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## The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier

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Found at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10535/18>

### PDF

**Type:** Book  
**Author:** Rheingold, Howard  
**Publisher:** Addison-Wesley Publishing Company  
**Location:** Reading, MA  
**Date:** 1993  
**URI:** <http://hdl.handle.net/10535/18>  
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**Subject(s):** internet  
technology

**Abstract:** From introduction: "Daddy is saying 'Holy moly!' to his computer again!" "Those words have become a family code for the way my virtual community has infiltrated our real world. My seven-year-old daughter knows that her father congregates with a family of invisible friends who seem to gather in his computer. Sometimes he talks to them, even if nobody else can see them. And she knows that these invisible friends sometimes show up in the flesh, materializing from the next block or the other side of the planet. "Since the summer of 1985, for an average of two hours a day, seven days a week, I've been plugging my personal computer into my telephone and making contact with the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link)--a computer conferencing system that enables people around the world to carry on public conversations and exchange private electronic mail (e-mail). The idea of a community accessible only via my computer screen sounded cold to me at first, but I learned quickly that people can feel passionately about e-mail and computer conferences. I've become one of them. I care about these people I met through my computer, and I care deeply about the future of the medium that enables us to assemble. "I'm not alone in this emotional attachment to an apparently bloodless technological ritual. Millions of people on every continent also participate in the computer-mediated social groups known as virtual communities, and this population is growing fast. Finding the WELL was like discovering a cozy little world that had been flourishing without me, hidden within the walls of my house; an entire cast of characters welcomed me to the troupe with great merriment as soon as I found the secret door. Like others who fell into the WELL, I soon discovered that I was audience, performer, and scriptwriter, along with my companions, in an ongoing improvisation. A full-scale subculture was growing on the other side of my telephone jack, and they invited me to help create something new."

### Files in this item

Files	Size	Format	View
<a href="#">The_Virtual_Community.pdf</a>	1.224Mb	PDF	<a href="#">View/Open</a>

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download as PDF File (.pdf) or read book online for free. (Note that there is also a 1994 after- word—the Web was an interesting little cloud on the horizon in 1992, when I was writing the first edition.) New people and a new virtual community need to be acknowledged in regard to the additional material. First and foremost, Moya Mason, bibliographic researcher extraordinaire, has helped me compile an extensive new bibliography that is meant to serve as a guide to further research for those who are setting out to map the vast new social cyberspaces. In addition, members of the Brainstorms virtual community offered invaluable advice. The virtual discourse community is one in which "enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" [Rheingold, 1993]. Though one may see the World Wide Web as a whole to be its own community, Swales' (1990) criteria above apply more directly to the smaller and more specific communities that exist within the Internet. ... The concept of a gift economy features prominently in many early accounts of the electronic frontier and online communities (e.g., Barbrook, 1998;Kollock, 1999;Rheingold, 1993).