

Near Eastern Archaeology

Middle-East Technical University

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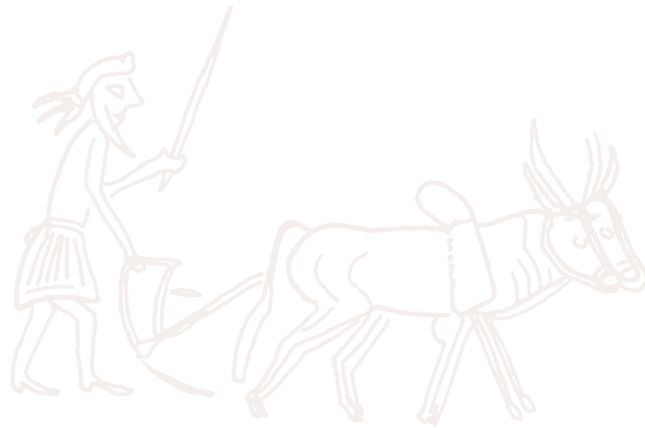
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on the World Wide Web :

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www.metu.edu.tr/home/wwkerk/

Who Wants What?



<http://www.achemenet.com/>

[ressources/enligne/jasr/](http://www.achemenet.com/ressources/enligne/jasr/)

jasr01.htm

Keywords

Archaeology, electronic publication, image, internet, kerkenes, world wide web

Abstract

This paper discusses some of the advantages and disadvantages of electronic publication and dissemination over the WWW, considers who the audiences for web sites concerned with Near Eastern Archaeology are, and describes how these concepts have influenced the setting up and design of the Kerkenes Web Site. This impressionistic contribution is intended to stimulate discussion amongst those who use and design electronic publication.

Eeyore's "Poem"

Eeyore's "Poem", from which the above is an extract, was his first and only attempt at constructing literature. To those who have attempted to construct archaeological web pages, the sentiment will ring a rather flat note of truth.¹

Many projects concerned with the Ancient Near East (ANE) now have their own Web Sites, i.e. pages of electronic publication that are available on the World Wide Web (WWW). But why, who are they trying to reach and what are they trying to communicate to their audiences? I suspect that few have asked these questions explicitly. The WWW exists, it is all the rage, everyone has a Web Site, therefore *we* should have a Web Site. From that point there are two options:

- 1. Find one of the many do-it-yourself templates, select a few illustrations, write a brief text to go with the pictures and sit back and congratulate yourself that the fruits of your research are now reaching millions of readers world wide;
- 2. Find a web page designer who can do it all for you.

I do not wish to suggest that either of these are bad things in themselves, and it could be argued that the approach is not so very different from much of the more traditional printed form of archaeological publication. It all looks good on the *c.v.* impresses sponsors (e.g. site visitors can click on the sponsors logo to go directly to their home page) and, by the by, it makes information available. WWW publication, however, is not normally subject to peer review or editorial advice.²

My concern here is more with those relatively few projects that, like our own Kerkenes Project, have purposefully set out to take the fullest possible advantage of the opportunities that the technologies of electronic publication offer. I have always seen the primary purpose of the *Kerkenes Web Page* as an addition to and extension of printed reports and papers, not a substitute and most certainly not a summary.³ Some of the advantages and disadvantages of WWW publication will be discussed before turning to the question of audiences.

Some Advantages of WWW Publication

What follows is an idiosyncratic view that has been formulated with the specific needs of our own particular project in mind. The very heavy emphasis that we place on graphics reflects the nature of the research at Kerkenes and it would certainly not be applicable to all, or even the majority of ANE web sites.⁴

Speed: once a site has been established (i.e. there is a template in existence) it is relatively fast to add new information, as it becomes available. Digital photographs, for instance, can be loaded onto a website almost instantly. If speed is thought to be a good thing in itself, the WWW offers considerable advantages.⁵

Graphics: electronic publication does allow the inclusion of graphics, in colour, that are not limited to the size of a printed page. Graphics can also include facilities for zooming in and out, and for various kinds of manipulation (e.g. spinning 3D images around). Fly-throughs and even video footage can also be included. Despite qualms in some quarters concerning the precision of true colour reproductions, there can be no doubt that the ability to produce colour images of decorated ceramics, wall paintings and fresco, composite objects, archaeological strata, microscopic slides and so forth, is a distinct advantage. This is perhaps the major area where electronic publication provides possibilities that are completely beyond those offered by the printed page. Download times are important considerations, although the individual user can be given options here.

