

Comments from *JABA* Readers

INTERNET RESOURCES IN APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

JOSEPH J. PLAUD

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Internet communication is becoming an important tool for both academic and clinical areas in psychology and behavior analysis. The Internet, a confederation of thousands of computer systems covering the entire globe (Plaud, 1996b), can significantly enhance behavior analysis in at least three major areas: (a) information exchange and communication among behavior analysts through list servers, (b) dissemination of empirical data and commentary through on-line journals and information servers, and (c) promotion of programs and services in behavior analysis. This commentary provides specific examples in each of these areas and addresses the basics of connecting to the Internet.

DESCRIPTORS: Internet, World Wide Web, behavior analysis, computers, technology, communication

The Internet is a collection of thousands of computers, originally sponsored by the United States government, that now spans the globe and is dedicated to sharing information. The World Wide Web represents the next generation in Internet applications. As discussed by the Science Museum of London (1995) at their own Web site (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/usage/>), the Web was initially developed at CERN, the European laboratory of particle physics based in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1989, which also developed the HyperText Transmission Protocol (HTTP). The Web is a graphical user environment and is ideal for the presentation of graphical data.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Web is that it is not specific to any particular

computer type, and software now exists for all major varieties of mainframe and personal computers (Science Museum of London, 1995). A Web server is a computer that stores the information located on a home page, including both graphic and text files, as well as other files, and transmits that information across the Internet. A Web browser is software, such as Netscape, that requests information from a Web server, processes the information requested, and then integrates text and images to form a graphical document on the computer that requests the information. To access the Internet and the Web, an individual has to have an account from an Internet service provider (ISP). Regarding the Internet, most individuals have access through an E-mail (electronic mail) account. Most major commercial online services such as CompuServe, Prodigy, and America Online provide E-mail and Web space for their customers, and most colleges and universities also run their own dedicated

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Joseph J. Plaud, Department of Psychology, University of North Dakota, P.O. Box 8380, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202-8380 (E-mail: plaud@badlands.nodak.edu).

Internet and Web sites (please check with your system operator or computer department).

Behavior Analysis Online

As mentioned above, the Internet offers many valuable tools for behavior analysis. The first tool, information exchange and communication among behavior analysts through list servers (i.e., a service that shares E-mail with members of a list), is the most basic way that behavior analysts can contact each other around the world. The largest list server is called Behav-An, which is dedicated to behavior analysis, incorporating discussion of basic research and clinical issues, especially the interrelatedness of behavior analysis to clinical psychology and psychiatry and other interdisciplinary areas. Behav-An is moderated by the present author, and has over 650 members from around the world. When an individual joins the list server, he or she receives a copy of each post that any other member sends to the list. Likewise, any time a member posts a message to the list, all members receive a copy. If you would like to join the list, send an E-mail to listserv@listserv.nodak.edu: subscribe behav-an yourfirstname yourlastname (e.g., subscribe behav-an Franklin D. Roosevelt). When you join the list, you will receive a welcome file with instructions on how to post to the service. Behavior analysts use the list to post information and ask questions about a variety of issues related to the field. For example, recent discussions have included terms in behavior analysis, the use of behavior analysis in global settings (i.e., metacontingencies), and a variety of case study reports and questions about locating appropriate reference materials and interpreting single-subject data. There is no limit to the scope and functional services that are available to members of the Behav-An list.

Another important resource offered by the Internet is dissemination of empirical data

and commentary through on-line journals and information servers. On the Web, there are three main graphical resources available for behavior analysts in the area of data exchange. Abstracts, anthologies, tables of contents, and selected reprints are offered for both the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* (at <http://www.envmed.rochester.edu/wwwrap/behavior/jaba/jabahome.htm>) and the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* (at <http://www.envmed.rochester.edu/wwwrap/behavior/jeab/jeabhome.htm>).

Also, a new peer-reviewed graphical journal of behavior analysis and therapy debuted on the Web on June 6, 1996, entitled the *Journal of Behavior Analysis and Therapy* or *jBAT* (at <http://sage.und.nodak.edu/org/jBAT/jbatinfo.html>). Important for behavior analysts to consider is that the Internet, and especially the World Wide Web, provide a technology-based opportunity for behavioral scientists that may ultimately address and overcome all of the problems associated with the printed word (Plaud, 1996a). By the turn of the century many librarians predict that many or most of the major journals in the sciences and humanities will be on-line (D'Andraia, 1994).

According to J. Franks (personal communication, February 5, 1995), a mathematician at Northwestern University, ease of access and the quality of their user interface give electronic journals the ability to surpass the functionality of a traditional journal. The electronic forum might, for example, allow a behavior analyst to browse and search for relevant data electronically, saving time and effort and maximizing information exchange. Electronic storage of journal articles will decrease access time, allowing researchers who live in major population centers as well as geographically isolated scholars the ability to gather immediately upon publication of an article (Plaud, 1996a).

Finally, the Internet permits the promotion of programs and services in behavior

analysis. Any behavior analyst or institution with an account can advertise and promote their professional services. On the Web, for example, a major site is maintained at the University of South Florida (at <http://www.coedu.usf.edu/behavior/behavior.html>). According to information provided at the site, the purpose of the site is "to provide a low-response cost outlet to some of the interesting things that are available on the Internet relating to behavior analysis." Other sites are maintained, for example, at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (at [ftp://alpha1.csd.uwm.edu/pub/Psychology/Behavior Analysis/](ftp://alpha1.csd.uwm.edu/pub/Psychology/Behavior%20Analysis/)) and the Southeastern Behavior Analysis Center (at <http://jsucc.jsu.edu/psychology/sebac.html>). These services all provide information about a variety of applied behavior analysis resources.

Although the Internet and the Web are relatively new arrivals to our technology base, it can be seen that behavior analysis is well represented. In terms of sharing information, obtaining data, and promoting programs and services in applied behavior analysis, the Internet offers a significant opportunity to behavior analysts to communicate among themselves and with others in related disciplines, to share databases and present

new data (especially in the form of electronic journals), and promote their own applied behavior analysis services. With each passing day more individuals gain access to the Internet. Within the next 10 years, this form of communication may be in the front tier of disseminating information on applied behavior analysis across the globe. As such, our field may be well served by continued efforts by behavior analysts to utilize the Internet to promote the philosophy of behaviorism and the science of fundamental and applied behavior analysis.

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Received July 10, 1996

Final acceptance July 22, 1996

Action Editor, David P. Wacker