no small thing, this turning away from Channel 7, the one station we always looked forward to growing up as children because it came in the clearest. This turning away from my hometown paper. No more will I scan its pages with love, reminiscing about Hipshot Percussion, Gal Friday, Bert's Beanerie. I will hand down to my children printouts, and the occasional clipping of Boondocks, the only strip that now brings a smile when I flip to the funny pages.

We are in an interesting time, a time of a closing of the borders. They have not erected steel and fencing, but they have corralled those suspected of murder and they commit civil injustices against them. We live in perceived freedom. One day, some day soon, they will come for us. We need to sound the drum, the e-drum. It is the only thing that can get into all of our houses, the only thing that can cross all of our screens, one of the few things that is still free.

Close the comic book. Discontinue the *Wall Street Journal*. Turn to your screen; fight to keep it free; beat the tightened skin. The e-drum is all we have left.

Letter from the Poet

Dear Editor,

What a pleasure to receive your e-mail welcoming my work and including the wise and powerful words of Floyd Hoke-Miller! Floyd sounds indeed like someone I would have loved to have met. Thank you for responding so heartily and caringly. I will try to squeeze into an already packed schedule examining some back issues of *The Amateur Computerist*, but if the amount of time it took to respond to your e-mail is any indication, it may be Spring before I actually get to do so!!! :) Be well.

Sincerely,
Niama Williams

Books Have Their Own Fate In Memoriam of Dr. Akos R. Herman

by John Horvath

In late February 2002, Dr. Akos R. Herman, formerly the director of the National Technical Information Centre and Library in Budapest (OMIKK), died from cancer. Like so many needless and premature deaths in this tiny Central European country, his case had been diagnosed as less severe than it actually was.

Yet the importance of Dr. Herman's untimely death was not another shameful statistic of a country that has medical care and life expectancy comparable to the advanced countries of the Third World. Rather, he was yet another example of a legion of unknown pioneers who describe themselves as a citizen of the Internet, or to use the late Michael Hauben's term, a "netizen," that is, a net citizen. Unlike most hailed as pioneers of the "information society," Akos Herman wasn't a celebrity figure like Jon Postel, Tim Berners-Lee, or Richard Stallman. Nor was his contribution of a technical nature. Yet his work was equally

as important.

The OMIKK was a library that served the entire Hungarian community and was traditionally in the forefront of progress. A state owned institution founded in 1883, it was open to people and organizations, including small and medium sized enterprises, both as a special interest institution and as a public library in the fields of science, technology and economy. The OMIKK was one of the biggest of its kind in Hungary, with a holding of one million and a half books, serials and other documents.

During the Cold War years, the OMIKK was the first public – and for a long time the only – institution of its kind in the whole of the Eastern Bloc which had subscriptions to western science and technology databases. It had the biggest collection of CD-ROM databases (more than one hundred) and the most subscriptions to journals – including electronic ones – in Hungary (more than six thousand).

Unfortunately, like all public institutions around the world – especially since the fall of communism and the advent of “freedom and democracy” – the library soon came face to face with a funding crisis. As Dr. Herman himself noted, “one element of the library crisis in the whole world is that in the best cases, budgets are flat while there is the more or less exponentially growing number of publications, the inflation in prices making an ever growing tension. So we had a money shortage for acquisition.”

This crisis permeated all public institutions, affecting even the very core of the emerging “information society” in Hungary. The Hungarian Computer and Automation Research Institute (SZTAKI), which was in control of the information backbone within the country, had to come up with innovative ideas and practices just to survive. It was not an easy task.

Despite this uphill battle, Dr. Herman did his best to keep the OMIKK alive. In doing so, he forged a relationship that attempted to integrate “eastern” and “western” thought on the role of computer mediated communications. In May of 1999, after searching for information on the renown Hungarian mathematician John G. Kemeny, he found the book “Netizens and the Wonderful World of the Net” that had been put on-line in 1994, as well as an article by Ronda Hauben that

mentioned Kemeny but only briefly. He subsequently wrote to her about how not enough attention was properly given to the work of Kemeny. She then forwarded this e-mail to her husband, Jay Hauben, who had written a biography of Kemeny when he had died in 1990. He promptly answered Herman with a copy of the biography. This exchange led to a lasting personal and professional relationship between the Haubens and Herman that helped open the door on research into the development of science and technology during the Cold War era.

Dr. Herman was a pivotal figure of sorts in this area. He studied engineering (the metallurgy of non-ferrous metals) in Moscow during the mid 1950s, when science and technology became a focal point in policy on both sides of the Iron Curtain. When asked why he thought there was such public support for science, he said that people so hated war that they wanted to support whatever gave a chance of helping to prevent one from happening.

Akos Herman also proved to be a wealth of information on numerous Hungarian scientists. In particular he emphasised the work of Kemeny, better known as the co-inventor of the computer language BASIC and of DTSS, a person he felt deserved more attention.

When Ronda and Jay Hauben went to Budapest and met Akos Herman in 1999, she gave him a hard copy edition of her book on Netizens. For many, it's still hard to understand how, even in this day and age, books that deal with science and technology are somewhat of a rarity. During the communist era it was a question of political correctness; in the present era of neo-liberalism, it's a question of price. As Dr. Herman related, "although it [the Netizens book] will be a very useful book for our readers, we will not buy it. I had an exemplar dedicated personally to me. I was afraid that not any other Hungarian library will have this book. I decided one year ago, grudgingly, to give my copy to the library."

