The Amateur Computerist

Table of Contents

Introduction

The year 2022 marks the 25th Anniversary of the May 1, 1997 publication of the print edition of *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* by Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben. This issue is again part of the celebration of that Anniversary. The articles here are mostly posts to the Usenet online discussion system made by Michael Hauben from 1992 to 1997.

The first posts are a request for references or suggestions for a Computers & Society class Michael was taking. Michael wrote that computers and concurrent technologies have had a significant impact on communications and that he was interested in the impact that this will have on people's lives. These posts were part of the process by which the ideas for the *Netizens* book were explored and by which some of the articles in the *Netizens* book got written.

The second article is a speech Michael gave in April 1994, based on one of the chapters of the Net Book, "The Netizens and the Wonderful World of the Net: An Anthology" put online in January of that year. It begins, "Welcome to the 21st Century. You are a Netizen, or a Net Citizen, and you exist as a citizen of the world …" and is the early draft for Chapter One of *Netizens: On the History of Usenet and the Internet.*

The next article, "New Net Book" was the post on Usenet announcing the event that launched the Net Book. Michael wrote, "This Net Book is for those who want to contribute to the care and nurture of the Net." His post gave details how to access the Net Book from a gopher server or on his homepage.

That article is followed by Michael's speech at a party celebrating his and his friends graduation from Columbia College in 1995. In that speech Michael begins telling of his connection with Japan and his Japanese netizen friends. He describes how, two days before the party, a camera crew from TV Tokyo came to the Columbia University campus to interview him for a documentary. Michael explained his understanding of netizens to the TV Tokyo interviewers. He told them, "The internet is not about computers and isolated experiences, it is a very social, human experience." Later, after that documentary aired in Japan, a few computer science students in Japan contacted Michael. Some of the result of those contacts is told in other posts in this issue. Also in that speech, Michael explained that he came to Columbia wondering why are Americans so complacent. After four years at Columbia and being active on the Internet, he had an answer. He wrote, "By connecting to others with similar interests, questions and problems, along with people with different understandings, it is now possible to try and do something about the world, and to gain some power in how one lives his or her life."

The next four articles are posts resulting from Michael's Fall 1995 visit to Japan which was upon the invitation of Professor Shumpi Kumon. On Jan 1, 1996 there was a Japanese newspaper article about netizens and Michael's visit. It quoted Michael extensively and concluded, "The discoverer of Netizen is also a person of practice." With a computer science student in Japan, Michael issued a call for a Netizens Association, documented in three articles here. The Japanese stu-

dent argued if there are netizens around the world they need their international association. In the post, "Original Call for a Netizens Association," Michael tells the story of Professor Kumon's invitation and the trip that resulted and his collaboration with Hiroyuki Takahashi who proposed the need for the Netizens Association. In "Proposed Netizen List Charter," Michael shares most of the first 40 responses that the call for a netizens association received.

In May 1997, Michael was able to joyously post, "Netizens Net Book Finally in a Print Edition (-:". Then on July 14, he announced the "Bastille Day Celebration in NYC" of the newly published print edition of the Netizens book. From the cover of the book, he quoted Martin Greenberger, "Michael and Ronda Hauben sketch out a provocative declaration of Netizen rights in their appendix to this engrossing, well researched, and very useful book." Michael also quoted Tom Truscott, "Netizens is an ambitions 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."

In the post, Michael gave the time, place and subway information for the celebration. He saw the choice of Bastille Day was, "In recognition of Bastille Day and the efforts for people around the world to gain influence in the developing of democracy around the world." For Michael, the internet and netizens gave the people of the world a chance for more democracy.

To carry on the work Michael began, in 2002 Ronda Hauben posted a "Call for Submissions that Develop or Explore the Concept of Netizen." She wrote: "It is now 10 years later. We would like to document the further development and application of the concept of netizen (and of the vision of the future of the net) that developed since Michael's research in 1992/1993. Also we want to project into the future about what the emergence of the netizen can mean to the further development of the Internet and of our society in general."

More recently, on March 14, 2022 a tribute to Michael and his work appeared in Chinese as a blog post by Dr Fang Xingdong. We conclude the issue with an English machine translation of the blog post. Dr. Fang is the director of the OHI (Oral History of the Internet) project. On the blog he said there is a suggestion that the project "publish a book for the story of their family of three." The *Amateur Computerist* would welcome such a book.

Computers & Society Class
by Michael Hauben

I am taking a Computers & Society Class right now and need to figure out what would be important to write my term paper about. I am also thinking of proposing a major or concentration on Computers & Society. For this paper I am thinking about writing on the progressive impact computers have had on communications. So, I would appreciate any references or suggestions anyone might have to offer. By suggestions I mean what people think would be a worthwhile question in the combination of computers and communications that would be worth focusing on.

The Following are just notes I made to myself. But if you feel there is a way further to build on them, please let me know.
Thanks!
Michael,
hauben@cunixf.columbia.edu

Paper Topic Ideas for Computer & Society

My paper will focus on the developing role and importance of telecommunications (or maybe the combination of computer and communication technology.) Possible topics would be:

1) The Equalitarian role computers play in communications. (How conferencing plus BBSs allow anonymity and thus remove many intimidations putting ideas in the front. Also because anonymity allows as many people as possible to participate in whatever time frame. Basically allows anyone who wants to speak the right to speak.) Facilitation of freedom of speech.

2) How computer networks facilitate the transfer of information and flow of information. More specific? Spreading information to a wider body of people. allowing people to become more educated.

3) Making the world a smaller place … allowing for new international communities to form. (based on common interests, backgrounds, or abilities.)

4) What Usenet is and what it might or could become, or what direction it is going in? What potential exists?

Or is my question: did telecommunications help

bring the Berlin wall down and the events in eastern Europe? Also remember how students in China (Tianiman Square) and France utilized the new telecommunications technologies.

Help needed with Communications and Computers

by Michael Hauben

I am taking a Computers & Society class and the following is the proposal I handed into my teacher. I appreciate if anyone has any comments on it. Or can help me with references and/or a better clarification or sharpening of a topic. Thanks, Michael

Computers & Society Term Paper Proposal

Computers and concurrent technologies have had a significant impact on communications. I am interested in writing on the impact that this combination is having and will have on people's lives. The combination of computers and communications has led to enormous networks that transmit and carry numerous different types of information and data. In Computers, Communications and Society, Murray Laver wrote:

> Cost apart, territorial distances are no longer a barrier … . If the present trend continues, then by 1980 more than 90% of the world's computers would be linked to communication systems. This combination promises to be exceptionally important because its effect will not be confined to one section of technology, nor to technology alone. The collection and exchange of information underlies all that we do, and the structures and functions of industrial society depend absolutely on its prompt and ample supply. A major change in information techniques is bound to affect every aspect of out lives – economic, social, political and domestic – and we need to be alert and aware of what is happening if we aspire to direct its course. (Oxford, 1975, p. 1)

This flow of information can selectively be accessed, allowing the individual to make the information suit him or her. This is a fundamental change from the traditional mode of the mass media making the individual conform to it. The world is becoming more accessible while at the same time growing in size. New international communities are forming (based on common interests, backgrounds, and abilities.)

The combined efforts of people interested in communication has led to the development and expansion of the global communications system. Ithiel de Sola Pool in *Technologies Without Boundaries* wrote:

> The system becomes part of the largest machine that man has ever constructed – the global telecommunications network. The full map of it no one knows; it changes every day. (Cambridge, 1990, p 56)

This system has grown because of the interest people have in communicating with the world outside of themselves. The voluntary nature of this system has lead to an enormous collection of generally helpful resources in other people and collections of information.

A current material example of the fundamental powers of this communications and information revolution is Eastern Europe. Much of the changes there were assisted through the opening up of information and communication. The organized form of Usenet News assists in the connections. This example might possibly serve as a foundation for my premises. A useful pointer is the following quote from "The Information Technologies and East European Societies" in East European Politics and Societies:

> The perception of serious technological backwardness, and the desire to end it, lie at the heart of Eastern Europe's economic, political, and social upheaval … . The computer and its related technologies have contributed most to the industrial world's rapid economic restructuring and have high-lighted Eastern Europe's economic deficiencies most clearly. (vol. 5, no. 3, Fall 1991, p. 394)

My research will consist of materials from books and my personal experiences. Along with this, I will interact with the Net and think of interviewing people involved with the development of various parts of the global communications network, along with personal observations from people who participate in Usenet.

As an example of the helpful resources, I posted a message in several newsgroups to gain help in figuring out a useful and interesting topic. In response I received over 10 email responses from around the world offering help.

