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Is anybody reading this? Indymedia and internet traffic reports

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"We DON'T record visits by our users. Ask the FBI"

-- Response from an Indymedia volunteer

Introduction

Access to media technology is a significant force shaping societies around the globe. From disputes about the digital divide to policy decisions about limits on media ownership, discussion of the constituitive nature of media and democratic societies has moved from the periphery to the center of a highly visible public debate. As the technology to *make* media continues to become more accessible to people around the globe, through websites, desktop publishing, micro radio, low-cost digital video cameras and editing systems and more, alternative media remain obscured by the ubiquitous commercial media that dominates most media outlets. At the same time that people worldwide are increasingly able to *make* media, *distribution* of that new, independent content continues to be a stumbling block.

One model that has aggressively confronted the hegemony of corporate media is the open source publishing of Independent Media Centers (IMC). In the four years since their inception, IMCs have spread around the world, providing outlets for independent media from text to video. This model, and alternative media in general, have received a fair amount of scholarly attention in recent years (Gumucio Dragon; Rodríguez; Atton 2002, 2003; Bennett 2003; Coopman 2003; Downing *Audiences and readers*; *IMC Movement*; Kidd *Become the media*; *Carnival and Commons*) – much of it containing a celebratory tone. Although we too share the excitement of a rapidly growing network of independent media outlets, we are concerned with the core question: 'Is anyone reading this new, 'radical' media?'

Given the speed with which the Indymedia phenomena has emerged, scholars are working to keep pace with the daily developments and are only now beginning to address the need to expand research beyond the theoretical analysis of the possibilities of networked alternative media. As Downing (626) notes in his call for research on alternative media audiences, 'usage of this considerable spectrum of alternative media therefore represents a huge gap in our research knowledge'. This paper is an attempt to address that gap by examining the traffic reports generated by the computer servers that host IMC websites. These traffic reports offer unprecedented data on the audience of alternative media and provide a powerful starting place to begin to fill the knowledge gap.

This study looks at Internet traffic reports of eight Independent Media Centers in North America from January to June 2003. [1] This time frame represents a critical period in world history, an occasion when the world's sole super power began an unprecedented experiment in 'pre-emptive' war. During this time, news media in the United States reported increased Internet traffic to foreign news organizations as people sought out alternative sources of information. We argue that alternative media outlets such as IMCs witnessed similar increased traffic and that this traffic reflects an audience actively engaged in the production and the consumption of media. Using these traffic reports, we address a central question: as events escalated in Iraq and open hostilities broke out on March 19, 2003, did these independent media sources record an increase in server activity (the primary vehicle for measuring audience usage)? This question is addressed following a brief history of IndyMedia, and a detailed summary of the current IMC structure.

History of Independent Media Centers

In the early months of 1999, activists from dozens of environmental, economic and social justice organizations began to converge in Seattle to prepare for a massive mobilization against the World Trade Organization (WTO) which was to hold a series of meetings there in November. This mobilization later became known as the "Battle in Seattle" and is considered by many to be a defining moment in the world-wide movement against neo-liberal globalization. Many of those participating in the early stages of the mobilization against the WTO were organizations committed to the establishment of alternative media sources and the development of community owned and operated media and information centers. Organizations such as Free Speech TV, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), Adbusters, Paper Tiger and Whispered Media already had extensive experience in the area of alternative media. Other direct action and direct action training organizations like The Ruckus Society and the Direct Action Network had street level mobilization experience. Drawing on their past experiences, the activists began to put together an Independent Media Center (IMC). The IMC would serve as a space where journalists and activists could gather to both publicize the happenings during the Seattle mobilization in forums that were free of the filter of the corporate press, and help the involved groups coordinate their efforts (Indymedia.org).

The hub of this new Independent Media Center was a web site that used open source software to create an open publishing forum allowing journalists and activists alike the opportunity to share their experiences with each other and the outside world. The site provided up-to-the-minute written reports as well as audio and video footage and was featured on CNN, America Online, Yahoo and the BBC Online. The center logged more than two million hits during the week-long mobilization. As news of the center's success diffused through the progressive activist community, the Seattle center began to receive requests for assistance to create new Independent Media Centers in other areas. In February 2000, three months after the 'Battle in Seattle', a similar media center was established in Boston to cover the Biodevastation Conference. Later that same year, another was established in Washington D.C. to report on a series of protests against meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Since then, the model of open source, radical democratic journalism has spread around the globe, appearing in 35 countries including London, Canada, Mexico City, Prague, France, Italy and Belgium with more than 110 sites (Downing *IMC Movement*; Kidd *Become the media*).

