

IAN - International Academic Network

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GOALS

To create a new International Academic Network (henceforth: IAN) dedicated to 1.) fostering connections between scholars, 2.) discussing major questions facing the world today, and 3.) integrating academic work within wider society.

1.) The network would emphasize multi-disciplinary nature of much of groundbreaking work that is in evidence in academia today. It will enable researches to find collaborators for projects requiring experts from different areas. The network would have an international and interdisciplinary character, gathering scholars and professionals from the humanities, social sciences, fine arts, technological and natural sciences.

2.) The second important aspect of IAN's nurturing communication between scholars and researchers would be to raise important questions that relate to the state of the present society, its education and attitude towards integration of new technologies and findings from social sciences into its educational system and on all levels of society.

3.) Ultimately, IAN will be a tool for promoting the integration of academic work into the fabric of society by integrating academic research with production-based industries and in other institutions of the private and the public sector. Corollary to this would be alleviating the growing problem of unemployment of scholars. The network would be invested in setting course for the new lines of inquiry, especially those requiring international cooperation.

DESCRIPTION

With the rapid development of communication technologies interaction between people has changed as well. Social networks like Facebook and Tweeter have changed the way we communicate, as well as redefined the meaning of the word "friend" in contemporary society. Skype and similar software have brought people from around the globe in closer contact, providing an essential tool for verbal and

visual communication. Internet-based communication has opened up new possibilities for work and collaboration, but while these were embraced in informal communication, in many professional fields they were not nearly exploited enough.

One of the most ignored fields, yet one that gives structure and framework for all other fields is academia. A genuinely non-profit sector whose employees labor for the sake of knowledge and professional betterment with very little actual monetary remuneration. Because scholarly work is non-profit by default, and because it does not have a superstructure that defines other professional fields, our proposal concerns improving communication within academia, especially between scholars from different countries. This is where the new internet-based tools of communication could be successfully employed.

These days many research projects include specialists from several disciplines, which all bring their own knowledge and expertise to the project. The way in which these specialists come together is often *ad hoc*, through personal connections and random chance meetings. Although these sometimes turn into profitable collaborations, many projects fail because of the lack of appropriate experts. Hence, finding the right collaborators for any scholarly endeavor is the prerequisite to its successful completion and this is precisely what IAN hopes to offer to all who are interested in participating or those who seek collaborators on research projects.

IAN would also function as a counterweight to all that is done in the name of 'science' by government bodies when making decisions where specific knowledge is required. Discussions which relate to the course the world is taking on major subjects such as the environment, allocation of natural resources, economic systems, and so on, take place between closed doors. We, as general populace, are only informed that 'experts' were consulted, but we rarely get to hear opinions of several independent experts on a topic under discussion. IAN would be invested in bringing onto the table the most burning questions and inviting participation from all those specializing in pertinent areas to offer their opinions. These would be eventually conveyed to governmental institutions and to media (newspapers, television, internet) for wider dissemination.

We hope that in this way we will make the educated segment of the society more prominent and engaged in the important decisions and enterprises of common interest. This will out and of itself provide employment, and will begin a new era of introducing the scholarly research methods into fields where they have been absent. Why shouldn't company managers and CEOs be instructed in using the Socratic method to arrive at their decisions? Why wouldn't logicians be invited to give the final comment in the news, based on the validity of arguments expressed? Why wouldn't a cognitive scientist add his interpretation, as well? These are just some of many unforeseeable contributions that we would like to see come to the fore as a result of IAN's work.

Connecting educated population interested in topics of common interest and inviting them to actively participate should raise the tone of the discussions and ultimately bring about new, more humane and rational thought to our political arenas. International communication of scholars should also alert the global scholarly community to developments and tendencies that are taking over the political life of other countries, and thus prepare them for the encroachment or the same tendencies in their own environments.

If one of the most popular maxims of the previous generation was that 'Information is power' then our own age—where communication and information is plentiful but unfiltered and thus of relative use—can refine this thought to say that the knowledge which information to trust and how to examine it is the true power. This is where the scholarly community can make its mark. International Academic Network offers a platform for that kind of informed interaction.

IMPLEMENTATION

There are several more steps beyond this conceptual proposal that need to be accomplished before IAN would become a reality. First, we would like to make connections with members of Memefest, who might be interested in the topic outlined here in talking to us and jointly working on tweaking the details of the precise content and shape of the internet-based platform. Hence, if our project would receive your approval, we would like to invite your members to suggest additions and corrections to our proposal before we give it a final physical form. Secondly, we intend to employ web-designers and IT experts to design the website for IAN. At the same time, we intend to start advertising the website through all the possible academic channels, and through scholarly journals. We believe that once a critical mass of 1,000 plus scholars begins using IAN, word of mouth will accomplish the rest, bringing exponentially growing numbers of new users.