Researching the "Net": On the Evolution of Usenet News and the Significance of the Global Computer Network

by Michael Hauben

I. You are a Netizen, or a Net Citizen

Welcome to the 21st Century. You are a Netizen, or a Net Citizen, and you exist as a citizen of the world thanks to the global connectivity that the Net makes possible. You consider everyone as your compatriot. You physically live in one country but you are in contact with much of the world via the global computer network. Virtually you live next door to every other single Netizen in the world. Geographical separation is replaced by existence in the same virtual space.

The situation I describe is only a prediction of the future, but a large part of the necessary infrastructure currently exists. The Net – or the Internet, BITNET, FIDOnet, other physical networks, Usenet, VMSnet, and other logical networks and so on – has rapidly grown to cover all of the developed countries in the world. Every day more computers attach to the existing networks and every new computer adds to the user base – at least twenty five million people are interconnected today. Why do all these people pass their time sitting in front of a computer typing away? They have very good reason to! Twenty-five million people plus [in 1994] have very good reason not to be wrong. [Twenty-five years later, in 2019, there were 4.3 billion active internet users.]

We are seeing a revitalization of society. The frameworks are being redesigned from the bottom up. A new more democratic world is becoming possible.

According to one user, the Net has "immeasurably increased the quality of … life." The Net seems to open a new lease on life for people. Social connections which were never before possible, or which were relatively hard to achieve, are now facilitated by the Net. Geography and time no longer are boundaries. Social limitations and conventions no longer prevent potential friendships or partnerships. In this manner, Netizens are meeting other Netizens from far-away and close by that they might never have met without the Net.

A new world of connections between people – either privately from individual to individual or publicly from individuals to the collective mass of many on the net – is possible. The old model of central distribution of information from the Network Broadcasting or Publication Company is being questioned and challenged. The top-down model of information being distributed by a few for mass-consumption is no longer the only News. Netnews brings the power of the reporter to the Netizen. People now have the ability to broadcast their observations or questions around the world and have other people respond. The computer networks form a new grassroots connection that allows the excluded sections of society to have a voice. This new medium is unprecedented. Previous grassroots media have existed for much smaller-sized selections of people. The model of the Net proves the old way does not have to be the only way of networking. The Net extends the idea of networking – of making connections with strangers that prove to be advantageous to one or both parties.

The complete connection of the body of citizens of the world that the Net makes possible does not exist as of today, and it will definitely be a fight to make access to the Net open and available to all. However, in the future we might be seeing the possible expansion of what it means to be a social animal. Practically every single individual on the Net today is available to every other person on the Net. International connection coexists on the same level with local connection. Also the computer networks allow a more advanced connection between the people who are communicating. With computer-communication systems, information or thoughts are connected to people's names and electronic-mail addresses. On the Net, one can connect to others who have similar interests or whose thought processes they enjoy.

Netizens make it a point to be helpful and friendly – if they feel it to be worthwhile. Many Net-

izens feel they have an obligation to be helpful and answer queries and follow-up on discussions to put their opinion into the pot of opinions. Over a period of time the voluntary contributions to the Net have built it into a useful connection to other people around the world. The Net can be a helpful medium to understand the world. Only by seeing all points of view can any one person attempt to figure out either their own position on a topic or in the end, the truth.

Net Society differs from offline society by welcoming intellectual activity. People are encouraged to have things on their mind and to present those ideas to the Net. People are allowed to be intellectually interesting and interested. This intellectual activity forms a major part of the information that is carried by the various computer networks. Netizens can interact with other people to help add to or alter that information. Brain-storming between varieties of people produces robust thinking. Information is no longer a fixed commodity or resource on the Nets. It is constantly being added to and improved collectively. The Net is a grand intellectual and social commune in the spirit of the collective nature present at the origins of human society. Netizens working together continually expand the store of information worldwide. One person called the Net an untapped resource because it provides an alternative to the normal channels and ways of doing things. The Net allows for the meeting of minds to form and develop ideas. It brings people's thinking processes out of isolation and into the open. Every user of the Net gains the role of being special and useful. The fact that every user has his or her own opinions and interests adds to the general body of specialized knowledge on the Net. Each Netizen thus becomes a special resource valuable to the Net. Each user contributes to the whole intellectual and social value and possibilities of the Net.

II. Licklider, the Visionary

The world of the Netizen was envisioned some twenty five years ago by J.C.R. Licklider and Robert Taylor in their article "The Computer as a Communication Device" *Science and Technology*, April 1968). Licklider brought to his leadership of the U.S., Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) a vision of "the intergalactic computer network." Whenever he would speak of ARPA, he would mention this vision. J.C.R. Licklider was a prophet of the Net. In his article Licklider establishes several helpful principles which would make the com-

puter play a helpful role in human communication. These principles were:
1) Communication is defined as an interactive creative process.
2) Response times need to be short to make the "conversation" free and easy.
3) The larger network would form out of smaller regional networks.
4) Communities would form out of affinity and common interests.

Licklider focused on the Net comprising of a network of networks. While other researchers of the time focused on the sharing of computing resources, Licklider kept an open mind and wrote:

> The collection of people, hardware, and software – the multiaccess computer together with its local community of users – will become a node in a geographically distributed computer network … . Through the network … therefore, all the large computers can communicate with one another. And through them, all the members of the supercommunity can communicate with other people, with programs, with data, or with selected combinations of those resources. (Licklider and Taylor, http://mem ex.org/licklider.html, p. 32.)

Licklider's understandings from his 1968 paper have stood the test of time, and do represent what the Net is today. His concept of the sharing of both computing and human resources accurately describes today's Net. The networking of various human connections quickly forms, changes its goals, disbands and reforms into new collaborations. The fluidity of such group dynamics leads to a quickening of the creation of new ideas. Groups can form to discuss an idea, focus in or broaden out and reform to fit the new ideas that have resulted from the process.

The virtual space created on non-commercial computer networks is accessible universally. This space is accessible from the connections that exist; whereas social networks in the physical world generally are connected only by limited gateways. So the capability of networking on computer nets overcomes limitations inherent in non-computer social networks. This is important because it reduces the problems of population growth. Population growth no longer means limited. Rather that very growth of population now means an improvement of resources. Thus growth of population can be seen as a positive asset. This is a

new way of looking at people in our society. Every new person can mean a new set of perspectives and specialties to add to the wealth of knowledge of the world. This new view of people could help improve the view of the future. The old model looks down on population growth and people as a strain on the environment rather than the increase of intellectual contribution these individuals can make. However, access to the Net needs to be universal for the Net to fully utilize the contribution each person can represent. Once access is limited, the Net and those on the Net lose the full possible advantages the Net can offer. Lastly the people on the Net need to be active in order to bring about the best possible use of the Network.

Licklider foresaw that the Net allows for people of common interests, who are otherwise strangers, to communicate. Much of the magic of the Net is the ability to make a contribution of your ideas, and then be connected to utter strangers. He saw that people would connect to others via this net in ways that had been much harder in the past. Licklider observed as the ARPANET spanned two continents. This physical connection allowed for wider social collaborations to form. This was the beginning of Computer Data networks facilitating connections of people around the world.

My research on and about the Net has been and continues to be very exciting for me. When I posted my inquiries, I usually received the first reply within a couple of hours. The feeling of receiving that very first reply from a total stranger is always exhilarating! That set of first replies from people reminds me of the magic of E-Mail. It is nice that there can be reminders of how exciting it all is – so that the value of this new use of computers is never forgotten.

III. Critical Mass

The Net has grown so much in the last 25 years, that a critical mass of people and interests has been reached. This collection of individuals adds to the interests and specialties of the whole community. Most people can now gain something from the Net, while at the same time helping it out. A critical mass has developed on the net. Enough people exist that the whole is now greater than any one individual and thus makes the Net worthwhile to be part of. People are meshing intellects and knowledge to form new ideas. Larry Press made this clear by writing:

> I now work on the Net at least two hours
> per day. I've had an account since around

1975 but it has only become super important in the last couple of years because a critical mass of membership was reached. I no longer work in LA, but in cyberspace. Many inhabitants of the Net feel that only the most technically inclined people use the Net. This is not true, as many different kinds of people are now connected to the Net. While the original users of the Net were from exclusively technical and scientific communities, many of them found it a valuable experience to explore the Net for more than just technical reasons. The nets, in their early days, were only available in a few parts the world. Now however, people of all ages, from most parts of the globe, and of many professions, make up the Net. The original prototype networks (e.g.: ARPANET in the USA, NPL in the United Kingdom, CYCLADES in France and other networks around the world) developed the necessary physical infrastructure for a fertile social network to develop. Einar Stefferud wrote of this social connection in an article, The ARPANET has produced several monumental results. It provided the physical and electrical communications backbone for development of the latent social infrastructure we now call 'THE INTERNET COMMUNITY.' (*ConneXions*, Oct. 1989 Vol. 3 No. 10. p. 21.)