Clearly this model of participatory communication has struck a chord with activists and people excluded from the enclosure that is the global corporate media (McChesney, Mosco). Kidd (*Become the media* 235) used the metaphor of 'the commons' to analyze the open source, non-hierarchical governance structure of the IMC collective. [2] In using the metaphor, Kidd identifies the potential for 'enclosure' and argues that 'the IMC's global network of dispersed sites, their rapid circulation of information between them, and their connection to the global social justice movement should make the IMC network much more resistant to enclosure.' This sort of optimism is prevalent throughout much of the literature of this new alternative media model. Similarly, Downing (*IMC Movement* 256) sees the success of the IMC network as an indication of

the 'strategic failures of corporate media' and points to the lack of any specific political party as a source for 'international political connectivity'. IMCs have drawn the attention of activists and academics alike with both groups working to expand the material and theoretical possibilities of this proliferating alternative media model.

The goal of providing alternative non-corporate media outlets is only one part of the mission of the IMC movement. The Network of Independent Media Centers (NIMC) works to redesign the entire process through which news and information is gathered, synthesized and shared with the public. The NIMC is building a new type of media system based on decentralized and democratic decision-making, transparency of process and unfettered access by the public to the communication media. This system attempts to eliminate the third party influence of the corporate press in favor of direct, person to person communication.

While the model of do-it-yourself (DIY) media has broad appeal, this nascent communication model is still struggling to establish everything from common technical protocols to editorial policies and, most significantly, international social networks that can reinforce the hyperlinks that create and maintain the current network.

> 'The challenge of the IMC is to foster as much circulation of social learning about the network, as technical capacity and news' (Kidd *Carnival and Commons* 14).

We argue that one piece of the social learning that needs to take place involves the nature of the internet and the potential to use server data to monitor web traffic, and thereby know if anyone is looking at the sites that are created with such passion. The internet infrastructure allows for unprecedented feedback from an alternative media audience. This feedback has historically eluded alternative media outlets that often fail to register on Arbitron or Neilson scales and are unable to do the sort of market testing that allows for any objective measure of audience.

An emerging body of research details the history and current state of media activism and Independent Media Centers. Bennett (*New Media Power*; and Bennett forthcoming) detailed the connections between emergent 'global activism and networked politics', placing particular attention on the 'social conditions' that shape the use of new digital media. Bennett (5) outlined 'an understanding of the social, psychological, political, and media contexts that make new media particularly conducive to enhancing the power of this global activist movement'. New forms of activism are said to be a response to 'new patterns of human association' that are made possible by the low-cost, highly accessible digital communication technology. Bennett's work provides an insightful analysis of the conditions of independent media, although it avoids the basic question of reception.

The Network of Independent Media Centers

Although IMCs have received a steady flow of scholarly attention (Atton *Alternative Media*; Bennett; Coopman; Downing; Kidd), a detailed description of the IMC structure has yet to emerge in the research literature. This section addresses that void and details the structure of the NIMC network and the listserv communication technology that facilitated this research.

The website that served as the hub of the first Independent Media Center is still based in Seattle and serves as a global portal for the network. Most of the individual IMCs do carry national or global news and information, but specialize in stories of interest to their communities or geographic regions. The focus of the central site at indymedia.org, in contrast, is national and global in nature. This central IMC has its own set of journalists but like IMC's worldwide it also features an open publishing section, referred to on all of the sites in the network as the 'Newswire'. The volunteers at the central site of indymedia.org also routinely search individual sites on the global network looking for newswire articles to include in its own 'Features' section. This central site provides links to every individual IMC in the network and also serves as the base

for several global media projects that include radio, video and traditional print media outlets. Each IMC in the network is autonomous, but in order to be included in the NIMC individual centers must agree to 13 conditions. These conditions, summarized below, set broad guidelines consistent with the general philosophy of the movement.