Dynamics: electronic publication can be, and indeed should be, dynamic. Links within the site allow for many things:

- instantaneous movement between text and illustration
- leaps between glossaries, indexes and references
- links to other parts of the site
- the inclusion of search engines within a site.⁶

The user can therefore navigate around the site, either at random or to follow a specific thread. Parts of sites can be selected by the user for electronic storage in other files, or can be printed out. Links can also be made to altogether different (related) sites.

Additions and Updates: the printed word has certain finality about it. Once printed, text becomes an artifact; unalterable and permanent. This, of course, is one reason why academics in general and archaeologists in particular have such a bad record of publication. Publication on the WWW, on the other hand, is neither permanent nor unalterable; it can be easily updated and changed. Redundant data and ideas can be expunged (like photographs from the Soviet era in which those who had fallen from grace were simply removed). New evidence can be added.⁷ There need be no such thing as a definitive version.⁸ Like most researchers engaged in fieldwork, we are under pressure to publish; indeed, our ability to win awards from those institutions that traditionally fund archaeological research is to a large extent dependent on the Project's publication record. Interim reports are, however, interim. It is inevitable, because of the very nature of ongoing fieldwork, that they will be found contain errors of both fact and interpretation. Readers have thus to wade through a succession of reports and notices, working out for themselves which parts have been modified as the result of future investigation and which have not. Updated WWW publication avoids these difficulties. There is still, perhaps, a role for the printed version, something I will return to towards the end of this paper.⁹

Outreach: the WWW has a much greater and far more diverse audience than do the dusty shelves of academic libraries. Far the greater part of that audience might rarely, if ever, delve into published archaeological literature. The nature of this audience is considered below. There is also an audience within the academic community, both scholars and students, that has only limited access to those few libraries that might carry our publications.¹⁰ I assume that today anyone in academia has access to the WWW on a reasonably powerful server, should they choose to use it.¹¹

Some Disadvantages of WWW Publication

This section, like the last, is also slightly idiosyncratic. Some would consider most of the advantages given above as disadvantages, but I am not seeking self-justification.

Long term availability: perhaps the biggest worry is that the Internet system will change to such an extent that everything will need to be redone. A second fear is that the current low cost of Internet use will cease, thereby wiping out the audience. More serious, if less immediate, is the concept that journals and books will remain available, and useable, for scores, even hundreds, of years. But what of our WWW Site, not in 2010 or 2020 but in 2100? ¹²

Costs: we are fortunate that METU provides space for our large site on the University server. But, just as preparing an article or book requires type-setting, illustration and so forth, so WWW publication has preparation costs, costs that might well be larger because they require a greater number of more specialised skills. It is not possible to quantify these costs because only some of them are specific to the Web Site, e.g. transferring text to HTML, whilst others are part of wider programs of research and publication. There is also a grey area between preparation costs and production costs, a distinction that may be further blurred by the increasing demand for Camera-Ready-Copy, which makes any direct comparison very difficult. Electronic publication can be a much better way of disseminating information than printing and distributing books and journals, but much of the preparation is, if anything, slower and more costly. Although two forms of publication, electronic and printed, are being considered here, they are so very different that making comparisons is of little help. More importantly, the expense of preparing electronic publications such as ours cannot be met through subscriptions or sales.

Copyright: although there is an unwritten code of practice amongst academics that a Web Site is a publication, and therefore subject to the same rules and agreements as the printed page, the very nature of the technology is such that anyone can download and reproduce images and text. The use of scanners, however, reduces the differences between printed and electronic publication in this particular respect. In practice it will become increasingly difficult to maintain copyright protection of WWW publications. Many might see this particular trend as an advantage.