Many different kinds of people comprise the Net. The University Community sponsors access for a broad range of people (students, professors, staff, professor emeritus, and so on). Programmers, engineers and researchers from many companies are connected. A K-12 Net exists within the lower grades of education which helps to invite young people to be a part of our community. Special Bulletin Board software (for example Waffle) exists to connect Personal Computer users to the Net. Various Unix bulletin board systems exist to connect other users. It is impossible to tell exactly who connects to public bulletin board systems, as only an inexpensive computer (or terminal) and modem are required to connect. Many common bulletin board systems (for example fido board) have at least e-mail and many also participate through a gateway to Netnews. Prototype Community Network Systems are forming around the world (e.g.: In Cleveland – the Cleveland Freenet, In New Zealand – the

Wellington Citynet, In California, the Santa Monica Public Electronic Network, etc.) Access via these community systems can be as easy as visiting the community library and membership is open to all who live in the community.

In addition to the living body of resources this diversity of Netizens represent, there is also a continually growing body of digitized data that forms a set of resources. Whether it is Netizens digitizing great literature of the past (e.g.: the Gutenberg Project), or it is people gathering otherwise obscure or non-mainstream material (e.g.: Various Religions, unusual hobbies, fringe and cult materials, and so on), or if it is Netizens contributing new and original material (e.g.: *The Amateur Computerist Newsletter*), the net follows in the great tradition of other public bottom-up institutions, such as the public library or the principle behind public education. The Net shares with these institutions that they serve the general populace. This data is just part of the treasure. Often living Netizens provide pointers to this digitized store of publicly available information. Many of the network access tools have been programmed with the principle of being available to everyone. The best example is the method of connecting to file repositories via FTP (file transfer protocol) by logging in as an "anonymous" user. Most (if not all) World Wide Web Sites, Wide Area Information Systems (WAIS), and gopher sites are open for all users of the Net. It is true that the current membership of the Net Community is smaller than it will be, but the net has reached a point of general usefulness no matter who you are.

All of this evidence is exactly why there could be problems if the Net comes under the control of commercial entities. Once commercial interests gain control, the Net will be much less powerful for the ordinary person than it is currently. Commercial interests vary from those of the common person. They attempt to make profit from any available means. Compuserve is an example of one current commercial network. A user of Compuserve pays for access by the minute. If this scenario would be extended to the Net of which I speak, the Netiquette of being helpful would have a price tag attached to it. If people had had to pay by the minute during the Net's development, very few would have been able to afford the network time needed to be helpful to others.

The Net has only developed because of the hard work and voluntary dedication of many people. It has grown because the Net is under the control and power of the people at a bottom-level, and because these people have over the years made a point to make it something worthwhile. People's posts and contributions to the Net have been the developing forces.

IV. Network as a New Democratic Force

For the people of the World, the Net provides a powerful way of peaceful assembly. Peaceful Assembly allows for people to take control over their lives, rather than that control being in the hands of others. This power has to be honored and protected. Any medium or tool that helps people to hold or gain power is something that is special and has to be protected. (See "The Computer as Democratizer," *Amateur Computerist* Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 5, Fall 1992.) J.C.R. Licklider believed that access to the then growing information network should be made ubiquitous. He felt that the Net's value would depend on high connectivity. In his article, "The Computer as a Communication Device," Licklider argues that the impact upon society depends on how available the network is to the society as a whole. He wrote:

> For the society, the impact will be good or bad depending mainly on the question: Will 'to be on line' be a privilege or a right? If only a favored segment of the population gets a chance to enjoy the advantage of 'intelligence amplification,' the network may exaggerate the discontinuity in the spectrum of intellectual opportunity. (Licklider and Taylor, http://memex.org /licklider.html, p. 40)

The Net has made a valuable impact to human society. I have heard from many people how their lives have been substantially improved via their connection to the Net. This enhancement of people's lives provides the incentive needed for providing access to all in society. Society will improve if net access is made available to people as a whole. Only if access is universal will the Net itself truly advance. The ubiquitous connection is necessary for the Net to encompass all possible resources. One Net visionary responded to my research by calling for universal access. Steve Welch wrote: "If we can get to the point where anyone who gets out of high school alive has used computers to communicate on the Net or a reasonable facsimile or successor to it, then we as a society will benefit in ways not currently understandable. When access to information is as ubiquitous as access to the phone system, all hell will break loose. Bet on it."

Steve is right, "all hell will break loose" in the most positive of ways imaginable. The philosophers Thomas Paine, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and all other fighters for democracy would have been proud.

Similar to past communications advances such as the printing press, mail, and the telephone, the Global Computer Communications Network has already fundamentally changed our lives. Licklider predicted that the Net would fundamentally change the way people live and work. It is important to try to understand this impact, so as to help further this advance.

[Editor's Note: On January 12, 1994, a book party was held at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Michigan to launch an online book. The following short announcement was posted on Usenet announcing the launch and giving details on how to access the new net book whose title was, "The Netizens and the Wonderful World of the Net: An Anthology." The announcement is at http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACN6-1.pdf in the *Amateur Computerist* Vol. 6 No. 1.]

New Net Book

In honor of the 25th Anniversary of the ARPANET and of the UNIX operating system, and the 15th Anniversary of Usenet News, I am proud to announce a Net Book. This Net Book provides some of the historical perspective and social context needed to understand the advance represented by the global telecommunications network. This Net Book is for those who want to contribute to the care and nurture of the Net.

The Book's title is: The Netizens and the Wonderful World of the Net: An Anthology.

Any comments on the book would be welcome, as it is currently in draft form. We are making it available as we feel it will be helpful for people, and your comments will help us to make the book more valuable.

In addition, it would be worthwhile to have the book published in a printed edition. Any suggestions toward this would be appreciated.

A draft is now available via anonymous ftp at: wuarchive.wustl.edu in the directory:
/doc/misc/acn/netbook.

The book is also available to browse via gopher on the gopher server: gopher.cic.net in the directory (or by going through the menus):
e-serials/alphabetic/a/amateur-computerist/netbook
My .gopherrc entry looks like this:

Name=Netizen's Net Book
Type=1
Port=70
Path=1/e-serials/alphabetic/a/amateur-computerist/netbook
Host=gopher.cic.net
URL: (For WWW browsers like Mosaic, lynx, cello, etc.)
gopher://gopher.cic.net/11/e-serials/alphabetic/a/amateur-computerist/netbook
or from my homepage at:
http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/home.html
under the link to its title.
Click: here

-Michael Hauben,
hauben@columbia.edu

[Editor's Note: The following was presented on May 21, 1995 at a party celebrating the graduation of Michael Hauben and some of his classmates from Columbia College. It appears at: https://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn24-1.pdf, pp. 36-38.]

Graduation Presentation

My graduation did not end at the May 1995 Columbia University Commencement ceremonies. I did receive my Diploma on May 17, but my graduation was not completed until May 19. On that Friday, I was interviewed about the internet by a Japanese camera crew for a television documentary to be shown on TV Tokyo. In speaking with these people the result of my four years both here at Columbia and connected to the outside world was revealed.

During the interview I described Netizens and the world-wide community which the internet and Usenet News make possible. Netizens are people who use the various computer communications networks and feel they are citizens of this net. People desire to communicate with others around the world. In order to communicate, to share information and to have a discussion, it is necessary to share a common space and to accept differences. People who connect to the internet willingly help others and work collectively to have a place which allows their personal speech and which allows the speech of others. It is in this spirit of an open forum that we are holding this party today. The internet and other communications networks are about

people and are about people communicating with each other. It is this understanding and experience which I shared with the interviewers. The internet is not about computers and isolated experiences, it is a very social human experience.

I entered Columbia asking the question "Why are people, so complacent in this country?" I asked this question on my application essay in 1990 considering that people in Eastern Europe and China were fighting their governments for a better life and a better world, while here at home little seemed to be happening to combat the worsening times.

In thinking about this question, I chose the joint Philosophy/Economics major as my prospective major. My introduction to the Columbia bureaucracy came about when upon visiting campus, I discovered this major had been turned upside down, and was now based in the Economics Department rather than the Philosophy Department and was renamed Economics and Philosophy. The emphasis was: similarly shifted from classical philosophy to contemporary economics.

In arriving at Columbia and setting up my computer account, I connected to the world by using Usenet Newsgroups. My Unix account, hauben@columbia.edu, gave me access to Usenet Newsgroups which are public discussion forums that are circulated around the world. It was in discussions on these newsgroups that I developed my academic study. I was fascinated by the internet and Usenet News and wanted to find out more about this network which connected people from around the world.

It was on the internet and Usenet where I posed questions and conducted research into what other people found valuable about being and how it was important in their lives.