- Meetings of the IMC decision-making bodies, usually referred to as the 'Collective', must be open to the public and all records of the meetings and the decision-making process must be open to public review.
- Each center must develop an editorial policy through a democratic process and that policy must be open to the public.
- Each IMC must agree to host open publishing and must use some form of open sourced software. Several software packages are available from the global network but new software can be used, provided it utilizes an open source codebase.
- The individual IMC must develop its own mission statement and adopt a decision-making process based on consensus building. Once a new IMC is integrated into the network, that center is required to provide volunteers charged with participating in decision-making on the global level through the established IMC Network Communication Methods which will be described later in this report.
- Each center must agree to display the IMC 'i' logo on its site as well as include a listing with hyperlinks to all of the other sites on the network.
- Individual centers are prohibited from any affiliation with a political party or with political candidates and are not permitted to engage in any type of commercial for-profit enterprise.
- Also, each new center seeking membership in the NIMC must be able to demonstrate that there is enough interest in the community and enough volunteers to sustain the center.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, each IMC has to agree to adopt and adhere to the 'Principles of Unity'.

These principles are the foundation for the individual center's procedures and decision-making processes. They define the overall philosophy of the network and the movement. These ten principles are:

1. The Independent Media Center Network (IMCN) is based upon principles of equality, decentralization and local autonomy. The IMCN is not derived from a centralized bureaucratic process, but from the self-organization of autonomous collectives that recognize the importance in developing a union of networks.
2. All IMCs consider open exchange of and access to information a prerequisite to the building of a more free and just society.
3. All IMCs respect the rights of activists who choose not to be photographed or filmed.
4. All IMCs, based upon the trust of their contributors and readers, shall utilize open web based publishing allowing individuals, groups and organizations to express their views, anonymously if desired.
5. The IMC Network and all local IMC collectives shall be not-for-profit.
6. All IMCs recognize the importance of process to social change and are committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships, from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics. Therefore, they shall organize themselves collectively and

be committed to the principle of consensus decision-making and the development of a direct participatory democratic process that is transparent to its membership.

7. All IMCs recognize that a prerequisite for participation in the decision-making process of each local group is the contribution of an individual's labor to the group.

8. All IMCs are committed to caring for one another and our respective communities both collectively and as individuals and will promote the sharing of resources including knowledge, skills and equipment.

9. All IMCs shall be committed to the use of free source code, whenever possible, in order to develop the digital infrastructure, and to increase the independence of the network by not relying on proprietary software.

10. All IMCs shall be committed to the principle of human equality, and shall not discriminate including discrimination based upon race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation or physical ability. Recognizing the vast cultural traditions within the network, we are committed to building diversity within our localities (tallyimc.org).

Once a prospective IMC has met these 13 requirements, and agreed to the 10 principles, the information and supporting documentation is sent to the New IMC Working Group. This is a worldwide, ever-changing list serve of members who provide help and guidance to the new groups looking to join the NIMC and evaluate each new request for affiliation. The decision making process for this group is subject to the same process guidelines outlined by the IMC-Process, and records of their communications, via emails, are kept in a central location for anyone to download and examine.

The individual collectives may determine the overall look of each local IMC, as long as the minimum requirements listed earlier are met. The overwhelming majority of the IMC sites examined for this study adhered to one of several basic templates. These templates are a function of the open source software codebase being used by that center. [3] All of these templates contain a listing of individual IMC's in the network on the left side of the screen and the open publishing newswire section on the right. The newswire sections of each site use digital forms designed for ease of use by visitors looking to publish their news on the site, again based on the basic software codebase being used. Sites using the DADA IMC software package use an email address confirmation system to ensure that the source of the articles being published can be tied to a bona fide email address. This provides a very basic assurance to readers that the published account is a legitimate posting by an individual, rather than a form of spam or other mass distributed piece. Publishers can elect not to have their email address verified; but readers are warned that the article in question may not be as reliable as those originating from a source with a verified email address.

Individual centers develop their own editorial guidelines and processes to handle the stories posted to the Newswire. In the interest of transparency, links to these policies must be included in the site so that the public can access them at any time. Volunteer editors for each IMC monitor the Newswire looking for postings that are well researched, well written and of particular interest to the communities being served by that center. These stories are 'promoted' from the open publishing Newswire to the 'Feature' section of the website, which is in the middle most visually dominant column of each center's main page. The editors also look for postings that violate the individual IMC's editorial policy. These postings, which may contain commercial advertising, hate speech or other prohibited content are not eliminated but are moved to a 'Hidden' section of the Newswire. The titles of these pieces are not visible unless a reader elects to enter the Hidden section. Each time a post is moved to the Hidden section, the editors post a reason for moving the article. In keeping with the basic principles of the NIMC, most of the editorial policies are

extremely open and minimize the editors' ability to place a posting in the Hidden section. Nevertheless, the creation of the 'Hidden section reveals the tensions faced by the open source publishing model and represents a site where ideology and politics can begin to influence the content of this open model.

