

Internet Reagency: The Implications of a Global Science for Collaboration, Productivity, and Gender Inequity in Less Developed Areas

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Abstract:

This article focuses on the nature of scientific research in less developed areas in the context of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). We examine the notion that the internet will globalize the practice of science by creating connections between researchers from geographically dispersed areas. By altering the spatial and temporal mechanisms through which professional ties are developed and maintained, internet access and use in less developed areas may change the nature of knowledge production or simply reproduce traditional practices and relationships. The diffusion of the internet to Africa, Asia, and Latin America requires us to go beyond traditional views of development and technology transfer, to contemporary neo-institutional and reagency perspectives. The potential of the internet to globalize science, however, is largely dependent on the places and institutions in which it is used, as well as the identities of its users. Reviewing data collected in Africa and Asia since 1994, we summarize findings on access to and use of the internet and its impact on scientific productivity, collaboration, networking, and gender inequity.