In researching these questions during different history and literature classes, along with several independent studies, I became an active participant of the Usenet Newsgroups and mailing lists. I submitted questions and thought pieces to these forums, and people around the world responded with their opinions and thoughts. I became interested in the Net itself, and I posed questions about it . Many people found they shared this interest, and they connected to me and contributed their understandings of the value of the Net to their lives. Many of these private electronic mail messages and public Usenet responses were extremely thoughtful. I also raised questions about how it was possible for such a medium to develop where people were helpful to total strangers. In starting to research

the history of the internet and Usenet News, students and professors who were part of that history sent me personal accounts and supporting documentation.

My papers and research about the internet and Usenet have been guided and helped by many real people around the world. When I finished my papers, I contributed back to the Net by making them publicly available and asking for comments and criticism. In addition to various responses of that sort, I also received much encouragement and support. People wrote thanking me for making my writings available.

Also, I received various requests from professors and others to reprint and make my writings available to classes and other more public forums. This support was of course in addition to help and encouragement from my parents. All of this support came outside of Columbia. There were two professors in the Computer Science Department, namely Professor Unger and Professor Greenleaf, and there was Professor Garton from the Music Department who were helpful, but there was very little help from the university or computer science department as a whole. My connection to the outside world and community is what has both made my research possible, and provided feedback that this research was important and valuable to others. I have mainly enjoyed the time I have spent at Columbia because of the feedback I received from other people saying they appreciated my effort, and that my writings have been useful for more than just a grade.

Identification of this value to society came slowly but surely. People sent various e-mail messages, and this was helpful, but did not feel to be lasting. These past two years have been marked by various events which have helped to solidify my understanding of the value. The word Netizen started to appear both and in print. Papers I wrote were published in three journals. Ronda and I gave several presentations in New York City and Michigan from the book we put together. A radio station in California interviewed me last semester. And currently Ronda and I are negotiating with a publisher to publish our book in a printed form. Lastly, professors from the Global Communications Institute in Japan have been communicating with me about my participating at a conference in Japan later this year. The interview on Friday was the culminating event which identified that this work has been recognized as important.

After four years, I feel I have answered the question with which I entered Columbia. The internet and Usenet News provides a place where people can

communicate with other people at a grassroots level to make their lives better and to attempt to make the world a better place. By connecting to others with similar interests, questions and problems, along with people with different understandings, it is now possible to try and do something about the world, and to gain some power in how one lives his or her life.

All in all, while Columbia has been a difficult place to live for the last four years, it has been an honor to be able to contribute to the world some understanding of how to make a better future.

[Editor's Note: The following post appeared on Usenet on March 4, 1996. In it the author gives the background to an article that appeared in Japanese in the *Nishi-Nippon Press* on January 1, 1996. A translation into English of that article follows the author's introduction.]

Good Press Coverage of the Net and Netizens

by Michael Hauben

I visited Japan in November 1995 to speak at the Hyper Network Conference, Beppu Bay '95. The conference theme was "The Netizen Revolution and the Regional Information Infrastructure." The conference theme was chosen in an attempt to understand what principles would help expand the Internet in Japan.

While at the conference, a reporter from the *Nishi-Nippon* Shimbun interviewed me. The article based on the interview about my research and Netizens was published in the *Nishi-Nippon* newspaper New Years Day special edition. It was special that it was published in the New Years issue, as it helps to welcome a new era with the new year. The *Nishi-Nippon Press* is located in Fukuoka City, Oita Prefecture.

Following is a rough translation of the article that conveys the significance of the role Netizens have had in building the Net to be a cooperative communications medium which benefits the larger community.

This translation is being distributed on Usenet with permission from the publishers of *Nishi-Nippon* Shimbun.
Peace,
Michael

English Translation of Article in

Nishi-Nippon Shimbun,
January 1, 1996 Issue

by Michiko Sato
Translated by Mieko Nagano and Ken'ichi Nagano

Netizen Revolution

Do you know the word "Netizen"?

This is a new word made of "network" and "citizen." Michael Hauben (22), a graduate student of Columbia University in the USA first advocated the word three years ago.

His definition is "Those people who are eager to create a better society by exchanging creative opinions through personal computers."

This word has spread with the explosive growth of the Internet. Netizens are people from all types of backgrounds. Their activity extends beyond considerations of country, race, gender or age.

This word is now being highlighted on a global scale through the explosive proliferation of the Internet. From homes, communities, companies, and schools, a vast number of Netizens are communicating using the Internet beyond border, race, gender, and age.

How do they change the world?

The advocator Michael Hauben and some members of COARA, a representative grass roots PC communication group, came to talk on the value of Netizenship.

MAIN ARTICLE

Mr. Michael Hauben, the advocator of Netizen, speaks quietly, yet his claim is fully apparent.

"Systems of top down hierarchical communication are being challenge. The distribution of communication will be emphasized from now on. Everybody tries to communicate to make the society better"

He explains the definition of Netizen and continues "For example, an ordinary person can be a reporter. One can send news to the rest of the world."

He was 12 years old when he first used computers to communicate with other people.

"I joined a local network in Michigan. I became aware of the activities of people to exchange opinions, to help each other, and to share knowledge. That was a new experience for me," he recalls.

This experience sent him to Columbia Univer-

sity's computer science department. One of the fruits of his research work is the concept of Netizen. The new word has proliferated world-wide through the Internet.

"I was delighted to find that the concept of Netizen was being discussed widely in Japan."

He reflects on his first impression in attending the Hyper network Beppu Bay Conference '95.

"Communication is the very basic tenet of Netizenship. The microcomputer is a mere tool. Therefore, what is wonderful is that so many people joined the session in Beppu to see each other."

Prior to the conference, he received an e-mail welcoming him from a COARA member. In return, he brought a cook book as a present. "I browsed her home page and learned she loved cooking" he explained simply.

The popularization ratio of PCs in Japan is remarkably reaching 15 % of the whole population. But this is still low compared with Western countries.

"Also in the U.S., the PC became much more popular when the price of personal computers was lowered. Besides price, there are a lot of problems to be solved, such as improved interfaces, more and better training and so on. But those problems will soon be solved and the Net will spread further."

"Just net surfing or making a home page for show does not make a real Netizen. What is important is having a strong will to encourage discussions."

The discoverer of Netizen is also a person of practice.

Michael Hauben Teachers College
Dept. of Communication
Amateur Computerist Newsletter,
http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/acn/
WWW Music Index, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/music/

[Editor's Note: The following is a post that appeared on March 5, 1996 in the Usenet newsgroup comp.dcom.telecom also known as TELECOM Digest. It contains a post to that newsgroup on March 4, 1996 with the subject "The need for a Netizens Association."]

Original Call for a Netizens Association

Article: 52786 of comp.dcom.telecom

From: TELECOM Digest Editor
Newsgroups: comp.dcom.telecom
Subject: The Need For a Netizens Association
Date: Tue, 05 Mar 1996
Organization: TELECOM Digest, PO Box 4621, Skokie, IL 60076

An interesting message reached me today that I thought several of you might be interested in. If you do wish to continue the discussion, please send your comments direct to the author as shown below and not to the Digest itself. Perhaps at some future point the author will be so kind as to summarize responses for the Digest and submit them to me for publication. PAT*

From: hauben@vanakam.cc.columbia.edu (Michael Hauben)
Newsgroups: comp.dcom.telecom
Subject: The need for a Netizens Association
Date: 4 Mar 1996
Organization: Columbia University
Reply-To: hauben@columbia.edu

The recent passing of the telecommunications bill in the USA demonstrates the lack of understanding by Congress and the government about the value of the Net and what it really is. In light of this, there seems a need for people to organize and form a Netizens Association. The following summary of a trip I made to Japan in November 1995 describes the genesis for this idea. Please e-mail me or respond publicly if you have suggestions or can help.

Hiroyuki Takahashi is the co-proposer for Netizens Association.

Toward a Netizens Association
/Michael Hauben

A little under one year ago, I received a letter sent through the Internet, via electronic mail. The letter was sent by a professor from Japan, and concerned studies we were both interested in. This communication between people concerned common interests despite differences in age, language, and culture. While Professor Shumpei Kumon knew English and was studying global communication, there were still real barriers of distance and time. I hope to show how the new technologies are helping to alleviate these barriers and help bring us into a new age of communications where the old rules and ways are no longer the guiding rules and ways.