Some individual IMCs have dedicated sections relating to specific topics, others have established columns and other special features, but all of the web sites have the basic characteristics described above. At the center of each IMC is a web site but many have expanded to also include radio, public access television and documentary film and traditional print media. [4]

Communication Within the NIMC Network

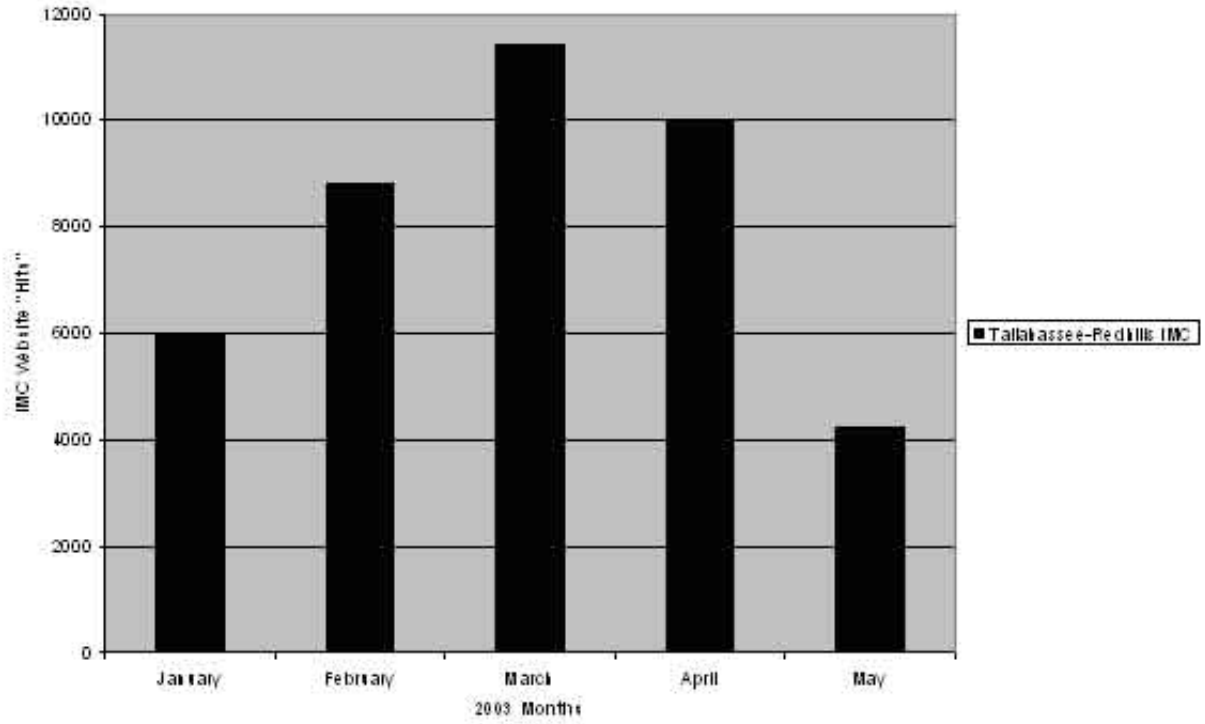
In order to facilitate communication between individual IMCs and volunteers across the global network, the NIMC has established a system of public subscription email lists. These lists are managed through a central server and can be accessed through the Internet at lists.indymedia.org. Each of these lists covers a different aspect of the NIMC. There are lists dealing with technical issues, fundraising, legal issues, outreach, etc. There are also lists that deal with the various projects of the NIMC and political and social issues of relevance as well as resource lists. Additionally, local IMCs are encouraged to use the list system for their local business and communications. Temporary lists are also created to help the NIMC cover large-scale mobilizations such as the protest actions at the G8 Summit in Genoa and the Fair Trade Area of the Americas Ministerial in Miami. Anyone can submit a request for the creation of a new listserv, and new lists are routinely coming on-line. Currently there are more than 800 lists. Each time a new list is created, the list administrator is able to set the parameters by which users are able to send messages to that particular list, but almost all are subscription only in an effort to deter spam and other unwanted solicitations.