Stagnation: a flit through WWW sites concerned with the ANE will reveal a wide range of approaches and a great range in size and complexity. Many sites are “under construction”, a convenient term when it is true, but increasing synonymous with “run out of steam” or “the graphic designer has found a job”. Some sites remain unchanged for years although research in the field continues apace. Large and complex sites require, therefore, a manager; someone who will make sure that as additions and updates are properly integrated, the links continue to work; that the site is carried by the major search engines (e.g. Yahoo), and so forth. There is a need here for continuity, since each site has its own peculiarities that require the manager to become familiar with if it is to be maintained efficiently.

Recognition and Peer Review: or rather, the lack of. This is a general gripe of many academics in all disciplines who publish on the WWW. Ways forward have been suggested, even implemented, with the introduction of peer reviewed electronic journals. Such journals will, I believe, replace many traditional printed periodicals in the near future; and many will charge commercial subscription rates for access. Sites like ours, however, are in a different category. We are listed in and linked to ABZU, that fabulous resource that Charles Jones runs out of the Oriental Institute at Chicago. We are also linked to Achaemenet, which is what this meeting is all about. But ABZU is eclectic, very much in keeping with the spirit of the Internet. Sites range from the serious to the bizarre, from the excellent to the appalling, from the academic to the polemic, from the core to the fringe. There is no sieve. Why should there be? Well, two reasons: first, the amount of time (and, if you are paying for the connection, money) that surfing ANE sites on the WWW can absorb in the hunt for knowledge, either

in general or in answer to a particular question; and second, because not everyone who uses these resources has sufficiently developed critical faculties to be properly able to discriminate between the good and the not so good, or between the informing and the misinforming.¹³

Audiences

If a Web Site is designed (rather than slung together with whatever is in hand), it is either designed for an audience or it is designed to give aesthetic pleasure to the designer. These two approaches are not the same and may lead to heated discussion. Since our ANE sites are not commercial we are not, apart from the satisfaction of our egos, concerned with the number of “hits” that our pages attract.¹⁴ We are concerned with different audiences. The discussion that follows is again based on impressions, not on any polls or questionnaires. It is intended to show the thinking that underlay the initiation and that still underlies the development of our Kerkenes Web Site, and also to dip a toe into the sea of users.

Academic Colleagues: those professional archaeologists, classicists, historians, anthropologists, geographers, geomorphologists, geologists, geophysicists and others who have more than a passing or casual interest in the progress, methods or results of some aspect of our research. The primary advantages offered by the Web Site, graphics and speed, have already been discussed. Numbers are small, perhaps only tens, certainly not hundreds. Of those who do use the resource on offer, I wonder how long they spend downloading the images and how deeply they delve into the text. None have ever, in four years, come back with a comment or question that was more than a platitude (but please don’t stop, we like platitudes, they show you found us and scrolled down far enough to find the “comment” slot). Indeed, two of our strongest supporters, distinguished academics who have written in support of our most successful grant applications, do not even use computers to word process, let alone visit the WWW. Half a day of focused research in the library, writing that reference that was promised and then pushed to one side, getting on with this or that unfinished paper is a better use of scant time than downloading web sites. Conferences and reports as well as published papers are more than sufficient.

It depends, I suppose, on the discipline. Geographers and geophysicists are more likely to use our graphic images than historians are; but I have no evidence that they have actually done so. Nor do I know of any colleagues who have actively used our web site for teaching (beyond suggesting to students that it might be worth them spending a little time looking at it). I am not complaining; I myself very rarely use Internet resources from the ANE in the course of my own academic research, although I do find the WWW in general very useful in putting together lectures on topics that fall outside my core area of knowledge. It is also enjoyable, as well as instructive, to occasionally surf around sites constructed by friends and colleagues in the comfort of my own home – not an opportunity that is available to everyone.

Graduate Students: here, perhaps, lies the nest. But how many graduate students study the ANE and, of those, how many have an interest in Iron Age Anatolia? Few. In the related areas, geophysics, GIS and landscape studies there may be a wider pool, but we have not had any communications to suggest that this is more than wishful thinking. Graduate students in America who have actually come to take part in fieldwork at Kerkenes have done no more than glance at our Web site. Complaints reach that our site is too big, it is too slow to download through a modem at home. This will have to change, unless the publication of archaeological material in electronic form is to cease for want of an audience. The rising cost of printed books and journals, and diminished library budgets, and the slow but continuing death throws of Near Eastern Archaeology on both sides of the Atlantic will

force a change on the few who remain, but this is hardly a growth industry. Methods might hold more hope of raising interest in our own work over the short term, but in ten years if not five our work will be studied not so much for the results themselves, but as an example of archaic pioneering using equipment long since relegated to the scrapheap.