What brought Professor Kumon and me together was our shared interest in the globalization of culture and society through the emerging communications technologies. The specific concern was about the emergence of Netizens, or people who use computer networks who consider themselves to be part of a global identity. The Netizen is part of a developing global cooperative community. I first used the term "Netizen" in 1993 after researching people's uses for the Internet and Usenet. Professor Kumon's first communication to me follows:

Date: Tue, 28 Feb 1995
From: shumpei@glocom.ac.jp (Shumpei - Kumon)
To: hauben@columbia.edu
Subject: Netizen
Hi,
I am a social scientist in Japan writing on information revolution and information-oriented civilization. Since I came across the tern "netizen" about a year ago. I have been fascinated by this idea. It seems that the age of not only technological-industrial but also political-social revolution is coming, comparable to the "citizen's revolution" in the past. I would very much like to do a book on that theme.
Yesterday, I was delighted to find your Netizen's Cyberstop. You are doing a great job.
shumpei kumon

Professor Kumon also asked if I was the first to use the term Netizen. Part of his studies are sociolinguistics, so he is interested in the development and use of language over time. Netizen had come to replace the term netter or networker in Japan to describe people who use computer networks.

In response to my return message, Professor Kumon offered his understanding of Netizen as "people who abide in networks and are engaged in collaborative propagation of information and knowledge just as citizens abide in cities and are engaged in commerce and industry." He continued, "In this sense we can perhaps find the origin of netizens in Europe of 13-15th centuries, just as first citizens in modern civilization appeared in Europe of 12th century as commerce revived there." Professor Kumon concluded the message by asking if I was interested in visiting Japan. He said he could make this possible.

At the time I did not know where this would lead, but I responded that I would be very much interested in visiting. Japan was an unfamiliar country for me. Previously in my education I did do some research into the secondary education system, and found it to be a very stressful environment. Otherwise I had some general interest in the culture. However, I was unfamiliar with Professor Kumon, and the institutions he was connected to, the Global Communications Institute (GLOCOM) of which he was the director and the International University of Japan. However, this contact with him, and soon with his colleagues brought me to Japan. One of the planning directors of GLOCOM, Izumi Aizu, wrote me shortly after Professor Kumon, and mentioned a conference in November to which they might invite me. Before the real invitation actually arrived, several other events took place.

Izumi Aizu arrived in New York City in late April, and we spoke of many things. Most interesting was how he saw the Internet being a direct challenge to traditional Japanese culture. While people normally go by their last names in Japan, the Usenet and Internet culture encourages first-name familiarity. Professor Kumon's e-mail address was made up of his first name, not his last. The style of writing in e-mail is usually informal. The ease of use encourages people to use the medium as if it were in between writing a letter and making a phone call. E-mail, Usenet and the world wide web (WWW) encourage people to share their original thoughts and creations with the world. I have been told that Japanese culture encourages people to represent the larger grouping they are part of. The concept and history of Netizen strikes a good midpoint between being individualistic or having a group identity. Netizens represent themselves, but as part of the larger group. The many-to-many technology gives people the chance to represent themselves, but in the context of contributing to the whole community. During Izumi's visit, we also briefly spoke of some of the barriers to the spread of the Internet in Japan and the United States. A big concern of Izumi's was who could or should pay to spread the Internet in Japan. There are other social and technical hurdles to overcome in order to spread the Internet throughout Japan.

Izumi described more of the work of the HyperNetwork Society which was connected to a network community in Oita Prefecture and described some about the conference I was being invited to speak at in November. He also asked if I was willing to be interviewed for a television special that would be created for Japanese TV introducing Netizens and

describing the Internet.

Two days after my graduation from Columbia College in May, the two film-makers arrived to conduct their interview and to film me and Columbia. They explained that their film would be aired on TV Tokyo, a NHK television channel on an educational TV show in July, 1995.

The airing of the TV program about the Internet, communications and multimedia was very important to my later trip to Japan. My connection to Japan would broaden out from the initial contact by the members of GLOCOM. After July 2, I received several e-mail messages from other people in Japan.

A student in his final year of undergraduate study at Saitama University wrote on the very day the TV show was on in Japan. In his e-mail, Hiroyuki Takahashi explained that "I discovered your idea – Netizen … . I feel attracted to your concept. I would like to talk with you about netizen and so on. I want to spread netizen among networker in JAPAN." (email of July 2). He asked if he could copy to his public computer server in Japan the documents about Netizens that I have publicly available through my Columbia University web pages.

I responded yes, and wrote, "I am glad to hear you are trying to spread Internet access to the public. We thus have a common goal. :-)" (email July 2, 1995)

Hiroyuki wrote back "Yes we can collaborate on that purpose."

He had apologized saying that his English was not very good. I responded that "unfortunately, I speak no Japanese, but appreciate that we can communicate." Hiro wrote back saying "Nationality has no longer senses on the network. Everybody stands on same starting points. :-)"

He wrote that there were many problems in trying to spread the Internet in Japan as computer networking had grown a lot in the past two years. He explained: "[In the] Last two years [the] computer network environment in Japan grew up marvelously so most of Japanese included mass media, market and ordinary men cannot catch up with the growth and they are expecting too much." Hiroyuki explained "So now I am seeking how to spread network environments." (e-mail July 4, 1995)

The connection to GLOCOM similarly flourished, and I was asked to contribute a chapter to Professor Kumon's planned book about Netizens tentatively titled "The Netizen Revolution." In addition, I submitted a paper for inclusion in a newspaper special supplement whose theme was "The Media Revolution."

More people sent me e-mail, and I posted publicly to public newsgroups like soc.culture.japan and fj.life.in-japan. This connection with people from across the globe whose native language was different was occurring because the computer and communications technology had developed to 1) break down the geographic and time barriers, and 2) break down the social barriers which exist in all cultures, but which are traditionally strong in Japanese culture. These changes are helping all cultures and societies to become more global, in both making their contribution to the larger world and to receive back from the world.

I heard from Izumi several times after July concerning the conference, and the final invitation arrived in August. Izumi invited me to make a presentation on "Netizen concept and issues." Izumi also mentioned that there would be two other Internet conferences in Kobe that it might be possible to attend.

In November, plans for my visit to Japan were worked out. I was asked to prepare a 20 minute talk and to submit a description of my talk for the conference program.

I wrote Hiro telling him I would be visiting Japan and asked if it would be possible to meet him. I also posted on some Japanese Usenet newsgroups asking if there were suggestions about my visit.

Hiro wrote back that he would be very happy to meet me. He said that "We can discuss or talk about many things; netizen, internet, computing and so on. I am very happy to see you :-)" (email Nov 16)

When I was in Japan, we met and had dinner. We spoke of many things including the lack of professors at his University who understand the computer technology. I learned that he and other students managed the campus computers and networks. Hiro also worked toward introducing the Internet and spreading its use in Japan. When I asked how I could help, he mentioned that he wanted help to translate some of the netizens writings into Japanese. I said I would be helpful if he had any questions. Then I left Tokyo and went to the HyperNetwork conference in Oita. Similar to what took place in Tokyo, I received an extremely warm and friendly welcoming from many of the people from COARA and the BBC '95 conference. My presentation in Beppu concentrated on describing the emergence of Netizens and analyzing the development of the public communications medium know as the Net. Following is a definition of Netizens presented in the speech,

"Netizens are the people who actively contribute toward the development of the Net. These people understand the value of collective work and the communal aspects of public communications. These are the people who actively discuss and debate topics in a constructive manner, who e-mail answers to people and provide help to new-comers, who maintain FAQ files and other public information repositories, who maintain mailing lists, and so on. These are people who discuss the nature and role of this new communications medium. However, these are not all people. Netizens are not just anyone who comes , and they are especially not people who come for isolated gain or profit. They are not people who come to the Net thinking it is a service. Rather they are people who understand it takes effort and action on each and everyone's part to make the Net a regenerative and vibrant community and resource. Netizens are people who decide to devote time and effort into making the Net, this new part of our world, a better place." When I got back to Tokyo, Hiro came to visit again, and he brought several members of his computer club with him. The computer club was the Advanced Computer and Communication Engineering Studying Society (a.k.a. ACCESS).

I had also received email from Mieko Nagano in November before my visit to Japan who said she was housewife active in the community network COARA which sponsored the Hyper network conference. Her e-mail was an invitation to the conference from someone outside of GLOCOM. In a later email she wrote that she was moved by my concept of Netizen which she shared in my understanding would "help further the growth of the Net by connecting a diversity of people who have various opinions, specialties and interests. This worldwide connection of people and other information resources of different sorts will help the world move forward in solving different societal problems." (email Oct. 29, 1995)

She wrote that she was not able to "comprehend high-class discussions in the past conferences." "I only enjoy," she continued, "as a ordinary housewife, communication with good-willed and good-sensed people through COARA and/or E-mail on real name basis."

