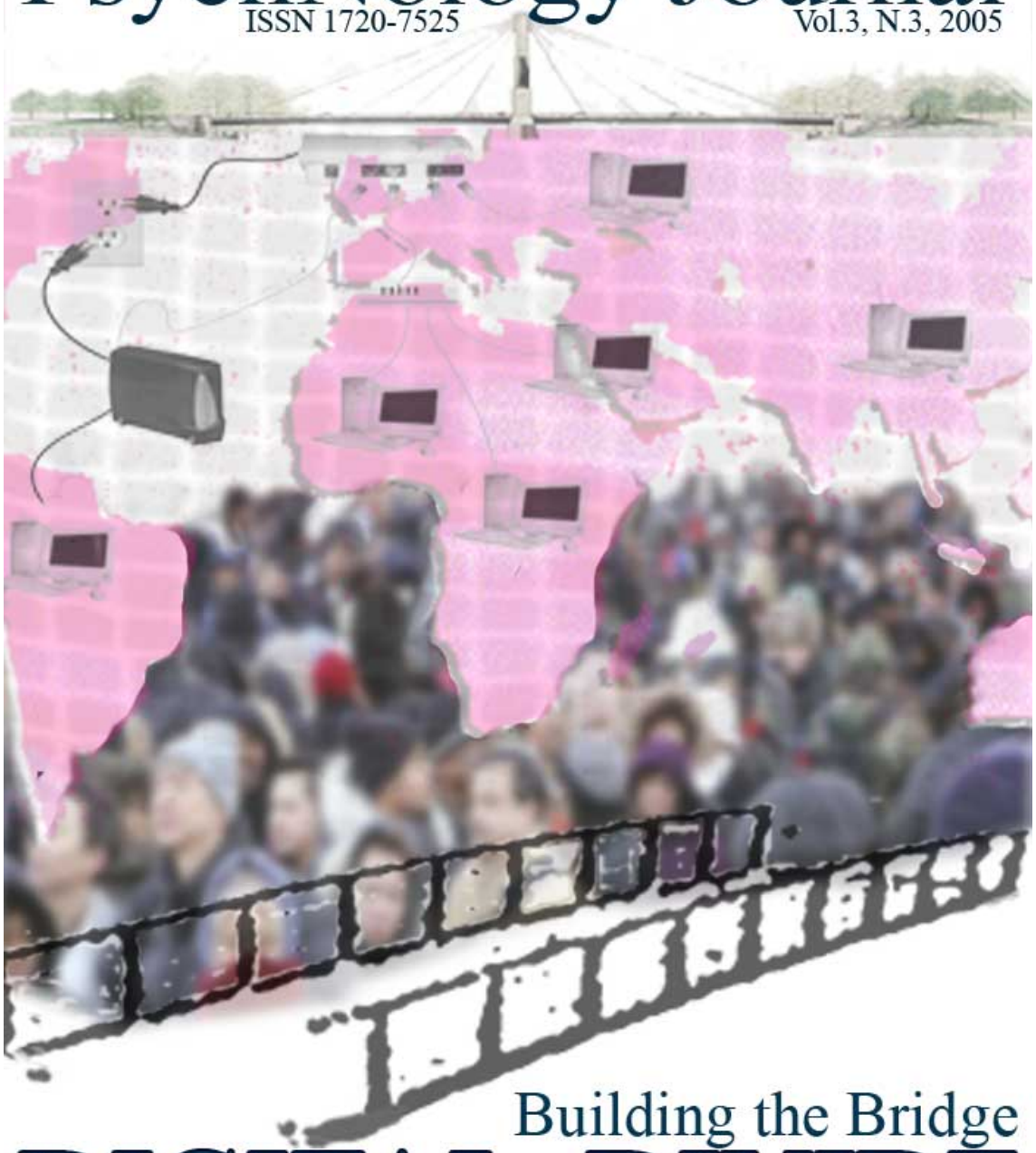
PsychNology Journal
ISSN 1720-7525 Vol.3, N.3, 2005



Building the Bridge

DIGITAL DIVIDE

ISSN 1720-7525 **Volume 3 N. 3, December 2005**

PSYCHNOLOGY JOURNAL

The Other Side of Technology

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Luciano Gamberini
Department of General Psychology, Padova University, Italy.

Giuseppe Riva
Catholic University of Milan, Italy.