Undergraduate Students and High School Pupils: here, perhaps, is – or ought to be – our largest audience, and the one we should be targeting most. The web site contains sufficient information for inclusion in projects and studies in schools, and for undergraduate papers. More importantly, it makes our work available to a wide, young audience with central and peripheral interests, an audience that has the time, facilities and motivation to pay more than a fleeting visit, and an audience that might thereby be stimulated to take a deeper interest in one or more aspects of the Project. This is also, for the most part, an audience that does not have easy access to all of the published reports and which, if it did, might find them too dry and too specialised to attract and hold their attention. This is the audience that, it is to be hoped, will continue to take an interest in the Project itself and in some of the wider issues that are addressed, whether they be historical, archaeological, technical or environmental. Potential audiences should be large, although we have no indication that they are.

Lay Audiences: a wide ranging public with various interests and differing levels of knowledge. Some have a passionate interest in some aspects of our work that might stem from previous education, religious interests, travel, the fringe, or simple enthusiasm for aspects of the past. Some of these viewers are deeply interested, the sort who visit museums, attend lectures and might read widely; others might have a more specific interest in, say, art or geophysics, and be largely ignorant of other matters. This, of course, is the wide general public that academics so often claim to be addressing.

Strategies

Given that these might be the audiences, which are the priorities, how are they to be ranked, and how are they to be targeted? I take it to be axiomatic that targeting audiences is what we ought to be about. I would rank the audiences in reverse order to that listed above; the surfing public first, the professional colleague last. This is for two reasons; the first is practical, it means that the site structure descends (or rises) from the general to the specific; the second tactical, I am attempting to bring new audiences to the subject and the largest of the potential new audiences is the general public. Françoise will be illustrating the results and discussing the practicalities as concerns Kerkenes.

Most web sites concerned with scholarly subjects that fall within the general area of antiquity appear to me to be more concerned with a committed audience, although not necessarily by design.

The Web Site as Publication

Putting pages on the Www is a form of publication. The content is subject to international copyright regulations in the same way as printed material. There are savings, the cost of paper, ink, binding, distribution and so forth, but the expense of preparation is not always less and can be considerably more. It is therefore of the utmost importance that those bodies and institutions that support the publication of academic work in printed form come to realise that there is an equal need to support electronic publication if we are to stay at the fore-

front. Earlier I mentioned the question of peer review, a system that applies to many «academic» journals and, in various ways through publishers, to books. I think that we will see electronic journals increasingly replacing printed journals for all of the reasons given above and others that I have not touched on here. Some Internet Journals already exist. Of these some are experimental and a few seem now to have become established. Most are currently free although the reader does have to “subscribe” or «register». It will not be long before charges are made for subscriptions to these Internet publications in order to cover the costs of managing and preparing these journals. It remains to be seen whether there will be sufficient demand for commercial profit making academic publishers to go down this road and, if there is, how such publishers will ensure that all users subscribe.¹⁵ I can also foresee that some of the major sites that are now free and supported by institutions will come under pressure to raise funds. Revenue could be raised, for instance, through subscriptions, through commercial sponsors, through sales outlets (e.g. booksellers); but I doubt our readership is sufficiently large. Further, such a commercial approach goes against the whole idea of the Internet which, Al Gore notwithstanding, was begun as a medium through which scholars could freely exchange information. These fundamental considerations, however, fall beyond the main purpose of this contribution.