Concerning his views on the development of the Internet, Herman agrees with Hauben that the ARPAnet and the so called poor man's ARPAnet were very early phases of the "Internet revolution." However, he credits the work that went on at MIT and Dartmouth with the first time-sharing systems as the true beginning of the Internet, not to mention the work of Baran at the Rand corporation.

As for his views on the concept of netizens, Herman pointed out that there is a long list of names of people who contributed to this concept. Among them are the ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit philosopher who published nearly half a century ago in “The Vision of the Past” (Harper & Row, New York, 1966), where he mentions the “noosphere,” i.e. the man-made sphere on the globe. Then there is the Hungarian biologist Vilmos Cs nyyi and his work “Evolution Systems and Society: A General Theory of Life, Mind, and Culture” (General Evolution Research Group, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1989), which concludes with the autogenesis of a global system based on new technology. And finally there is the late Michael Hauben who first coined the word “netizen,” who made a significant contribution to exploring the technical and social roots and aspects of the Internet. In many ways, the year 2001 marked a troubling time for the concept of netizens. Most notably, the September 11th terrorist attacks in the U.S. led to a severe crackdown in human rights and gave the green light to law enforcement authorities around the world to monitor and even curtail computer mediated communications. This has been a severe blow to the free flow of – and access to – information, which lies at the heart of the netizen concept, one in which it’s believed that the top-down model of information distribution would be transcended, thus making it harder for governments to manipulate public opinion.

Yet even prior to this, two events happened in late June in separate parts of the world which likewise had a devastating effect, each in their own different way. In Budapest, the OMIKK succumbed to its fate. The Secretary of State for Education decided to put an end to the over hundred year history of the library. Against the will of many thousands of users, on June 30th the holdings of the OMIKK were transferred to the Budapest Technical University. In effect, this move has made it more difficult for the general public to gain access to the wealth of information that was at the OMIKK. Meanwhile, in New York City, Michael Hauben died tragically.

“Habent sua fata libelli,” a Latin phrase quoted in an obituary of Michael Hauben, had a double meaning for Herman. “The books have their own fate” refers to how a work can live through the centuries and still, in the end, find its reader. Yet in this instance, it not only refers to

the work, but also to the author.

In the end, yet another meaning was added to this Latin axiom: that of the reader. The book he dedicated to the library was read over by him and initially left at the distant left corner on his writing table. He thought that it would be a good beginning for a new period of his life. Indeed, he shared with his friends a long list of projects he was hoping to do now that he was retired. “Habent sua fata libelli.”

Review of *NETIZENS: On the History and Impact Of Usenet and the Internet*

by Boldur Barbat

[Editor’s Note: The following review of Netizens appeared in *Studies in Informatics and Control Journal* (SIC) December 1998 Volume 7 Number 4 (Bucharest). It is at their website at the URL: http://www.ici.ro/ici/revista/sic98_4/index.html. We found it recently and feel it recognizes the connection between Netizens and cybernetics.]

Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben

IEEE Computer Society Press, Los Alamitos, 1997, XVI p. + 346 p.

ISBN 0-8186-7706-6

The book aims at presenting the development and significance of the participatory global computer network evolving into “an ambitious look at the social aspects of computer networking. It examines the present and the turbulent future, and especially it explores the technical and social roots of the Net.” The readership aimed at, is comprised not only of those who are already Netizens but – maybe notably – of those who strive towards getting this status, within the perspective of passing from the latter condition to the former. So, before moving forward, let us see where such a gratifying title comes from – according to Michael Hauben: “My research demonstrated that there were people active as members of the network, which the words net citizen do not precisely represent. The word citizen suggests a geographic or national definition

of social membership. The word Netizen reflects the non-geographically based social membership. So I contracted net.citizen to Netizen.” Anyhow, the book makes it evident that the word – as well as its denotation and ramifications – are here to stay.

The volume is divided into four Parts; each part comprises between three and six Chapters ordinarily consisting of articles written over a four-year period (1993-1996) and set up to be read individually.

The first Part, *The Present: What Has Been Created and How*, has four Chapters providing an introduction to the net world: the effect it has on peoples lives (now, after the moment when the critical mass of people and interests has been reached), Usenet (its evolution and goal as “poor mans ARPAnet”), the social forces behind its development, and the description of the Usenet (including the conceivable antithetical features of structure anarchy and the system of rules known as “Netiquette”), emphasising the advantages of this new world as well as the possibility of a “more democratic government.”

The second Part, *The Past: Where Has It All Come From*, is the largest one, being composed of six chapters, and starts with the “vision of interactive computing and the future” originated by Licklider and proceeds on describing the foundations of the cybernetic revolution, time sharing, man-computer symbiosis and their implications. Chapter 7 looks “behind the Net,” introducing “the untold story of the ARPAnet and computer science” highlighting the new way of viewing the computer: a communication device rather than (only) an arithmetic one, whereas the next Chapter is a comprehensive narrative of the birth and development of the ARPAnet. The last two Chapters bring into focus the early history and impact of Unix, and the roots of the “co-operative online culture,” respectively. In one of its Appendices are listed two Newsgroups appearing in Usenet in 1982.