The purpose of this list system is fourfold. First, the lists allow IMC volunteers to subscribe to the area or project of the NMIC in which they have the greatest interest. The range and scope of the IMC project is so great that volunteers would have to wade through thousands of emails daily just to be able to work on their specific projects or interest areas. Second, the list system provides a convenient, centralized location for new IMC volunteers to find an area of interest to them. New activists can begin work right away and veteran volunteers can expand their involvement around the planet regardless of their geographic location. Third, the lists provide forums where people can share ideas and information without the risk of their email address winding up on a company's spam list, and the system helps stop the transmission of computer viruses. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the list system archives all of the email messages sent through that list. These archives are available to anyone so that the process and progress of the NIMC can be accessed at any time. This keeps the activities of the network open to the public, keeping with the spirit of the IMC, and provides crucial information to those who wish to build new community IMC's or otherwise expand the movement.

Procedures

We began work on this project after seeing a report of server traffic statistics for the IMC in our community posted on the website. This report included a wide-range of statistical information including the number of hits, number of page views and other activity chronicled by month, day, week and hour. A cursory examination of this server report indicated that there was a significant increase in website traffic during the month of March. This corresponded to several public protests in the Tallahassee area organized in response to the outbreak of the war in Iraq. Also, the number of hits began to decrease during the next two months. A careful examination of the stories on the site indicated that the increased interest coincided with the onset of the war. We then decided to seek similar server data from other IMC sites in the network to see if similar patterns existed.

Figure 1: Tallahassee-Redhills IMC "Hits Per Month, January - May 2003



A message was sent to each IMC, describing the nature of the research project, an internet link to the Tallahassee report, a request that each IMC run a similar report and an offer of technical assistance in compiling the data if needed. An initial version of this request was sent using the lists system described earlier to the global IMC-Communications and IMC-Tech lists.

This initial communication only elicited a single response, so the request was then sent to each IMC in North, Central and South America on an individual basis. As stated earlier, every IMC collective has a great deal of autonomy in how it conducts operations. Consequently, there is no standard for the way in which individuals outside of the various collectives communicate with the IMCs. Some use a direct email address associated with that center while others post email accounts for one or more of the center's volunteers. The majority, however have opted to use the IMC lists system described earlier. In addition to the benefits already discussed, the use of the lists system has other advantages: it provides a convenient way for individual centers to set up subscription lists without any technical expertise or special software, and automatically archives all of the communications associated with the operation of that IMC without taking up any valuable server space for that center.

The Indymedia lists system poses a challenge to individuals not involved with the collective and was an impediment in collecting the desired server information for this study. We decided to request information through a direct email in addition to a second request using the IMC lists. This approach garnered several more responses, the majority of which came from the direct email addresses rather than through the moderated lists. The responses to this second round of contacts were notable not for the server data we received, of which there was very little, but for the reasons given for the denial of our requests.

'We DON'T record visits by our users. Ask the FBI' was the reply we received from an IMC from the Southern region of the US, and was characteristic of the type of responses received to the second round of requests for data. Another response from a Southwestern site read, 'I have a hard time trusting anything from Florida'and a volunteer from a third IMC responded, 'We don't keep that information, Mr. Ashcroft.' While these responses represent the most extreme cases, there was a great deal of hesitancy from the IMC community to our inquiries. Widespread concern in the progressive community over the Patriot Act and other government initiatives almost certainly

accounts for some of the uneasiness, and a case involving the FBI in 2001 provides tangible justification for the concerns of the NIMC. [5]

In order to address these concerns, our request for information was re-written to stronger emphasize our connections to our own community IMC and to assuage the fear that the information requested would only be used for research. Also, we made it clear in the request that this study was interested only in the number of visitors for the specified time period and, if possible, the number of hits and page views - not the IP addresses or other information that might identify the users of the site.

Once the request was retooled, we submitted it to the individual websites via their listed email contacts (both moderated lists and direct email) but we took the process one step further. One of the researchers visited each and every site and posted the new request as an article to each center's Newswire. The message was translated into Spanish and similarly posted to the Newswires of IMC's in Central and South America. This final step yielded the greatest number of responses but the bulk of those responses were explanations as to why the server statistics we were looking for were not available. Again, these explanations yielded a great deal of information about the NIMC, especially about its structure and operations.

First, it is important to note that the NIMC has not adopted any standards for maintaining server information. The decision to generate and archive server data is left up to the individual collectives. The only standard that has been adopted by the global network is the requirement that no IMC archive the IP addresses of visitors to the sites. Many of the responses we received were from volunteers based in the communities served by the IMCs with little if any knowledge about the technical aspects of their sites. Upon further investigation we found that a large number of the sites were housed on servers in locations far removed from the IMC. In these instances, there appeared to have been very little communication between the volunteers who handled the generation of content and community outreach and the people providing the technical expertise. In fact, the majority of the IMCs in Central and South America were housed on servers located in the US. In situations where the server was locally located, volunteers often replied that they had ceased logging server statistics in order to preserve precious server space. Others reported that they had not logged the stats due to a lack of human resources. Several website administrators shared various technological problems associated with logging this date, due to the way in which many individual IMCs are housed on multiple servers.
Eventually this process yielded server reports for six additional IMCs on the network. Due to the fact that there are no standards for collecting or reporting data, the reports were varied in the ways in which the data was collected and collated both in units of measurement and time periods for which the data was reported.