I want now to turn to some aspects of the philosophy that lies behind our approach to the electronic publication of the Kerkenes Project. Firstly, it should be understood that this is a publication that is specific to one single project, and a project that is largely engaged in archaeological fieldwork. That fact in itself sets certain parameters, even if they embrace a wide range of disciplines and interests. Secondly, I firmly believe that publication on the Web is proper academic publication that is equivalent to, or even surpasses, printed publication. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the standard of publication that we strive to attain is at least as high as the expectations of the most learned journals or academic tomes. Could I stress the word “standard”, for I do not mean to imply that the two different mediums should have the same content, or be aimed at the same audiences, as I have tried to outline above. Internet publication of an archaeological field project should not, in my view, contain undigested “raw” data sets (e.g. lists of animal bones); and should most certainly not do so under the pretence that putting such data on the net constitutes proper archaeological “publication”. This is not to say that interim reports and studies should be excluded, just the opposite, for the net provides an ideal medium for disseminating the results on ongoing research. But I stress *reports* and *research*. Undigested sets of data that are, at best, of little use if they are free floating.¹⁶

In the middle of the last century it was common place (for the British) to publish annual reports on major excavations in specialised journals, as a brief look at the indexes of *Anatolian Studies* and the other «house» Journals of the British Schools and Institutes abroad will reveal. Indeed, many “final” publications have been disappointing since they have often turned out to little more than an integration of interim or preliminary reports usefully gathered between a single set of covers. This idea of regular interim reports is still commonly found, although the high cost of publication at a time of dwindling subscriptions has made it difficult for many to a home for such reports and, at the same time, new and different archaeological concerns combined with a reduction in the scale of excavation has changed this pattern.

For our own work in Turkey the actual position is a little more complex. Annual interim reports, in Turkish, are published in the *Proceedings of the Symposium on Excavations, Surveys and Archaeometry (Kazi, Arı_turma ve Arkeometri_onuçları)* that is most laudably published by the Turkish Ministry of Culture. In 2000 this ran to 5 volumes that contain reports on almost all projects carried out by foreign missions and Turkish universities. A much shorter notice, in English, is carried in *Anatolian Archaeology* (a newsletter of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara that is sent to all members of the Institute and a very few additional subscribers. These annual reports are short, edited versions (because of space limitations) of an *Annual Report*, written in both English and Turkish, that is produced in fulfil-

ment of the terms of grants awarded by our principle sponsors. Since 1998 we have also posted these *Annual Reports* on the Web Site in both languages. Another approach has been to supplement these reports with more substantive articles for publication in academic journals, each of which focuses on particular aspects of the project particular phases of the research design are brought to some sort of conclusion. Since 1998 we have also been producing a newsletter, *Kerkenes News*, for the projects supporters and friends.

Our Web Site currently contains the *Kerkenes News*, one contribution to a book and a Report produced as a condition of a METU research grant, in addition to the *Annual Reports*. We are considering including reports published in *Anatolian Studies*.¹⁷

The Kerkenes Web Site, then, is the medium for the publication of interim reports. These Reports, however, are not written or produced for electronic publication (although they are to some extent well suited because of the graphic nature of much of the output), they are produced for other reasons and posted on the Web Site so that they can be easily accessed by a far wider readership than we can afford to provide with hard copies. They are an addition to an existing site, not the reason for its existence, and they are not produced to take full advantage of the potential and capability of electronic publication.

What the main body of the Kerkenes site attempts to present is a specially produced and comprehensive overview of the project that is designed in order to make the fullest use of tools available. Threads or themes can be followed from the general to the particular, or the specialist sections can be reached directly from the menu. The site is thus carefully designed and structured. It is dynamic and continues to grow.

In conclusion, I will attempt to summarise the differences between electronic and printed publication from a conceptual point of view. The electronic is dynamic and has the potential to become interactive (e.g. the user could manipulate images in various ways), printed paper is permanent and unalterable. The printed page is still perhaps the best medium for detailed discussion, partly because of the ease with which it can be used and, for some us at least, the pleasure derived from physically using books.¹⁸ Archaeology, however, deals with material culture and with landscapes; the electronics do not impose limits on size or on scale, many different layers can be added to or subtracted from a composite image (although we have yet to put one of these on line), colours can be used, and even changed by the user. Links are routinely inserted and searches can be made. Should anyone wish, there are programs available that enable the user to down load the entire site onto their own computer, from which further copies can be made. But the most important aspect is surely the audience. We can appeal to an audience that has an enormous diversity in the level of interest, that covers a huge age range, that has widely differing background knowledge and differing reading skills in English. The user can rapidly move around the site, skipping over the simple or selecting an area of interest. This range and diversity of user could not be catered for on printed pages set between covers. Sections are split into topics or areas, each of which then descends from the general to the more specific. We do not discriminate within the site: there is no expert section, friends section, and fringe section. We are not talking to ourselves. If we were, there would be no readers! ■