The third Part, *And the Future?*, comprises five Chapters. In Chapter 11, the National Telecommunications Information Administration virtual conference on the future of the Net (held in November 1994) is described as a very significant event, attempting to create a prototype for a democratic decision-making process. The next Chapter, with the inciting title “Imminent Death of the Net Predicted!” – a phrase often used in the past, by Usenet pioneers, when problems seemed insur-

mountable – explains the new problems ensued by the envisaged changes in the nature, ownership, and oversight of the Net, defending the principles that place its development into the hands of the public, educational, and scientific sectors of society (i.e. considering the privatisation harmful). Chapter 13 investigates the effect of the Net on the professional news media, under the metaphor of “Will this kill that?”; its conclusion is rather optimistic: the user masses becoming “netizen reporters” will force the acknowledged news media – to avoid being increasingly marginalized – to evolve a new role, challenging the premise that authoritative professional reporters (almost always biased, consciously or not) are the only possible ones. Chapter 14 scrutinises the effect of the Net upon the future of politics, forecasting the “ascendancy of the Commons” by reason of the new technologies presenting “the chance to overcome the obstacles preventing the implementation of direct democracy.” The last Chapter of this part departing from the changes on a world scale, explores the New York City’s online community, showing a snapshot of “nyc.general,” and concluding that, in spite of being problems online, the advantages are “more important and outweigh the disadvantages.”

The fourth Part, *Contributions Toward Developing a Theoretical Framework*, consists of three Chapters. Two of them address characteristic areas: “The Expanding Commonwealth of Learning” and “‘Arte’: An Economic Perspective,” respectively. As regards the first issue, “making a contribution is an integral part of Netizen behavior” and “both the printing revolution and the Net revolution have been a catalyst for increased intellectual activity.” With respect to the second question, after accentuating the role of “Arte” in the production of social wealth, the authors defend Humes observation that “arte” leads to intellectual ferment, and, in turn, this ferment “is the needed support for the development of technology.” The last Chapter merges the consequences of the former ones into a whole, synthesising them in its title – perhaps the bannerol of the entire book: “The Computer as a Democratizer,” one main idea being that the “step toward universally available and affordable access” and “uncensored accessible press” demonstrate that “it is now possible to meet more of Mills requirements for democracy.”

At the end, before the substantial and numerous references, the

Glossary of Acronyms is, particularly for readers outside the American cultural milieu, an invaluable asset.

Maybe, this condensed passing through the content can give you an idea about this book, but it could be inconclusive, because the mesmerizing force is originated by – or, better, in – the multitude of quotations from known, and mostly unknown, “co-authors,” the conventional ones remaining in the background, as unpretentious editors, devoting themselves to the chore of task-building. Consequently, “Netizens” becomes rather an aggregate of articles, than an orchestrated ensemble with its unbroken composition and, in turn, the articles become a kind of syncretic and chaotical, but very enthusiastic and, first of all, very fertile opinion pool. Though, the whole might be seen in the optimistic view of the Net, as well as the cyberspace it embodies, as a “meritocratic” environment; the book suggests us a micro-snapshot of such an ambience. The feeling – intended or not – is that the book has been written by Netizens for themselves, as an entreaty, a summons to all readers – whatever and where ever they are – to join them in the extraordinary world they live in. Thus, the book employs, at its much smaller scale, the “large-scale customization” made workable by the Internet it fights for. By the way, have you seen many books with Foreword, Preface and Introduction? Yes, the book is full of redundancy and heterogeneity – just like the Net, just like life itself (fortunately, some of the redundancies are quite pleasant, covering most crucial historical moments of the marvelous phenomenon they depict). Reading it, you will find a very rich authentication, a host of peoples with a lot of ideas, comments, proposals and – sometimes – displeasure, rising their voices; you will discover rather the atmosphere of a “multimodal chat” than that of a conference with invited papers. So, if you imagined that you could learn from this book about network programming, forget it. Yes, the Internet is in there, but as an actor – in all interpretations of this polysemantic word – not as a computerised tomography. Thus, paradoxically, the book is net-centred because it is human-centred, or, pure and simple, human.

If you read it again – it is in no way a chore – and all seems all right, nothing is amazing or frightening, then you are prepared for full Netizenship (of course, you need a computer, too!). Moreover, from the

wording as well as from some rare photographs, you may scent the flavour of old battles (with legendary heroes like Wiener, Shannon, McCarthy, Licklider, Thompson, Ritchie ...), fought for forwarding not only the Net, but the Computer Science itself. Such a flavor acts in the age of Netizens as a catalyst for the Information Technology. Thus, the book can be seen – and used – as a kind of second-degree catalyst: the written catalyst for the living one....

Letters to the Editor

From: Tetsuro KATO <katote@ff.ij4u.or.jp>

Subject: Re: global netizen college and link to netizens book?

The name of my homepage “Global Netizen College” comes from netizen of course. My Japanese page is a bit famous personal academic site. “Netizen College” (over 400,000 hits). In Japan, we use the word “netizen = network citizen” very popularly, thus I named my site “Netizen College.” I of course know the history of the word and Prof. Kumon’s book.

If you can understand Japanese language, please search the word “Netizen” in Google. You will find 5,410 sites which uses the word Netizen. Of course I am proud of the fact that my site is the number one site of those “netizen” sites in Japan. (You will of course find 82,600 “netizen” sites in English Google.)

Yours,

Prof. Tetsuro KATO

Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo, Japan

From: Jay Machado <jaymachado1@comcast.net>

Subject: please subscribe me to the *Amateur Computerist*.