In general, server data is reported in one or more of six units of measurement. *Hits* are the most general unit and refer to any request for access to any single portion of the website. *Visits* are more specific and represent a specific time period in which a single IP address spends navigating the site. This time period varies and is set by the system administrator or is the result of a default setting of the web tracking software being used. Visits usually refer to an IP address that is actually "using" the site rather than *Hits* which are registered whenever any single element of a web page (such as individual images) are accessed, at any time. Single visits almost invariably register multiple hits. *Unique Visits* are still more specific and are only registered when a new IP address accesses the site or if an IP address that has visited before is accessing the site after an arbitrary time period has elapsed. *Page Views* usually refer to the number of distinct pages accessed within the specified time period. Finally, many server reports include the number of kilobytes that are downloaded from the site. For the purpose of this analysis, the number of *visits* was chosen as the relevant unit of measurement because this unit seems to offer the best indicator of website traffic. Also, this statistic was most consistent across all the IMCs reporting data. The Tallahassee-RedHills IMC, the site that produced the first server report, only recorded the number of *Hits* and *Page Views* so was excluded from any further analysis.

Results

The traffic reports from the six IMC websites examined all show an increase in traffic during the five-month period of interest and display a pattern relatively consistent with the initial website examined. Figure 2 is a graphic comparison of the 'visits' logged by each of the six websites examined and Figure 2a provides the actual numbers corresponding to the graph. For each IMC website, the number of 'visits' for each month, January through May, is represented by a designated bar. Although the levels of traffic varied across the sites, each site experienced a significant increase in 'visits' beginning in March, much like the first reports we examined from the Tallahassee-Redhills IMC. These increases were not marginal changes, rather a near doubling of visits from January to March in most cases. In four of the six cases, March was the month with the highest level of activity, again consistent with the Tallahassee web site.