- 1 From the last chapter of that delightful children's classic *The House at Pooh Corner* by A. A. Milne.
- 2 These trends might also be seen to be on the increases with regard to printed learned journals as some now struggle to find editors and meet deadlines.
- 3 For the Kerkenes Web Site see Françoise Summers in this volume. I intend to keep my remarks general, not offering critiques of specific sites. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. This contribution is based on casual observation, not research, as a result casting around for ideas (good and bad) when constructing our own site and from using web pages for teaching purposes in a University that has few recent books.
- 4 I have included search engines within sites because I have found one in particular to have been of considerable help, although we have not yet seen the need to include a search engine on the Kerkenes Web Site.
- 5 Of course, we are all anxious for the latest news on research. In my view, however, there should be some time available for reflection and contemplation. How fast is fast?
- 6 Search engines can be particularly useful in large and diverse sites – of which there are few. Essentially they replace a printed index, although they may have the advantage of allowing combinations of words (e.g. horse, bones, neolithic).
- 7 F. Summers, this volume, produces the great idea that at some point a line is drawn under parts of our Kerkenes Web page which is then archived and, perhaps, distributed by CD-ROM. At that point the finality that applies to the printed page might also apply to the electronic publication. On the other hand, the technology is becoming such that even a “frozen” version could be updated or replaced over the Internet.
- 8 Traditionalists will, of course, deplore this as a weakness that lets in sloppy thinking, bad presentation, undigested data and so forth.
- 9 As described later, our site does contain *Annual Reports*. These would allow the progress of the project, the development of research design and changes in our thinking to be traced should the history of the Project itself become of interest.
- 10 I am particularly aware of this problem in Turkey where the foundation of many new universities in recent years has not been matched by an investment in library resources. Staff and students do, however, have more or less unlimited access to the Internet and the WWW, which are, therefore becoming increasingly important aids to teaching and research.
- 11 It appears to me that electronic publication will expand in both quantity and complexity. As this happens spending time at a terminal directly connected to a powerful server will become as common place as using a library. Just as professional academics are not able to afford a copy of every book that they use, so they will not be able to afford the hardware that would enable them to access all that might be needed from their own home. An additional factor here is cost where access to the server is way of a commercial intermediary and phone system.
- 12 The Kerkenes Project is preparing an electronic archive that will be stored at the Center for the Study of Architecture (CSA), directed by Harrison Eitlejorg II at Bryn Mawr. The CSA promises to create a long-term electronic archive that will up date material as technology advances. This is all good and fine over the medium term, say 10 to 20 years, but it is not a national library and cannot be expected to last for ever.
- 13 These same problems exist, of course, with the printed word, but perhaps on a lesser scale. Articles in peer reviewed journals may not always be good, but few readers would be harmed by reading even the worst. This, alas, is not always true of the WWW.
- 14 To be frivolous, if our page were to be called Kerkersex the number of visitors would soon outstrip the combined number of hits on all ANE Web Sites. I doubt, however, that many of those particular visitors would bookmark our site.
- 15 Witness the ongoing legal battles over the distribution of popular music.
- 16 Lists of species, counts of pottery sherds and so forth are of little use without the presentation of the contexts from which they come in a form that can be understood.
- 17 The possibility of placing material on the Web Site that has been published in printed form raises questions of copyright. Copyright varies from journal to journal, sometimes resting with the publisher, sometimes with the author, sometimes with both.

- 18 Like many, I find it difficult to read lengthy text on the screen and much prefer the printed page. The dislike of reading text on screen is partly a result of eye strain, partly one of physical comfort, partly that scrolling is still less efficient than flicking through printed pages, and partly - no doubt - generation gap. As far as our own and most other academic Web Sites, are concerned, however, the user is free to print out as much as might be wanted.