I was the editor of an e-zine back in the mid 90's called Bits and Bytes Online Edition: The Electronic Newsletter for Information Hunter-Gatherers. Back issues are here: <http://radio.weblogs.com/0104156/stories/2002/07/31/bitsAndBytes.html>. I was interested (still am) in the

convergence between technology and society. Got a little bit of attention; I was in the first edition or 2 of the Internet Yellow Pages, a piece mistakenly attributed to me was published in a book called "Internet Dreams," I got a couple of job offers, briefly worked with Christopher "Rageboy" Locke on a website for Internet World, blah blah blah. Time passed, and here we are. I will be reading your back issues over the weekend. Looks interesting though. These are critical times for preserving the freedoms we dream of enjoying on the net, when the net grows up. It's actually looking pretty bleak to me, but we will do what we can to keep the net fast, cheap, and out of control.

Jay Machado

this particular weblog:

<http://radio.weblogs.com/0104156>

Netizens Then and Now

Introduction

This year marks the 10 year anniversary of the introduction online of Michael Hauben's article "The Net and the Netizen." In honor of this anniversary it seems appropriate to look at how this concept has inspired, described or promoted netizenship around the world in the intervening years.

Search engines turn up almost 100,000 instances of the use of Netizens. Individual searches combining different countries and "netizens" such as "Netizens India" or "Netizens Korea," turn up a large number of hits in each individual country. I want to consider but a few of the examples I found.

Examples

1) A paper written by Jane Long and Matthew Allen titled "Hacking the Undernet" (*The Australian Journal of Communication*, vol 28 (3) 2001, pp 37-54) describes the process of privatization of the Internet as one of invading it. They examine the concept of an online community.

They recognize that the networking architecture, which sets a foundation for the global commons is often hidden from most researchers who focus only on the online conversation. Long and Allen object to this limiting and characterize it as a “narrowing” of the meaning and character of the concept of community. They write:

The narrowing of meaning and association of the term ‘community’ was also influenced by a concurrent thread in Internet research concerning Usenet newsgroups. As with initial forays into Irc research, earlier ground-breaking research (principally by Hauben & Hauben, 1997) into Usenet had identified the totality of newsgroup users as a form of community, ‘a world town meeting’ or ‘the Wonderful World of Usenet News.’ The Haubens also, however, emphasized the technical architectures through which the overall Usenet system was maintained.

Long and Allen point to other notions of community that narrow the concept to those on a single newsgroup, or those who use the Internet to support relationships among people which already exist. In this context they critique the notion of the Internet as a frontier with settlers. They write:

Many problems have been identified with the individualist, libertarian, and colonising ideologies inherent in the frontier myth (Barbrook & Cameron, 1995; see also Werry, 1999). An additional concern, not normally considered, is that describing cyberspace as a frontier ‘presumes’ the existence of the space into which community developers and settlers, such as Howard Rheingold, John Perry Barlow, Esther Dyson, George Gilder, and the multitude of anonymous others, were to move. However, these self-styled settlers were preceded by another community, or set of interlinked communities, comprising the engineers and scientists, hackers and coders, system administrators (‘sysadmins’) and operators who – effectively – created the virtual terrain later labeled ‘the frontier’. Some who utilise the frontier mythology regard these creators as the ‘natives’ to be colonised or even driven off the frontier (Werry, 1999), but within the metaphor, that still leaves open (or, rather, hidden) the identity of those who created the cyber-frontier in the first

place.

2) An article in a South Korean newspaper (Digital Chosunilbo – English Edition) on March 3, 2003 documented how the Internet was making it possible for people to act as netizens. The Korean president made a decision to support the U.S. war effort in Iraq. The newspaper article reports that this decision “has stirred up a flurry of disputes among the segments of society.”

The article then describes the role of the Internet in this dispute: Much of the dispute is playing out on the Internet, where tempers flared after President Roh’s televised address on Thursday. A netizen with the ID of ‘small practice’ wrote on the Web site Jinbonuri that ‘President Roh violated the constitution by deciding to dispatch our troops to Iraq.’ He created a petition, to which 150 people quickly added their names.

The article continued quoting from another web site:

The Cheong Wa Dae Web site was swarming with thousands of posts and e-mails criticizing the president’s decision. One netizen said that the president had betrayed his people.... But other voices supported Roh. A netizen with the ID ‘people’ wrote that ‘The war is abhorrent, but as an ally of the U.S., we must not forget that 30,000 American soldiers are in Korea to secure our nation.’

The article in a very small way documented online discussion among Internet users in South Korea to discuss whether a policy of their government was in the interests of the South Korean people.

The article only gave a few of the posts. The posts themselves, however, are an important process that shows that governments are not the same as the people of a country. Though the Internet now makes it possible for governments to hear the views of their citizens on important policy questions, most governments do not recognize the importance of these voices. In general, they don’t try to hear from the people of the country before undertaking actions that they claim are in the best interests of their citizens.

The Internet and netizens are changing this terrain, however. It is now possible for governments to support the creation of online processes

where they can hear from their citizens and from netizens around the world about the national and international response to their plans. That is a more dynamic process than depending on the voices of a few to determine the decisions that will affect the many.