"What is great for me," she noted, "is that I can talk to the people all over the world instantaneously and look around various sites full of information including images and sounds." (Oct. 29)

When I arrived at the hypernetwork conference, there were stickers and hats declaring "Netizen in COARA." After the conference, Mieko explained:

> Naming after NETIZEN, as Mr. Hauben advocated, COARA members prepared in advance 'Netizen sticker' appealing to be COARA constituent by attaching the logo on their chests of clothes and welcomed our guests. (email Dec 12, 1995)

After our visit, I wrote Hiro that I was very happy to have met him and his friends from their computer club at his University. In his email when I returned home he asked if there was a Netizens Association. He wrote in a P.S. in an email of Dec. 6 "Netizen association is available? If not in Japan, I want to make it." I told him I did not know of any and asked him what he had in mind for a Netizens association to do. He responded:

> I think [a] Netizen Association is a guide into tomorrow's Internet world. Internet and other network[s] have a flood of electrical informations. So people cannot swim very good in Internet. So Netizen Association tell or advise how to swim or get selected information. The association act as guide. Oh, and we have to spread information about concept of netizen. But making association process has many difficult points, I think. So we have to give careful consideration to the matter.

"Please let me know your idea," he added. (email Dec. 12, 1995)

Hiro also wrote that he and his classmates had a "translation team" that was "now reading carefully" through the Netizens article. "And next Thursday and Friday," he wrote, "our club has big presentation about Internet in my university, so we are very hard [at work] this week." (from Dec. 9, 1995 email.)

Others wrote to explain their interest in the concept of Netizen. The response was important because as I found out while in Japan, the word 'netizen' meaning 'network citizen' would have a different meaning in the Japanese culture. The term or concept of citizen differs from the American meaning as the individual finds meaning in the group organizational setting and not separately. This means the meaning of the concept rather than the surface of the term was understood.

While in Japan, I met many people interested in spreading the Internet. Those involved, young or old, found it important to try and connect people to the Internet as a way forward into the future. Young

people were happy to have a new tool to challenge the old conventions of society. I was more surprised to find others of older generations still interested in this new technological medium which was challenging the traditional Japanese social customs. More importantly, however, was the global connections and broadening of people the Internet brings. Mieko, Izumi, Professor Kumon and Hiro were all working toward making it possible for the Japanese people, from any part of Japan, to be able to communicate with others around the world.

Michael Hauben, Teachers College Dept. of Communication
Netizens Netbook, http://www.columbia.edu/-hauben/netbook/
WWW Music Index, http://www.columbia.edu/-hauben/music/

[TELECOM Digest Editor's Note: Thank you for a very fine presentation to the Digest readers today. I quite agree that a Netizen's Association would be a marvelous idea. I wonder what other Digest readers think of this proposal? I believe we should at this time unanimously appoint Mr. Hauben as Chairperson or President of the Netizens Association in the United States and encourage him to work with not only his counterparts in Japan but to aid in beginning Netizen Association chapters or groups all over the world. And Michael, you can count me in as a member from the very beginning. PAT]

---

* Pat Townsend moderated the TELECOM Digest, the Usenet newsgroup, comp.decom.telecom. The TELECOM Digest was a long running newsgroup and email distribution focused primarily on telephony technology and other aspects of telecommunications. The TELECOM Digest Archives are available at: https://telecom digest.net/archives/back.issues/.

[Editor's Note: The following is a post Michael Hauben made to Usenet newsgroup nyc.general and others on April 3, 1996. It contained the list announcement for a netizens association. It is at: https://groups.google.com/g/nyc.general/c/PJXRHE1jVJ4/m/Kx UWDoFJ83IJ.]

New List: Netizens Association

I posted to these newsgroups a month ago a call for the formation of a Netizens Association. We are one step closer, as a mailing list is now formed to plan and discuss some an association. Following is the list announcement and in the next message I will send the proposed list charter.

Please e-mail me if you have any problems subscribing to the mailing lists or any thoughts. My e-mail is hauben@columbia.edu.
Regards,
/Michael Hauben

NEW LIST ANNOUNCEMENT: NETIZENS ASSOCIATION

During a recent trip to Japan, I met a number of networking enthusiasts who were interested in spreading the Internet in Japan. They found the Netizen concept to be helpful in their efforts. One student who I met in Tokyo, Hiroyuki Takahashi, suggested that there was a need to form a Netizens Association. This association could work toward educating people and helping them to gain literacy in both the technical and social aspects of working, living and playing on the Net. In addition, this Netizens Association would function as a forum to bring people together to protect and advance the Net as a new public commons and global community. I propose to work toward forming a prototype for a local Netizens Association chapter. The success of a few such chapters could lead to the spreading of chapters focused around educational institutions or communities. This would be in conjunction with efforts by people working for similar goals in other countries across the globe like Japan, and Canada. (From Toward a Netizens Association: Proposed Netizens List Charter)

In response to these common goals, it was proposed that a Netizens Association be formed. Such an association would fill two purposes, 1) to bring together netizens interested in nurturing the net and 2) to spread knowledge and literacy to those not. To that purpose, the majordomo mailing list netizen@columbia.edu has been created. This list will begin the discussion toward the principles, goals and questions for such an association. I would hope local Netizen Association chapters would form based on this list. These associations could help spread Net Literacy and encourage both new and old users to contribute to the Net. See WWW page: http://www.columbia.edu /~hauben/netizen/ for more information.
How to Join:
Send an e-mail message to netizens-request @columbia .edu with the message body of: subscribe. If this does not work, send e-mail to: majordomo@columbia.edu with a message body of subscribe netizens. If neither way works, write me at:

netizens-owner@columbia.edu. To subscribe to the DIGEST version of the list, send e-mail to netizens-digest-request@columbia.edu.

Michael Hauben, Teachers College Dept. of Communication
Netizens Netbook, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/
WWW Music Index, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/music/

[Editor's Note: The following is a post Michael Hauben made to multiple Usenet newsgroups on April 3, 1996. It contained the proposed Netizens List Charter for a netizens association. It is at: https://groups.google.com/g/comp.edu/c/GJq-0VVCF44/m/B37yYZX1fYEJ.]

Proposed Netizens List Charter
Draft for Comment

The global computer communications network now stretches around the world. However, there are many places within reach of the Net which are currently not connected, either because of lack of money, of knowledge, or of other factors impeding access. There are many Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and services spreading, but these commercial entities do not guarantee that everyone who would be interested in connecting with the world will have the ability to do so. Also, the personal computer is not affordable to a great number of people around the world. Just as it is important to the American society as a whole to connect our nation together, so there is a similar need in other countries and a need to form a truly global and universal computer communications network. This is a difficult undertaking but one currently more in reach than ever before.

There is a growing body of people who identify as members of a global community which communicates electronically over the world-wide computer communications network. These people have come to understand the value of the communication ability facilitated by the Internet and identify as citizens of the Net, or as Netizens. Netizens are people who work to contribute to the growth and collaborative community of the Net. The word describes those who help newcomers on the Net to understand the value of the Net by teaching how to utilize it and contribute back to it. The idea of Netizen has now spread around the world and is used in a variety of ways. The idea represents a

helpful way to portray the principles and the vision of the social advancement that the global connection of netizens networking worldwide can make possible. It is important to support this vision and these principles. There is a need, to act toward making the community available to all. Infrastructure needs to be established which would allow broad access and the chance to teach the new literacy of both computer and other skills. The Internet is currently under pressure from business and governments around the world to go in a direction that strays from the guiding vision of the original ARPANET pioneers who saw an intergalactic network that would be a public intellectual utility. Usenet pioneers envisioned discussion groups being made available around the world and at low cost as part of an emerging WorldNet which would be world wide and multifaceted.

In response to a call for people interested in forming such an association of netizens I received responses from about 40 different people. The responses mainly came from North America, with a number from Japan and Europe. The overwhelming sentiment however, where ever the response came from, was "how can I help?" There was an urgency present in the messages.

Concern existed with how to communicate successfully across cultures and societal differences. "What needs to be accomplished?" was asked. A desire was expressed to think globally enough to make such an organization international in scope. So while benefits were seen in offline organizing, it was important to tie these efforts together in a way which contributed to a new global cooperative community. The grassroots development was highlighted as a difference between this possible association and current societies focusing on technology and the Internet.

It is important to bridge the gap between the discussion about access and availability with offline grass-roots action and development. The component will guide the physical world development and feedback from that experience will inform the discussions. Individuals in localities concerned with the further development, expansion and accessibility of the Net help the technology by spreading literacy and understanding about the new global community breaking previous social and geographic boundaries. Given the vision of a future networked world and the tenuousness of the current time in realizing this vision, it is important that concerned individuals come together to discuss how to protect and expand the world, while

working with others toward making the networked future a reality.

