

EDITORIAL — ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional publishing on paper is being augmented by electronic dissemination (Peek 1996). This trend is inescapable (Kraut 1996), so it pays to go with the flow. At first, back in the 1980s, online publications were just electronic versions of their paper counterparts. But they soon took on a life of their own and, in some cases, replaced the paper. However, in most cases, the electronic versions diverged along a separate evolutionary pathway. Newspapers are good examples, especially *The Wall Street Journal*. Because of the ability to be innovative without the stifling burden of printing presses, raw materials, and delivery infrastructures, electronic publishing flourishes.

The journal *Science* has been a leader in this new medium and now has a great deal more to offer online than on paper. In fact, the paper edition often refers readers to the electronic for more information (Bloom 1997).

This trend is so powerful because virtually every paper publication in recent years has been composed from an electronic master. That is, old fashioned manual typesetting has been replaced by computerization. The electronic version now comes first; the paper is just one of its products.

Even our *Kingbird* has been produced from computers for many years. Most authors send in their manuscripts on a disk; I wish all did. Said another way, *The Kingbird* has an electronic counterpart. What should we do with it?

FEDERATION WEB SITE

One useful thing to do would be to link the electronic *Kingbird* to our Federation home page on the world wide web, to make it available for searching. The difficulty here is that we do not yet have a home page. I wrote one back in 1994 as part of a course in HTML (hypertext markup language) and ran it on the Broome Community College web site into 1995, until my server privileges wore out. Unfortunately, I had to drop this activity to become editor of *The Kingbird*. [No, I cannot do both!] The upshot is that the Federation needs a home page and a webmaster to keep it current. If you are interested, let me know.

ONLINE BIRDING

At our Annual Meeting in Colonie last September, Jane Graves and Gregg Recer presented a workshop on "Birding the Internet." The internet is awash with birding information (Principe 1995), much of it lacking any rigorous quality control. Nevertheless, *The Kingbird* should be integrated with it. Furthermore, *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of New York State* is due for an update soon, perhaps starting in the year 2000. The internet will play a vital communications role in this undertaking.

COPYRIGHT

Putting full text of our publications online could lead to piracy and violations of our copyrights. This is a risk we have to confront. However, information is not like pizza; the more you share, the more you end up with.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SPINOFF

As an alternative to connecting several years of the full text of *The Kingbird* to our home page, we could just use a spinoff. When I implemented abstracts in 1996 such a product was intended. Online searching is not new; its widespread public accessibility is. My first online search was run in 1966 on MEDLINE from the National Library of Medicine. Three decades later I reflected on this while eyeballing back issues of *The Kingbird* for the Bull update. How great it would have been to have searched each species electronically. Great perhaps, but too late now. However, other updates loom.

The electronic bibliographic record of our articles contains these fields: Author(s) / Address(es) / Title / Reference / Abstract / Keywords / Number of references cited. I plan to add a field for the terms for our decennial index. Searching such records is usually much more efficient than searching full text, at least for articles. For those who do not understand, a database is like a city; records are like buildings in that city, and fields are like rooms in those buildings. You navigate through a database the same way you perambulate around your home town. You look for an author in the author field, not the abstract field, just as you would look for a toaster in the kitchen, not the bathroom.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Regional reports must be searched full text. Here a searcher could look for all mentions of a sought for species across all 10 Regions or in selected Regions for as many years as desired. David Suggs, whose letter appears in this issue, is experimenting with the conversion of our electronic Regional Reports to a database. Other volunteers are encouraged to try their ideas.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Applying available technology to New York State birding is not our limiting factor. Obtaining volunteers is. So, if you have the necessary skills and equipment, please consider volunteering. You will have an opportunity to be in on the ground floor of some innovative pioneering. One word of caution, however. Electronic birding could be hazardous to your field birding, unless of course, you get a (weatherproof) portable computer.

LITERATURE CITED

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