3) Another article explored the importance of the concept of netizen for the people of China. The paper by Jack Linchuan Qiu, about the Internet and its role in China, describes a similar democratic vision for the role of the Netizen in Chinese society. In his article, “Virtual Censorship in China: Keeping the Gate Between Cyberspaces” (International Journal of Communication Law and Policy – issue 4, Winter 1999/2000), Qiu writes:

The Internet, as the means of online political communication (OPC), is not only a stimulant of cross-border interactions but also a tranquilizer of academic debates.... Some hold that advanced technology tends to democratization, while others contend it leads to demoralization.... Today’s new medium is the Internet. It sets the academic agenda with its interactivity, global accessibility, infinite channel capacity and other pro-democracy properties. It engulfs the critics of technology, whose voice nearly disappears.... (p. 1)

Qiu recognizes that the Internet is a platform for many different activities. He defines netizens, however, as those who utilize the Internet for online political communication. He writes:

Politics and ideological content is usually outnumbered by discussions about technology, economy, entertainment, sports and other topics. In this sense, only a small portion of China’s 4 million Internet users can be called “netizens,” defined as those who engage in OPC. (pp. 9-10)

Qiu observes that there are netizens from within and outside of China who interact. He writes:

A special group of netizens is the external users, who enter China’s virtual territory from the outside, playing a key role in linking China’s cyberspace with the global computer network. Most of them surf domestic websites and exchange information with others as ordinary users. (p. 10)

Among these users he reports that “some directly oppose the rule of

the Chinese authorities distributing e-mails with overt anti-ccp content.”

The Chinese government web sites, Qiu reports, are not influential, One reason he proposes is that they “lack interactivity.” He writes:

The websites are designed to facilitate one-way indoctrination instead of OPC interactions. Seldom do they reflect nonofficial opinions except when they are hacked. (p. 10)

Discussing the advantages of technical background for Chinese users who want to engage in online political communication, Qiu writes, “Technical detours bypassing regulatory obstacles are also possible in the case of the user who has more computer literacy.” (p. 18) And he reports that most Chinese netizens use pseudonyms to protect themselves from penalties for expressing their views. (p. 16)

His article raises the question of whether the Chinese netizens will prevail in their challenge to virtual censorship in China. “It remains uncertain,” Qiu writes, “whether virtual censorship in China will become more menacing or they will collapse someday leaving online political communication free at last among the Chinese netizens.” (p. 20) The URL for the journal’s website is <http://www.ijclp.org/>.

4) Looking for a definition of netizens, the online Miriam Webster dictionary defines a netizen as “an active participant in the online community of the Internet.”

5) The Tech Target, “What Is” website, goes further offering two similar meanings for “netizen.”

1. A citizen who uses the Internet as a way of participating in political society (for example, exchanging views, providing information, and voting).

2. An Internet user who is trying to contribute to the Internet’s use and growth. As a powerful communications medium, the Internet seems to offer great possibilities for social change. It also creates a new culture and its own special issues, such as who shall have access to it. The implication is that the Internet’s users, who use and know most about it, have a responsibility to ensure that is used constructively while also fostering free speech and open access.

(http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid_9_gci212636,00.html)

6) Chris Mueller, a graduate student, at the University of Berne, in

a thesis on “Electronic Networks and Democracy” (draft October 2002) describes how the online process of users contributing to the net is necessary for the net to be a democratic commons. He concludes that this process needs the hard work of people online. (<http://www.soz.unibe.ch/ii/virt/euicom.pdf>)

Those who do some of this hard work, are the online users that Michael called the netizens.

7) “Netizens Unite,” proclaims the title of the editorial in the *Times of India* on Tuesday, March 4, 2003. The editorial appeared in the online edition and also in the print edition on page 14. The editors of this major newspaper in India write:

America’s threatened war against Iraq has divided the world. First between the few friendly governments that support its unilateral action and the many that don’t. And second between officialdom on the one hand and the people on the other. This later division is particularly significant because it has pitted democratically elected governments that back Washington against the overwhelming anti-war sentiment of their own people. But none of this has made the slightest difference to president Bush and his team of hawks.

The editorial documents that there was a basis for a peaceful process to achieve the end that the earlier UN resolution had advocated (whether or not that was a legitimate end, was not a question raised however).

Then the editorial asks, “But what can all those around the world who oppose this mindless militarism do other than feel powerless?”

This is a question essential to Michael’s vision for the concept of the netizen. What are the means for common people to have power over the issues that affect their lives, including issues like whether one’s government makes war on another country?

The editorial then proposes a tentative way to look at this problem. The editors write:

We believe that one easily accessible way for world citizens to protest against this war is literally a mouse click away. As inhabitants of an increasingly globalised and borderless world, they should use the ultimate instrument of supra-nationalism –

the Internet – to register their opposition and say no to the war: Netizens of the world unite, you’ve nothing to lose but your chains of chauvinism. (To voice your views log on to <http://no-war.indiatimes.com>)

The significance of the editorial is that it proposed that people peacefully discuss their concerns and views. That such activity might indeed be a weapon in the fight.

The editorial and then the online discussion by the Times of India are not alone in seeing in the concept of Netizen as a way to be responsible “inhabitants of an increasingly globalised and borderless world” which the Internet has made possible.

8) It is not only researchers and writers online who have explored and contributed to the development of the concept of Netizen. There is also interest in the vision of the netizen in the online art community. For example, in December of 2002 there appeared on the Net an announcement of an art exhibit and competition in Rome, Italy. The exhibit was curated by Valentina Tanni.