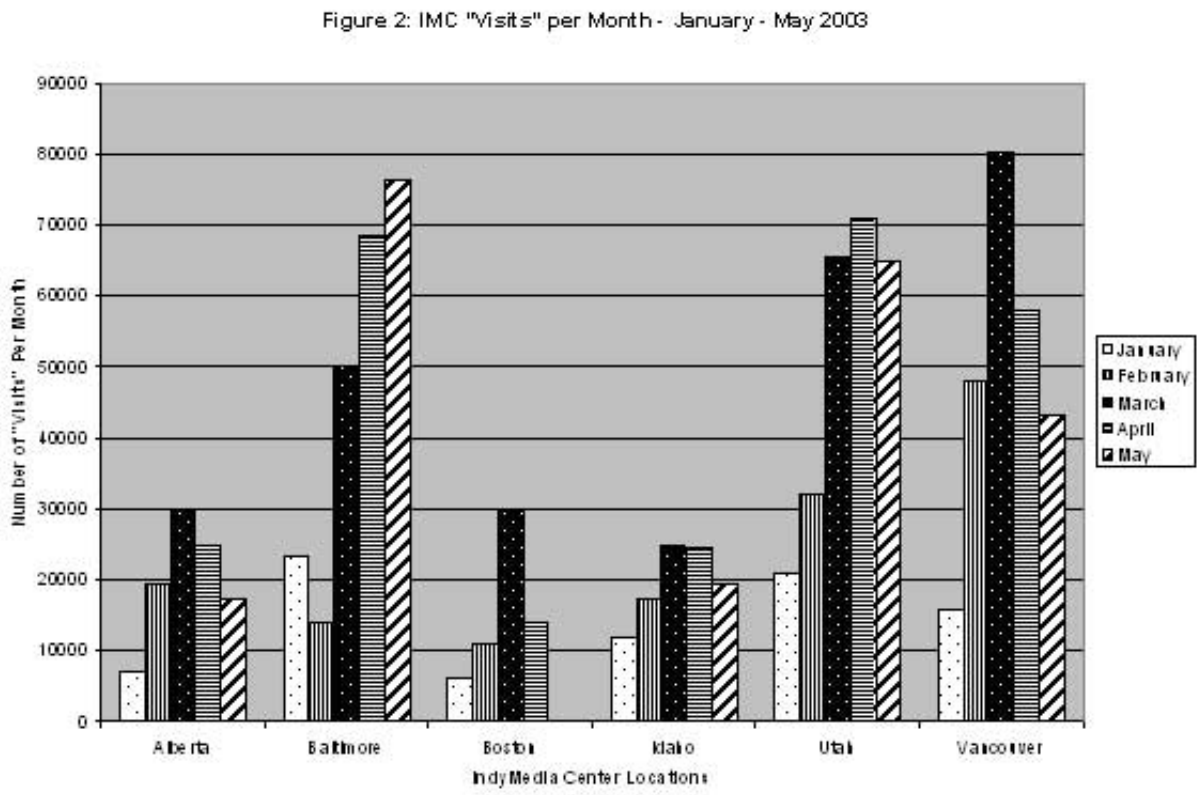


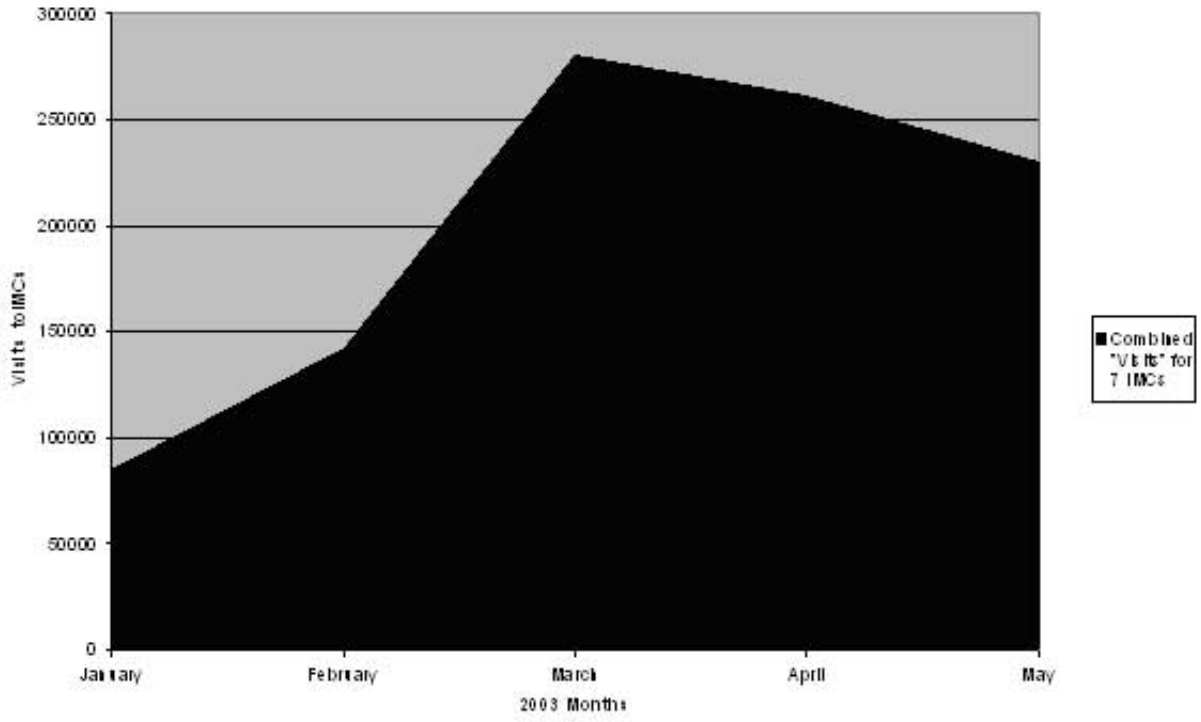
Figure 2a. Number of IMC Visits - January to May 2003

IMCs	January	February	March	April	May
Alberta	7094	19540	29493	24936	17374
Baltimore	23365	13999	50140	68500	76192
Boston	6000	11000	30000	14000	
Idaho	11840	17248	24649	24602	19538
Utah	20875	32069	65593	70986	64883

Vancouver	15926	48107	80049	57939	43105

In order to further illustrate a general traffic pattern, the raw number of 'visits' for each of the sites for each month were totaled and examined. Figure 3 is a line graph which shows that when the total number of visits across the six sites is plotted by month, a pattern does emerge – one that supports our original thoughts about IMC traffic and the outbreak of the war. The graph shows an immediate spike in activity during the month of March when open warfare began in Iraq followed by a very slow decline in the two months following. While it is true that two of the six sites (Baltimore and Utah) individually show a slightly different traffic pattern (with traffic spikes in May and April respectively), plotting the total number of visits for all of the sites in our sample during the five-month period does provide a collective indicator of how traffic may look across the network in North America.

