

39th SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE (SETI) – The
Next Steps (A4)
SETI II : SETI and Society (2)

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SOCIAL NETWORKING: IMPLICATIONS FOR POST DETECTION COMMUNICATIONS

Abstract

Almost 1.75 billion people are now connected to the Internet. According to the National Science Foundation, the web is now the primary source for the public in seeking information about science. However, while the spread of the Internet has been rapid and continues to grow, social networking has – in Internet parlance - gone viral. More than 350 million people, for example, have Facebook accounts, and in 47 countries the rate of uptake is increasing 25% in the last three months of 2009. In 28 of those countries the rate is much higher – doubling in the last three months of 2009. There are more than 70 translations available via Facebook. More than 65 million access their Facebook accounts via cell phones, and there are 2.5 billion image uploads per month. Twitter now hosts 75 million users. It experienced a 579% year-over-year increase from 2.7 million unique visitors in December 2008 to 18.1 million in December 2009. Flickr has more than four billion photographs. YouTube hosts a billion video clips, with 20 hours of new videos uploaded every minute. The average YouTube user in the US views 182 videos a month. There are more than 124 million blogs. Social media is expanding exponentially and the interconnectivity is palpable. This paper examines the changing face of information from simple one-way passive delivery via traditional mass media to mass individual multiple-way news exchange and commentary. The SETI community's Declaration of Principles was written in a very different era. While considerations are underway for updating that document, the rapid expansion of Web 2.0 properties give pause for thought. What are the implications for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence in the event of a possible detection of an advanced extraterrestrial civilisation?