The curatrice writes (our translation):

Netizens is a neologism. It is born from the union of two English words, net and citizens and is used commonly to define the navigators of the web. The expression, destined to a great future, was coined in the book by Michael and Ronda Hauben, authors of an important book about the social and psychological impact of the Net and of Net communication. (Actually it is Michael who is responsible for identifying and developing the concept of netizen -ed.)

Tanni continues:

It is not enough to be connected to the Internet to be a Netizen. In order to enter and to become part of this new, diffused society, it is necessary to pay attention to it, to understand it and to try to improve it, just as one must do to be part of communities offline. (Catalogue of the exhibit “Netizens: cittadini della rete” Sala 1, Rome, Italy, December 2002, p. 14.)

9) Another writer commenting on the concept of Netizen, shortly after the concept spread around the Internet, John Svedjedal, in his

paper, writes:

the Net provides new opportunities for discussions, meetings, and the exchange of ideas. As Michael Hauben...(has) recently remarked, the Internet provides an 'expansion of what it means to be a social animal' – the democratic, helpful human being Michael Hauben has labeled the Netizen.... (“Busy Being Born or Busy Dying: Networking the Net” <http://www.kb.se/Nvb/Svedjedal/busy14.html>)

Conclusion

These are but a few of the ways that the concept of netizen is being understood and utilized online in the years since Michael first recognized that there was something besides the technology of the Net that was important. Among the Internet's users something new was developing, something new was being born. This new phenomena is what Michael recognized and he called those who were part of this new phenomena “netizens”. Whether the word had ever been used previously, is not significant. What is significant is that there was a transformation occurring. Among the users online, something new had been discovered. This was that they were able to be part of a new society, and to play an important role in the birth and development of this new society. This isn't something idealistic or off in the future. And it isn't something detached from the offline world and society. The netizen is at the intersection between the old and the new, between the offline society and the online community. The actions that people described in 1992-1993 when Michael posted his questions about the impact of the Net on people, gave him an understanding of this new development. This understanding was captured in a new concept, netizen, made up of the concepts of citizen and net. And this concept, the new concept of the netizen has gone on to set a foundation for a more active role for citizens and people online, for a way that the Internet and its users can influence the old world, the old institutions, so that the new world of a new millennium can come into being. We are not there yet. Neither is the concept of netizen a concept of “utopianism” as some have suggested. Rather there is a living practice, an experience, and a consciousness developing which is one of the promises for a better world in the future.

Amateur Computerist

15 Year Index

[Editor's note: We are happy to announce in honor of this as our 15 year anniversary that all of the previous issues of the *Amateur Computerist* are online in at least PDF format at:

http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/Back_Issues The following is the full index of all of our issues.]

1) Volume 1 No 1 Feb. 1988

Introduction; Dawn of a New Era; Dedication; World of Telecommunications; Try This (IBM); Future Belongs to Programmers; The First Programmer (PICTURE); Why Learn Programming; Cover of *Personal Computing* (PICTURE); Commodore TIPS & TRICKS

2) Volume 1 No 2 Jun. 1988

The Big Machine; Pass the Profits, Please; Technology: Develop or Stagnate?; CARTOON by "DOC" Wilson; Sample BASIC graphic program; Try This (IBM); The World of Telecom... Corrections; German Vocabulary Helper Program; Programming in BASIC or C?; Configuring Your System; Letter to the Editor

3) Volume 1 No 3 Oct. 1988

Letter Published in Radio-Electronics; Responses from Around the Country; Election & Computers (Editorial); Savior in Waiting; How to Use the Merit Network?; Virtual Drives & Batch Files; Try This (EQUATION OF A STRAIGHT LINE); As I Was Saying... (Why Computerism?); Computers and Free Speech; Letter to the Editor; Plant Life (PICTURE)

4) Volume 2 No 1 Jan. 1989

Return to Sanity With the Amateur & the Pro; Letters from Readers; Problem Corner; Try This for IBM; SYSTEM DIAGRAM for Quadraphonic Sound System); Response to October Editorial; CAR-

TOONS (COMMODORE COUNTY); Welcome to Commodore County USA; Computer Hacking, A Crime?; IBM Key Assignments Using the "PROMPT" ...; History of Computers Part I

5) Volume 2 No 2 Apr. 1989

Why Learn to Program? (DISCUSSION); Letters; Try This (MESSAGE); "SE Q" for IBM; As I Was Saying (JOBS: HOURS AND SENSE...); Overtime and Under Pay; May Day; Sample Batch File; History of Computers Part II

6) Volume 2 No 3 Summer 1989

Impact of Computers On Society: A Debate; Letters to the Editor; CoCo Corner (Grail Quest-Pip); Commodore County USA (Cursor Color Change); Out of the Heart of the Abacus...; History of the Computer Part III

7) Volume 2 No 4 Fall 1989

Letter from Prosecutor; Opposing Viewpoint...; Letters to the Editor; Wanted Alive (AD); CoCo Corner (Equation Graphing Prg.); True Heroes; Trigonometry Lesson for IBM; History of the Computer Part IV

8) Volume 3 No 1 Winter 1989

Letter from Editor of *Detroit News*; Don't Replicate UAW-Ford School; When Will Their Walls Come Tumbling Down; Letters to Editor; Commodore County USA (CARTOON); The Spirit of Babbage; CoCo Corner (POKE & PEAK); CAD/CAM/CIM; History of Computers Part V

