The Psychology of the Internet

By Patricia Wallace

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An engaging and research-based text, The Psychology of the Internet provides a balanced overview of the psychological aspects of cyberspace. It explores crucial questions about the Internet's effects on human behavior, such as why we often act in uncharacteristic ways in online environments and how social media influence the impressions we form and our personal relationships. The book's balanced approach to the subject encourages readers to think critically about the psychology of the Internet, and how and why their own online behavior unfolds. Drawing on classic and contemporary research, this second edition examines new trends in internet technology, online dating, online aggression, group dynamics, child development, prosocial behavior, online gaming, gender and sexuality, privacy and surveillance, the net's addictive properties, and strategies for shaping the net's future.

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The Psychology of the Internet By Patricia Wallace Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1185619 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2015-11-10
- Released on: 2016-01-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.98" h x .91" w x 5.98" l, 1.20 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 392 pages

Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
The Internet abounds with folk psychologists. People who have never so much as read a Dr. Joyce Brothers column are happy to explain, after their first taste of a chat room or online discussion, just why it is that humans behave in curious ways on the Net. By now, though, the Internet has been around long enough that a fair number of actually credentialed social scientists have given it a close look, and Patricia Wallace has done us all the favor of summing up their observations--and hers--in a single volume, *The Psychology of the Internet*. A clear, concise, and comprehensive overview of the emotional and behavioral dimensions of life online, this brief textbook should be basic reading for every armchair cybershrink.

Starting with a useful breakdown of the variety of Internet experiences (chat spaces, newsgroups, home pages, auction sites), Wallace moves on to examine the many ways these settings can influence the ways we act and feel. Such hot-button topics as flame wars, online gender-bending, cyberporn, and Internet "addiction" (as well as subtler matters like online impression formation and group dynamics) here get a levelheaded look, anchored in studies not only of the phenomena themselves but of human behavior in general. Wallace writes in a brisk, simple style--employing an easy blend of anecdote and science--and the conclusion that gradually emerges is just as straightforward: Contrary to popular mythology, people online aren't any more or less twisted than people offline. They just twist a little differently, is all. *--Julian Dibbell*

From Publishers Weekly
Even though we may behave differently in cyberspace than in the "real world," our actions are predictable responses to particular features of online environments, contends Wallace as she sets out to conceptualize behavior on the Internet. Drawing on the latest Internet simulation studies as well as classic psychological experiments and business and social science research, she provides an expansive overview of online behaviorAfrom deception and aggression to altruism and romanceAas well as of the elements that make the Internet "addictive." Among Wallace's observations: real-world psychological research confirms that people tend to become less inhibited in anonymous situations; thus, online environments that foster anonymity can prompt individuals to behave in more extreme ways (e.g., acting aggressively or making intimate personal disclosures) than they would in a face-to-face context. On the other hand, individuals don't tend to conform to unanimous group positions on the Net as they often do in person. The relative lack of consequences for behavior on the Internet is an important influencing factor: Internet users can experiment with alterations in their identities that they might not be willing to risk in the real world. However, Wallace cites many examples of poseurs who have inflicted undue harm on their trusting online companions. This is a well-organized and accessible primer on the impact of the Internet on social and workplace dynamics. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal
New-media expert and Director of Information Management at the University of Maryland, Wallace has written an ambitious book on the psychological dynamics of the Internet in all its formsAe-mail, chat rooms, the web, etc. With chapters devoted to a variety of Internet issues, this book perhaps bites off a bit more than it can chew. While it is organized in broad, textbook fashion, few of the 12 chapters do their topics justice; Internet pornography, for instance, is given only about 13 pages. The discussion of several factors, such as impression formation and aggression, are thought-provoking and develop some interesting ideas, but much of Wallace's evidence is anecdotal and reveals the relative lack of experimental rigor in this emerging area of human experience. This very newness partly explains the absence of substantial scientific data on the Internet in popular culture while also making Wallace's one of the few books on the subject; perhaps we

should wait for better efforts on both counts. Recommended for larger public libraries only.ADavid E. Valencia, King Cty. Lib. Sys., Federal Way, WA

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Musick:

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