throughout their texts. For instance, Warden provides as a reason for Lara’s success, both the growth of the group of female gamers wanting female action heroines as well as the notion of virtual girlfriends taken from the Japanese gaming culture. This is just one, simple example of the conflicting views these contemporary debates seem to provoke. There are also more positive and productive conclusions to be found though. Tasker, in her study of ‘Women and Military Masculinities in Courage Under Fire’, argues for a rethinking of the ‘traditional’ (feminist) divide between male and female roles and stereotypes in favor of “a complex relationship between sex and gender” that “may speak to lived experiences of gender in which ‘post-feminism’ women are constituted in terms of gendered discourses and not simply in terms of femininity” (92). As such the book provides plenty of food for thought on a contemporary issue in media and feminist studies.

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Conference attendees are generally curious which of the papers presented — often reflecting work in progress and, consequently, somewhat rough and unpolished — eventually end up in print. This volume brings together a wide array of the papers presented at the first three conferences of the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) into what is designed to be a series of volumes reflecting the work presented at these events. In total, twenty-six of the papers — both plenary keynotes and session papers — delivered at the annual AoIR conferences held in 2000, 2001 and 2002 are included in this book. This diverse material is organized into three sections: ‘Internet as an area of research’; ‘Places, politics, and policies of the Internet’; ‘Net / working communities’. This considerable editorial task was performed by no less than seven editors who divided responsibility for selecting and revising the material across these three sections.

The resulting book is a modestly sized paperback of less than 300 pages. The editors clearly chose for a multitude of short contributions, on average less than 10 printed pages each. The first Internet Research Annual, then, is very much a sampler of the scholarship presented across
three years of conferences. The editorial policy emphasized diversity and brevity above focus and depth. Such policy is, in a sense, understandable and valuable. At the same time it is unfortunate and limited.

Let me first emphasize the positive features of this policy. People who did not attend the AoIR conferences or who are not attuned to the new field of Internet studies, will appreciate the collection. Much of the pioneering work and many of the pioneering scholars are represented in this collection. The keynote addresses by Philip Agre, William Dutton, Sheizaf Rafaeli, and Susan Herring are included in the book in revised form. These authors represent some of the foremost communication scholars concerned with facets of Internet studies, and their contributions provide a ‘taste’ of the work in which each is currently engaged. This work is sometimes methodologically innovative, as in the case of Herring who is creating a new form of discourse analysis suitable for investigating online exchange. It is sometimes provocative and speculative as in the case of Agre who invites the reader to imagine what is special and peculiar about studying the Internet. It is also organizational in character, as in Dutton’s presentation of the ‘business plan’ of what is becoming the model for institutional innovation in centers of Internet scholarship: The Oxford Internet Institute at Oxford University.

The heart of any conference is what happens in the small group sessions where scholars present papers of new work, and this volume provides a diverse selection of such material. The reader can, for example, follow the empirical investigation by Shani Orgad of online communication of a breast cancer self-help group; Stine Gotved examines forms of interaction in a study of newsgroups; Charles Ess introduces and comments on the research ethics guidelines developed by the AoIR committee that he chairs; Sorin Matei empirically examines the hypothesis that Internet use displaces other daily activities. These and about two dozen other contributors present their work, albeit briefly. These samplers do provide suggestions, mainly through the references, to more thorough publications and resources.

As indicated above, there is a dangerous down side to an editorial policy emphasizing diversity: Lack of focus and limited depth. Most readers of this review are probably familiar with the annual series Communication Yearbook published by the International Communication Association in association with Sage Publications. These volumes are around 500 pages in length and contain less than half of the number of contributions found in the AoIR annual. The authors of selected contributions can, as a consequence, delve in much more detail. Chapters in a Communication Yearbook often have the status of definitive reviews of literature and of the state of research in particular fields. The chapters
in the Internet Research Annual will never achieve such status, largely because of the editorial policy imposed.

The Internet Research Annual remains, however, valuable for readers interested in acquiring a broad overview of recent developments in the field of Internet studies. The book, nevertheless, should be seen as a companion to other activities and ‘products’ of the Association of Internet Researchers. One of these other activities is the AoIR discussion list, which is in fact the virtual commons where Internet scholars convene, debate and share concerns and ideas. Any scholar interested in Internet studies should seriously monitor this list: http://listserv.aoir.org/listinfo.cgi/air-l-aoir.org. Another important resource for such scholars is the AoIR website: http://aoir.org. It has recently been redesigned and offers members of the association access to most of the papers originally presented at AoIR conferences. In this manner, scholars have access to the raw material that the Internet Research Annual editors considered for inclusion in the volume. Whatever work is not included in the book, is likely to be found on this site. These three units taken together — the discussion list, the AoIR website, and the Internet Research Annual — provide resources without parallel for this area of scholarly study. Considered in this context, the annual may be considered a portal to a wealth scholarship found nowhere else.

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