9) Volume 3 No 2 Spring 1990

The Laborer, Yes; Floyd Hoke-Miller (1898-1990); The Picket; In Honor of Labor's Poet Laureate; Computer Education and Government Regulation; Letter from Superintendent; Open Letter to Superintendent Bemis; Letter to Governor; Commodore County U.S.A. (SHIMMERING TEXT); C-64 Music Digitizer; IBM Label Program; CoCo Corner (CALORIE COUNTER); Bulletin Board Numbers

10) Volume 3 No 3 Fall 1990

What Criticisms Have You of the A.C.?; Tips and Tricks (IBM BOOT PROBLEM); Letter to Editor; Editorial; A Common Man of Greatness; CoCo Corner (CORRECTION); Excerpts from BBS (DISCUSSION-TRADE UNIONS); Commodore C-64 Reset Switch; DIAGRAM #1

11) Volume 3 No 4 Winter 1990

Hats Off to Patriot; Amateurs are Needed More Than Ever; CoCo Corner (MORE POKE & PEAK); Bringing Automation Home; Computer BBS Discussion on the War; Computers for the People: Part I

12) Volume 4 No 1 Fall 1991

Computers for the People - A History Part II; Letters to the Editor; Ten Commandments of Good Networking; Try This Program (GRAPHIC "HF"); USSR and the Computer; Command Line Calculator; The Question of Censorship

13) Volume 4 No 2-3 Spring 1992

Computers Vs Plant Closures; Amateur Computerist Index(10 year); Problem Corner; Union Forever; CARTOON (Shorter Hours); Letter To The Editor; Letters to *Amateur Computerist*; Letter to Editor of Utne Reader; Review from the μ Peripheral; Tribute: Modern Computer Pioneer; Interview with Staff Member; One Line Program; Computers For The People; CARTOON (Commodore County); Pascal Program

14) Volume 4 No 4 Summer 1992

Impact of the Computer on Society: Two Views; Electronic Mail; Letters to the Editor; Desktop Publishing; Computers for People: History; TRY THIS: (Programs); From the Shop Floor; CARTOON (I HAVE A Grievance); America and the Dollar; Problem Corner; Interview with Staff Member

15) Supplement Fall 1992

INTRODUCTION; THE NET WORKS; 'Arte', Computers and Usenet

News; Computer as a Democratizer; CityNet in New Zealand; Learning About Usenet; Freenet BBS's; Two Books to Help Users Liberation Technology

16) Volume 5 No 1-2 Spring 1993

Interview with Henry Spencer; Tradition of May 1, 1848; Social Forces Behind Usenet; The Net and the Labor Movement; Letters to Editor; The New Dawn; Pittsburgh Press Strike; John G. Kemeny; Computers for the People; Pascal Program; Try This Program in C; May Day in History; Charter for Newsgroup

17) Volume 5 No 3/4 Fall 1993

From ARPAnet to Usenet News; Battle For Programming; COMMON SENSE; Imminent Death of the Net; Letters To The Editor; News From Europe; From The Shop Floor; Report: Summer 1993 USENIX; Proposals on NSF Backbone; C Program; Computers for the People; Soul of the Internet

18) Volume 6 No 1 Spring 1994

UNIX and Computer Science; An Interview with John Lions; An Interview with Berkley Tague; On the 25th Anniversary of UNIX; Usenet News: The Poor Man's ARPAnet; What the Net Means to Me; Plumbing The Depths Of UNIX; Using UNIX Tools; C Program; New Net Book; The Linux Movement; The Ten Commandments for C; May Day in the Morning; Free Software Foundation

19) Volume 6 No 2-3 Winter 1994

What is a Netizen?; Licklider's Vision and the Future; Net Cultural Assumptions; Etiquette and the Internet; Ethics and the Internet; The Internet Society; The Internet: Maintaining Diversity; Do You Want to Lose Your Voice?; The Net: A Scientific Perspective; Book Proposal; Netizens: The Impact of the Net; Rights of Netizens

20) Volume 7 No 1 Spring 1996

Net Access: A Privilege or a Right?; Canadian Community Networking; Netizens and Community Networks; Letter to the Editor; Access For All

FAQ; The Future of Democracy; Old Freedoms and New Technologies; Forming the Usenet Online Community; History of Cleveland Freenet; Universal Access to E-Mail; Prototype for Policy Decisions; In Honor of 'Doc' Wilson; (PICTURE OF DOC WILSON); (3 CARTOONS)

21) Volume 7 No 2 Winter 1997

Power Tools of Our Times; Effect of Net on Professional News Media; Report from INET'96 Part I; CDA Decision (Excerpts); E-mail Evangeladdict; Culture and Communication; Online Education; Report from INET'96 Part II; Internet Impact on Daily Lives?; FCC Submission on Universal Service; Letter to the Editor; Freenets and Politics of Community; Broad sides for Our Day; Genora (Johnson) Dollinger (1913-1995)

22) Volume 8 No 1 Spring 1998

Interview with Tom Truscott; Editorial; Factsheet Five: ACN; Cooperative Nature of Usenet; Creating Broad sides; History of the Net is Important; *Netizens*: Review of Reviews; Book Reviews: *Netizens*; Community in k12.chat.teacher; Wiener and Licklider; Amateur Computerist 10 Year Index: 1988-1998