During a recent trip to Japan, I met a number of networking enthusiasts who were interested in spreading the Internet in Japan. They found the Netizen concept to be helpful in their efforts. One student who I met in Tokyo, Hiroyuki Takahashi, suggested that there was a need to form a Netizens Association. This association could work toward educating people and helping them to gain literacy in both the technical and social aspects of working, living and playing on the Net. In addition, this Netizens Association would function as a forum to bring people together to protect and advance the Net as a new public commons and global community. I propose to work toward forming a prototype for a local Netizens Association chapter. The success of a few such chapters could lead to the spreading of chapters focused around educational institutions or communities. This would be in conjunction with efforts by people working for similar goals in other countries across the globe like Japan, and Canada.

While I have global concerns and contacts, it is important to start locally and concentrate on forming local associations that will help those in particular areas learn about the value of networking and help them to spread what they have learned to their schools and communities.

I also see the need to have public access to Usenet and email available via public terminals in schools, libraries, and other public places. Part of the work of a local Netizens Association might be to encourage government, school and library officials to make such access available. Also, I am forming a mailing list for people to discuss the principles behind a Netizens Association. In addition, this list will be for communication about the formation of local chapters and the discussion about how Netizens can support the Net and help work against ignorant actions against the Net by individuals or groups.

This is an important time in the development of a new form of human communication that the computer makes possible. The recent passage in the USA of the Communications Act of 1996 will be setting up machinery in the USA to determine whether access will be available to all or limited to the few. It is a struggle in all countries to make access available to all who desire it. This is a call for people to come together to discuss and work toward these goals.

Appendix

Following is a summary of the concerns and thoughts expressed by those who responded to my initial post about the need for a Netizens Association:

How serious is this effort to create "chapters" of the Netizen's Assoc.? … I think I can help you in a small way and, if, after reading my thoughts, you still think so, let me know.

I … educate people on a daily basis about the net. I have started a popular Internet Interest Group in the store and loved doing it. One of the ways I stay informed is subscribing to the Cyber-Rights mailing list, amongst others.
fascinating sub-study of the ability of the virtual world Netizens to have an impact upon the physical world in which they interact.

We are so engrossed with what the technology can do, we fail to log off in time to stand up for the potential in the physical world. It is no wonder we get things like the CDA, we are children with new toys trying to convince professional adults we are serious.

I would like to believe that the manifesto of the DigitaLiberty people, technology will save us, will eventually become true. Maybe it will for my child's grandchildren. Today we need to act in the real world. How would you feel about me putting together a Netizen chapter? I am moving to a new city in a couple of weeks and the chance exists that I may not have to work right away. In other words, time. The main purpose would be to educate those offline or those but [who are only] reading the ads.

make me a netizen.

Has much research been done on "individual base reasoning," I wonder? When we think of membership to a race, country or region, we are faced with a multitude of problems including overlapping, etc. But on an individual basis, persons are members of their individual community of one and also one of the 5.8 billion that make up our human population. Of course, as a living being or glob of matter we are also members of something bigger, but considering persons on an individual basis, human level, as in a Netizen Association seems to be the natural flow of things, and less problematic than race, nationality, etc.

I suspect that you are receiving overwhelming

support for a Netizens Association.

May I suggest one point that should be included in the mission statement? – To minimize the damage to the benefits of existing cultures, while facilitating the benefits of change to those cultures.

If there is anything that I can do to assist you please contact me.

Was anything I could do to assist in such an effort. Do you plan on forming a mailing list (or is there already one to which I can subscribe)?

Have you been working at all at home on this idea or is this an international thing?

I have all kinds of questions, reservations and concerns, but I shall defer expressing them until I learn how the concept develops.

"netizen" phenomenon is to look at it in terms of it being an incredibly successful "meme."

What needs to be accomplished?

The degree of ignorance displayed by the "experts" giving presentations on the topic was, in fact, shocking. It seems to me very bad laws are made on the basis of ignorance this profound. What do you suggest?

I'd be interested in being on you mailing list, as long as you don't think I'll get swamped.

I'd be very interested in joining if it doesnt cost a lot.

* It seems now that a day doesn't pass without another attack from a government on our ability to live freely on the Net:
– U.S. (encryption restrictions; CDA; state AG suits; …)
– China (Internet packet filtering; ISP licensing)
– Germany (newsgroup)
– Singapore (Internet packet filtering; ISP licensing)

* While you note a colleague said netizens "are especially not people who come for isolated gain or profit" I would hope that you wouldn't use this to screen people out. My work is my life and I believe this is also the case for others in our company as well as millions of other Netizens. Certain people or disciplines may not like "profit," but, being intellectually honest, profit (what's left from the harvest after costs) is what lets us eat.

I believe that the WELL and the River are held back because they never developed the grand scheme for a truly global community.

I think it embodied very well a few aspects of the Internet, such as fast global communication, and a sense of community.

Automatically assume that japan would have been up to date on this latest technology

I wanted to lend a hand. The Internet in western Japan has really taken hold in the last six months, and I'm trying to promote its use esp. among students and ESL/EFL learners.

Global Netizen Organization … . I certainly believe the spirit of the NET, or ordinary people having an unfettered voice and being able to talk with others all over the world will bring world peace and respect for all cultures.
Also, tell me what would be involved in my being the "Canadian" connection for the Netizen Organization?

I think one needs a sharp aim if such an association will have any chance of being more than a flea.

How about an adopt an "offliner" program? Get them up and running & educate them on the importance of what they are using? If you do get a mailing list going please subscribe me. I feel I must warn you that I believe these can get in the way of real action.

I am used to groups such as the "Association for Computing Machinery," the Internet Society (a society promotes the Internet), and so on. That is completely backwards from what the Netizens Association would be, I would think.

I am working in the conventional communication fields and I feel that our old society will be getting attacked and blamed by the netizens. There will be some frictions between both societies, but I do not worry about them. As people who are engaging in the communication fields know the essence or the purpose of communication. They enjoy first to make the pass road between unknown worlds, then to have a contact with unknown people and finally to become close friends.

I feel the netizen idea is very similar to that of amateur ham radio. Reminding the idea of young age, I would like to cooperate with netizens to make the peaceful netizen world. Thank you for your message.

One of the problems which I think its problem is, growing Internet in Japan seems forming "Japanese cyber space." I know that there's no physical barriers in cyber space, but language barriers are hard to cross for many Japanese. Many young people are excited by web, and start to surf and making their web pages. But most of their web pages are made for Japanese and they only surf for Japanese pages.

I am afraid that Japan is tend to be isolated and too nationalistic. If they meet serious argument, they tend to misunderstand to be threatened. So I think individual Japanese should communicate with individual people outside Japan. And I strongly think THE NET is the only chance to do it.

Those deeply involved become elitist and not only don't wish to help others become involved, but often want to discourage people from becoming involved. In the case of the internet this should go the opposite way.

Have Netizen organizations been formed or will they be? And what would their duties be exactly?

Well, I think of anything you succeeded in demonstrating how the net can transcend such traditional boundaries and how such a perceived different group of people can share such universal goals.

What I am left confused with is the persuasive side of the e-mail message. So if there's any call to action message – specifically – embedded, then I didn't catch it. But again, I doubt that would be the main thrust of what you wrote.

Don't get me wrong, Michael, I'm not trying to discredit what you are saying. I love the hope and excitement you exhibit talking about this. But you need to examine more closely how cultures work, imho, to further yr argument. Again, my opinions.

However, I'm curious and a bit confused about your idea of a Netizen's Association. Are you proposing a global group of Netizens that can act as a political lobby for net rights/consciousness in individual countries? Sort of like a Green Party comprised of Net regulars who wish to move toward a global consciousness facilitated by the Net?

Is there some way to have a presence on Usenet as well as setting up a mailing list to work toward a Netizens Association?

Michael Hauben, Teachers College Dept. of Communication
Netizens Netbook, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/
WWW Music Index, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/music/

[Editor's Note: The following is a post Michael Hauben made to multiple Usenet newsgroups on May 30, 1997. It contains his joyful announcement that *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* has appeared in a print edition. This post is at: https://groups.google.com/g/comp.edu/c/if-m9bfvsnc/m/5X6rD0RXZOIJ.]

Netizens Netbook Finally in a Print Edition (-:

The Netizens Netbook is now in print! After three long years, it is nice to see at last a print edition. It is a tribute to the Net and the contributions and support of many of you that it has finally appeared in an "old-world" book.

The draft remains at: http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/ which we will try and update when we get the chance to be the latest version.

The book's full title is *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* and the authors are Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben. The ISBN number is 0-8186-7706-6. The publisher is the IEEE Computer Society Press.

If you do not see it in your local bookstore, you can ask them to get copies in by giving them the above information.

We welcome people interested in reviewing the book or other comments. Write Ronda at: rh120@columbia.edu or ronda@umcc.umich.edu.