Figure 3: Combined "Visits" Per Month of 6 IMCs



Discussion

The server reports from the six IMC websites examined in this study indicate a significant increase in the number of times these sites were visited in the winter of 2003, with a definite spike in traffic during the month of March. This data suggests a connection between alternative media and periods of crisis and mobilization. These raw numerical server traffic reports do not provide us with the ability to know why people across North America visited IMCs more often, though a plausible explanation is that this traffic was a response to the Iraq war. Given the documented connections between IndyMedia and the global justice movement (Downing *IMC Movement*; Kidd *Become the media*), it is likely that these IMCs served as sites of information exchange as the global justice movement shifted focus in response to the war.

This study demonstrates the power of the Internet to monitor and measure the use of alternative media. This power is viewed with a fair degree of suspicion by many within the IMC community, and this suspicion presents a significant research barrier to further analysis of server traffic reports. This initial study merely touched on the activity of a small part of the NIMC during a highly charged period of time. From the significant trend in North American wartime IMC traffic

identified by this research, global testing of these findings would provide greater detail about the use of IMCs outside the industrialized North. We chose to provide extensive detail about the process of gathering the traffic reports in the hopes of assisting others who may expand on this small sample of IMCs. In addition, the mere process of gathering these server reports could prove to be a valuable educational tool for IMC-istas world wide. The knowledge and skills to establish, maintain and retrieve these reports are not ubiquitous among IMC volunteers and we believe these skills would be an asset for this emerging network. Though we would prefer that the traffic reports be made public, we recognize the concerns of many IMC volunteers and their desire to protect the network. We would prefer that sites generate these reports even if they restrict access to them. The data contained in these reports could help individual sites monitor reader's response to postings and provide an unprecedented feedback loop between media producers and consumers, furthering the IMC core concept of 'Be The Media'.

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Rich Templin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at Florida State University. He is currently the Director of Communications for the AFL-CIO in Florida as well as a founding member of the Tallahassee-Redhills Indymedia Center. His research interests include alternative media and the (dis)connections between networked activism and traditional labor politics.

Endnotes

[1] This study is based on Server data, from here on called "Internet Traffic Reports" generated from 8 Independent Media Centers: Tallahassee, Baltimore, Alberta, Canada; Vancouver, Canada; Victoria, Canada; Boston, Michigan, Idaho. [return]

[2] Kidd (2003) uses the metaphor of the commons to analyze the open source, non-hierarchical governance structure of the IMC collective. In using the metaphor, Kidd identifies the potential for "enclosure" and argues that the "the IMC's global network of dispersed sites, their rapid circulation of information between them, and their connection to the global social justice movement should make the IMC network much more resistant to enclosure" (p. 235) [return]

[3] The dominant codebases used in North America are dadaIMC, active, activesf and mir. [return]

[4] In Tallahassee, Fl, the IMC has partnered with the several other organizations and publishes pages with The Apalachee Tortoise, a free, monthly community newspaper. [return]

[5] In April of 2001, the leaders of many nations in the Western Hemisphere, including the US gathered in Quebec City, Canada to continue work on the Fair Trade Area of the Americas trade agreement. Anti-globalization activists from around the world were working to mobilize thousands of people to protest the meetings in an attempt to shut them down. A copy of the security plans designed to keep the delegates away from the protesters were stolen from a Quebec

City police car and promptly posted on the Indy Media site based in Seattle. On Saturday, April 21, FBI agents raided the IMC offices housing the server with an order demanding server information in an attempt to track down the individual who posted the plans on the site. A gag order was issued, preventing anyone associated with the IMC from discussing the case and preventing posts on the web about the raid. However, word quickly spread about the raid and the warrant for server data in the mainstream press including articles in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. This raid had tremendous repercussions throughout the NIMC, according to one response from a lead tech volunteer who manages several servers hosting individual IMC websites. "Ever since the FBI event during the Quebec action in regard to the FTAA meeting there, logs of Indymedia web servers, their existence, use, format, et al, has been somewhat of an issue" she wrote. "Many IMC's have quit keeping server data altogether and those that do are very hesitant to share that information outside their own collectives." [return]

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