23) Special Issue July 1998

Stakeholders in the DNS Controversy: Netizen List DNS Discussion; Study of the ARPAnet TCP/IP Digest; An Introduction to TCP/IP

24) Volume 9 No 1 Winter 1998

Editorial: 25 Years of TCP/IP; Role of Govt in the Internet; Report from INET98 and IFWP; The Internet: Public or Private?; Report from the Front; The Internet a Public Treasure; Testimony Submitted to Congress; Letter to Congressman Bliley; E-mail Message from Becky Burr; Letter to Wm. Daley Sec. of Commerce; Letter: Tom Bliley to Ira Magaziner; Letter to the NTIA; Herding Cats and Sacred Cows; DNS: Short History and Short Future MsgGroup Mailing List

25) Volume 9 No 2 Special Issue 1999

ISOC Silencing the Press; Cone of Silence; U.S. Press Censorship;

Letter from the DOC.; Letter from Ira Magaziner; Report from SIGCAS/POLICY 98; GAO Review

26) Volume 10 No 1 Summer 2000

Welcoming the Millennium; Who Can Watch the Watchdog?; Internet Pioneers Panel; Citizens' Agenda 2000 Forum; Cleveland Freenet Closed; From the Internet; Oral History of the Internet; 30 Years of RFCs; Principles of the Internet; ARPAnet Mailing Lists

27) Volume 10 No 2 Spring 2001

EDITORIAL; Internet: A Laboratory for Democracy?; Ford Model E Program; Battle over Computer Classes; State of the Net in Hungary; A Loss for Netizens; Moment of Silence for Michael Muuss; Culture Clash over Usenet Archive; Privatization of the Internet; MsgGroup

28) Volume 11 No 1 Special Issue 5/1/02

Introduction; The Emergence of the Netizen; Michael, Computers and the Net; Work And Life of Michael Hauben; Some of Michael's Accomplishments; In Memoriam: a Netizen; Giving Back to the World; Thoughts Regarding Michael's Work; Mike: Sketches; "Netizens" in Hebrew Dictionary; A Tribute; Writings by Michael Hauben; Preface: What is a Netizen?; What the Net Means to Me; Declaration of the Rights of Netizens; Democracy: SDS and the Net; The Untold History of the ARPAnet; Berlin Report: The Vision Lives

Communication Not Annihilation, No War on Iraq. Netizens Unite

[Editor's Note: The following is the text of a leaflet distributed in New York City on February 15, 2003 at a rally in opposition to War against Iraq.]

Today's marches around the world demonstrate the power of the Netizens. There is a need for global communication to be utilized to solve the enormous problems in our modern world. More citizens and

netizens around the world can now participate in helping each other to solve what otherwise would be impossible difficulties.

What is a Netizen?

The concept of Netizen grew out of research online in 1992-1993. This was before the commercialization of the Internet. Contrary to popular mythology the numbers of people connecting to the Internet was growing by large numbers each year. There began to be Free-Nets springing up to provide community people with access to the Internet.

A student doing online research, Michael, writes:

The story of Netizens is an important one. In conducting research...online to determine people's uses for the global computer communications network, I became aware that there was a new social institution, an electronic commons, developing. It was exciting to explore this new social institution. Others online shared this excitement. I discovered from those who wrote me that the people I was writing about were citizens of the Net, or Netizens.

(from Preface to *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* <http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/>)

The Internet was making it possible for people who got access to communicate with others around the world. And there were people online who did what they could to connect others to the Internet and to make the Internet something valuable for people around the world. The student documented this development in his paper "The Net and Netizens: The Impact the Net has on People's Lives."

The paper was posted online in 1993. The concept of Netizen spread round the world and has been adopted by many who continue to contribute to the development of the Internet as a global commons and to spread access to the global communication the Internet makes possible.

We need the vision of the Internet and the Netizen, that both its early pioneers and the users that the student in 1992/3 found online, have embodied. This is as a network of networks linking people around the globe where online users act as netizens helping to solve the problems of the Internet and of the society.

People online and people who aren't online, can help to make the vision of the Internet pioneers and users a reality. We don't want war in Iraq. We don't want war in North Korea or Iran. We don't want war against the Palestinians. We want to communicate with each other and collaborate together to have the wealth of society go to its people so that the better world that is now possible, becomes a reality. It's a hard and difficult struggle. But with lots of netizens around the world, we can forge a better world.

Long live the Netizens, Long live the Iraqi People, Long live the American People, Long live the peace loving people everywhere.

Let us honor the memory of those who have perished in the struggle.

NETIZENS UNITE AND SPREAD THE INTERNET SO EVERYONE HAS ACCESS

Let us continue to take up the challenge to make the Internet a global commons that all can contribute to and build.

Dedicated to Michael (1973-2001). I have written this to honor his memory and to try to continue his contributions to make the world a better place.

Ronda
ronda@panix.com

The opinions expressed in articles are those of their authors and not necessarily the opinions of the *Amateur Computerist* newsletter. We welcome submissions from a spectrum of viewpoints.

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All issues can be accessed from the Index at: <http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/NewIndex.pdf>

EDITORIAL STAFF

Ronda Hauben
William Rohler
Norman O. Thompson
Michael Hauben (1973-2001)
Jay Hauben

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Sticker distributed in 1995 at the Beppu Netizens Conference in Oita, Japan