Anna Spagnolli
Department of General Psychology, Padova University, Italy.

EDITORS

Mariano Alcañiz Raya: Medical Image Computing Laboratory Universidad Politecnica de Valencia. Valencia, Spain.
Cristian Berrío Zapata: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Bogotà, Colombia.
Rosa Baños: Universidad Politecnica de Valencia, Department of Personalidad, Evaluation y Tratamientos Psicólogicos. Valencia, Spain.
Cristina Botella: Departamento de Psicología Básica, Clínica y Psicobiología, Univeritat Jaume I. Castellón, Spain.
Jonathan Freeman: Goldsmiths College, University of London. United Kingdom.
Christine Hine: Department of Sociology, University of Surrey. Guildford, United Kingdom.
Christian Heath: Management Centre, King's College. London, United Kingdom.
Wijnand Ijsselsteijn: Human-Technology Interaction Group, Department of Technology Management, Eindhoven University of Technology. The Netherlands.
Matthew Lombard: Department of Broadcasting, Telecommunications and Mass Media, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA
Angela Schorr: Medienpsychologischen Labor, Universität Siegen, Germany.
Alexander Voiskounsky: M.I.N.D.Lab Moscow, Psychology Department, Moscow State University. Russia.
John A Waterworth: MUSE research group, Umeå University. Northern Sweden.

CONSULTING EDITORS

Hans Christian Arnseth: Department of Educational Research, University of Oslo, Norway.
Marco Casarotti: Department of General Psychology, University of Padova, Italy.
Roy Davies: Department of Design Sciences, Lund University, Sweden.
Andrea Gaggioli: Faculty of Medicine of the University of Milan, Italy.
Pietro Guardini: Department of General Psychology, Padova University, Italy.
Frode Guribye: Intermedia Center, University of Bergen, Norway.
Raquel Navarro-Prieto: Internet Interdisciplinary Institute Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Castelldefels, Spain.
Stephan Roy: Hospital Sainte Anne, Paris, France.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Lucia A. Reno': Department of General Psychology, Padova University, Italy.

PSYCHNOLOGY JOURNAL, PNJ:
Published online since Summer 2002
Web Site: http://www.psychnology.org
Submissions: articles@psychnology.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents…… p. 225

TARGET ISSUE: The Digital Divide

Editorial Preface…….. p. 226

Virtual enclaves or global networks? The role of Information and Communication Technologies in development cooperation……..... p. 228
Iginio Gagliardone

Gender Differences of the Internet-related Stereotypes in Russia..... p. 243
Olga V. Mitina & Alexander E. Voiskounsky

Internet usage and gender digital divide in a Romanian students' sample ……..... p. 265
Ioana Codoban

OTHER CONTENTS

The Impact of Telepresence on Cultural Transmission through Bishoujo Games ……..... p. 292
Matthew T. Jones

The Effect of the Emotion-related Channel in 3D Virtual Communication Environments……..... p. 312
Mikio Kamada, Mioko Ambe, Katsushige Hata, Eiju Yamada, & Yuichi Fujimura

Editorial Preface

The term Digital Divide (DD) began to be used by the US public administration to identify an unequal access to the computer services across the population (source: Wikipedia). Today, the concept is used more broadly to indicate the existing gap in accessing new technologies, due to wealth differences, to social relegation, to low education level, to poor infrastructure. The Digital Divide is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, registered in both rich countries, where it strikes the weaker layers of the population, and in the developing ones, trapping them in an endless spiral where the impossibility of using technical resources brings about the impossibility to decrease the disadvantage in other critical dimensions. Data were eloquent after the first Internet boom in 1998: any 1000 people, in the US there were 661 telephone lines, 459 personal computers and 847 Tv sets; in Italy, 451 telephone lines, 173 personal computers and 451 TV sets; in Colombia, 173 telephone lines, 28 personal computers and 217 TV sets; in Pakistan, 19 telephone lines, 4 personal computers, 88 TV sets and in Mozambico only 4 telephone lines, 2 personal computers and 3 Tv sets (United Nations Development Programme, quoted by Digital-Divide.it).