Thanks for the help and support!
/Michael,
hauben@columbia.edu

The table of contents is as follows:
Foreword: By Tom Truscott
Preface: What is a Netizen?
Introduction: Participatory Networks

Michael Hauben, Teachers College Dept. of Communication
Netizens Netbook, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/
WWW Music Index, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/music/

[Editor's Note: On July 14, 1997 a book party was held in NYC to celebrate the publication in May of that year of *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*. Below is an announcement of that event that was posted in soc.culture.french.]

Bastille Day Celebration in NYC

In recognition of Bastille Day and the efforts for people around the world to gain influence in the developing of democracy around the world, we have chosen Bastille Day to celebrate the publication of the print edition of Netizens.

Labyrinth Books and the IEEE Computer Society present a reading, book discussion and party celebrating the release of *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* by Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben.

Martin Greenberger, Director of the Center for Digital Media, UCLA, writes, "Michael and Ronda Hauben sketch out a provocative declaration of Netizen rights in their appendix to this engrossing, well-researched, and very useful book. The Haubens reserve the term Netizen for positive contributors to the Net, the good citizens whose heroic precursors from the 1960s are richly chronicled in a flowing historical and sociological account that is not to be missed."

Thomas Truscott, co-developer of Usenet, says, "Netizens is an ambitions 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."

Join us at Labyrinth Books
536 West 112th Street
NYC (between Broadway and Amsterdam)
on Monday, July 14th at 6:30 pm.

For a look at the contents of the book, go to http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/, to see an early

draft version. Call 212.865.1588 for more information.

This event is free, and refreshments will be served. To reach Labyrinth Books, take the 1/9 subway line to 110th Street and walk two blocks north, and turn right on 112th Street.

Michael Hauben, Teachers College Dept. of Communication
Netizens Netbook, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/
WWW Music Index, http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/music/

[Editor's Note: The following is a call for submissions posted on the Usenet newsgroup comp.decom.telecom on Sept 2, 2002. It can be seen at: https://groups.google.com/g/comp.dcom.telecom/c/rPUqiE2yeK0/m/JZRQ51G_eBMJ.]

Call for Submissions that Develop or Explore the Concept of Netizen

The emergence of the netizen was formulated by Michael Hauben as part of the research he was doing in 1992/1993. He recognized that there were people who considered themselves to be citizens of the net (net.citizen). These users were seeking to spread access for all to the Net. They understood the importance of the Net in spreading human to human computer facilitated communication. These users recognized the need to contribute to make the Net a valuable resource for all.

Michael formulated the concept in an introduction to the new world that was being born . (See introduction and conclusion to "The Net and the Netizen: The Impact the Net has on People's Lives," first posted in 1993, and then published in a print edition in 1997 and also available at: http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook.)

Some of Michael's early research appeared on Usenet and then in the *Amateur Computerist* newsletter. His research inspired others to apply or develop the concept of netizen.

It is now [2002] 10 years later. We would like to document the further development and application of the concept of netizen (and of the vision of the future of the net) that developed since Michael's research in 1992/1993. Also we want to project into the future about what the emergence of the netizen can mean to the further development of the Internet and of our society in general.

We are seeking submissions, including articles, poems, cartoons, stories, plays etc. that develop or explore the concept of Netizen that has emerged along with the development of the Internet and Usenet.

Submissions are due Sept 30, 2002. Please write and let us know if you will have a submission or if you have an idea/interest/suggestion for the upcoming issue.

Long live the netizen and netizenship.
Send submissions to: jrh@ais.org or ronda@ais.org

Ronda Hauben
Editor: *The Amateur Computerist*
http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn

[TELECOM Digest Editor's Note: I personally would like to see all the regular contributors here get essays to Ronda ASAP for this upcoming issue of ACN. She and Michael are good people to have around. Their book a few years ago, 'Netizens' was widely read and admired by many of us. Do what you can for her please. PAT]

[Editor's Note: On March 14, 2022, Dr Fang Xingdong, head of the OHI (Oral History of the Internet) project in China posted about Michael Hauben and his family on the blog china website in Chinese. Earlier that day, Ronda and Jay Hauben had a zoom session with Dr. Fang and his staff introducing themselves and answering questions about Michael. The following is a machine translation into English of Dr Fang's blog post. The original can be seen at: https://fxd.blogchina.com/794986680.html.]

Oral History of the Internet A Special Interview: "Netizen" Michael Hauben

On February 27, I received an email from Ronda Hauben, saying that she had seen books published of Internet oral history interviews and that she had learned about the Oral History of the Internet project during a WeChat video with Academician Hu Qiheng. Later, I also received an email from Academician Hu Qiheng. Of course I am no stranger to them. I knew about them in the 1990s. Ronda Hauben's son, Michael Hauben, coined the term "Netizen," and in 1997 the two co-authored a splendid Internet history book, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*.

Michael, who was born on May 1, 1973, proposed to study computing at the age of 5; in the first grade of primary school took his work to participate in the science exhibition only for senior students, and became the only junior student to participate in the exhibition; At the age of 10, he used a TV as a monitor and a Timex Sinclair computer with 3K memory, and wrote games on this computer together with his father Jay Hauben; he became active in major BBSs in the early 1980s and was in one of the earliest computer user groups. In 1993, the term "Netizen" was coined during his undergraduate studies. The term was coined in his article titled "The Net and Netizens: The Impact the Net has on People's Lives," which quickly spread. He was not yet 20 years old then.

At the university level, although Michael Hauben was a computer major, he preferred courses such as philosophy and ethics, and was a music lover, rather than courses such as economics. In the late 1990s, with the rise of the Internet wave, the whole world was in a frenzy for the commercialization of the Internet. As an important capital market, New York is undoubtedly the center of the myth that the Internet benefits. However, Michael Hauben has always focused on the spirit of openness and sharing of the Internet, rather than the commercialization opportunities brought by the Internet. His speeches and writings adhere to the pure Internet spirit. The evolution of his mother, Ronda Hauben, also reflects this rare purity. In an article titled "What the Net Means to Me," Michael firmly believes that the Internet will remain public, open, and non-commercial. "The Internet means personal power in a world where there is little or no personal power." "The Internet is, by its very nature, communication between individuals … a vehicle for the dissemination of people's ideas and aspirations."

He entered Columbia University in 1991, majoring in computer science, graduating in 1995. He obtained his master's degree in 1997, and also published the book "Netizen" in the same year. Michael Hauben, or his family of three, is not only the creator of the word "netizen," but also endows the word with a soul, which is the best embodiment of the Internet spirit of openness, sharing, freedom and equality or the spirit of "netizen." Their love for the Internet, their enthusiasm and passion for spreading the Internet to the world, is very contagious. However, it is very deplorable that in 1999 Michael Hauben was involved in a car accident and passed away in June 2001 at the age of 28. After the tragic loss of their only child,

Ronda Hauben and Jay Hauben took up the unfinished mission of their son and continued to work hard to promote the spirit of "Netizen" around the world.

The story of Ronda Hauben's family of three fits perfectly with the original intention of the Oral History of the Internet Project. Therefore, this video interview is of special significance. Zhong Bu said that our project will publish a book for the story of their family of three. Today's interview is the first, Ronda Hauben and Jay Hauben share the story of the three of them. This interview method is also the first time. When they talked about the story of their beloved son, the two complemented each other, and many vivid stories emerged, which made us deeply infected. Their parent-child relationship is so harmonious, the parents are willing to give Mike all the assistance they can.

Doing the oral history of the Internet is indeed a very hard job, but at this time, our inner harvest is unparalleled. I hope that our work is for the Internet and the world, and we can dig out more wonderful people and things. Through their stories and their lives, the true meaning of the Internet spirit will be more manifested, and the brilliance of the Internet spirit will be further reflected.

This year, the Internet Oral History Project turns 15 years old, and this harvest is undoubtedly our greatest motivation. The first interview, was in the morning in China, an hour and a half passed quickly, and it was already late at night in New York. It can't be too late, so, we look forward to the second time for further in-depth chat.

[At the bottom of the blog post was this statement about Internet Oral History by Dr Fang Xingdong]

Whether history is created by the masses or heroes of the times, it is always created by people. Whether it is the times that create heroes, or the heroes who create the times, create history and change the course of history, it is often a part of individuals who stand out. At an important juncture in the historical process, they did not miss the critical moment entrusted by the times, relying on their own personal characteristics and unique effort and made unique contributions and impossible miracles. They are the representatives of the historical process, and they are the models that condense the changes of the times. Focusing on and deeply penetrating them can better restore the splendor of history and show the unique

creativity of human beings. It is no exaggeration to say that these people are the instigators and leaders who pushed China from a semi-agricultural and semi-industrial society into an information society. It is the hero and heroine who promotes the entire human race from industrial civilization to higher information civilization. Their personal achievements and significance of the times will continue to be highlighted and recognized over time.