Various answers, although still insufficient, are paving the way to what will hopefully be a solution. Starting from hardware recycling, the so-called "trashware", passing through hardware integration, which combines the computing power of several different machines, and arriving at open source software to be freely copied and distributed. The United Nations have set up a High-Level Expert Panel, which presented at the Millenium Assembly in 2000 the first global plan to overcome the Digital Divide. In 1998, during the Global Village, an India-based seminar on the Digital Divide, the *Bangalore Declaration on Information technology for developing countries* was written; in addition, the idea of creating a low budget computer, based on a visual language and possibly supporting on-line activities for disadvantaged markets took shape. Thus, guided by the Indian Institute of Science and Encore ltd, after only three years, the Simputer appears, and Nicholas Negroponte announces at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis the creation of the "$100 laptop".

The Digital Divide, widening as a problem (digitaldivide.org), has also emerged as a topic; several places on the Internet are devoted to debate the issue. The most popular is probably the Digital Divide Network, www.digitaldividenetwork.org, the Internet's largest community "working to bridge the digital divide". Our Journal tries to contribute, first by facilitating open access and dissemination at no fee of scientific content, and now dedicating a special issue to this topic, which will be the first of a series.

Iginio Gagliardone, writing his article "*Virtual enclaves or global networks? The role of Information and Communication Technologies in development cooperation*" from the field of a UNESCO intervention in Ethiopia, tracks the changes that the concept of digital divide has undergone since its appearance, 10 years ago. This paper opens the triad of contributions on the digital divide of this issue of PsychNology Journal, illustrating how the presuppositions supporting the discourse on digital divide have changed, as well as the spirit of the initiatives made with the overt purpose of bridging the digital gap. Gagliardone shows -with the help of examples, landmark scholarly contributions and statistics- that no universal recipes can help deal with the problem and that exporting habits from one country to the another may revert a solution into a problem.

The next two contributions consider the way in which the digital divide gets internal, as in the case of the "gender divide". They investigate the psychological aspects of ICT usage in the East Europe, a phenomenon that is poorly covered, and discuss their results in comparisons with data on gender divide from other

geographical areas. Olga V. Mitina and Alexander E. Voiskounsky in their "*Gender differences of the Internet-related stereotypes in Russia*", investigate with a questionnaire the nature of the stereotypes regarding various 'characters' connected to the Internet user and do so with a complex methodology based on 'multiple identification' paradigm. In particular, they show the effect of self-assessment (SA) on the nature of male and female stereotypes. Ioana Codoban describes a study on the usage of the Internet conducted in Romania, part of a broader survey involving also Italy, the Netherlands, Spain. In her article "*Internet usage and gender digital divide in a Romanian students' sample*", she presents the Romanian sample in general and then compares gender subgroups. She also hypothesizes that an important effect in this kind of studies can be played by cultural preference about self-rating. This is surely crucial, for the items of a questionnaire or their underlying dimensions cannot be assumed as being cross-culturally equivalent.

PNJ hosts two contributions in the 'other contents' section. The first one reflects on Bishoujo Games, and on the way in which non-Japanese players experience them. In "*The Impact of Telepresence on Cultural Transmission through Bishoujo Games*", Matthew T. Jones proposes an hypothesis, namely that these games allow the user to be teleported into another culture, and examines the strategies contributing to this 'travel'. According to Jones, in an hypothesis that is worth being pursued, the player act from an 'homunculus' position with respect to the virtual environment of the game, and in this way his/her presence in such environment is realized through *tele*presence. The second contribution to this section, "*The Effect of the Emotion-related Channel in 3D Virtual Communication Environments*" is authored by Mikio Kamada, Mioko Ambe, Katsushige Hata, Eiju Yamada and Yuichi Fujimura. This study addresses a topic that is attracting great attention, namely emotional computing. They investigate the use versus non use of emoticons in group communication among children from elementary school in Japan, and the effects on performance and satisfaction. Their results show the positive effects of graphic elements adding an emotive layer to textual communication.

We would like to express our gratitude to the persons who have joined the Editorial Board this year and to those who have served as referees for the manuscripts submitted to the journal. We all know that it is an anonymous yet necessary help they provide to the community and the Journal, ensuring with the carefulness and generosity of their help a good feed-back to authors and a good quality of the material that makes it to publication. Their work will not be appreciated enough. We also would like to thank the scholars who have chosen PNJ as scenery from which their work can be disseminated, and our readers, for their attention.

Sincerely,

Luciano Gamberini,
Anna Spagnolli