

Making Sense of the Web

Finding Community in the GeoCities Web Archive

Ian Milligan
Assistant Professor
@ianmilligan1



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of History

The Web as a Primary Source

- **Web archives will fundamentally affect the way historians write history**
 - We will have easier access to information on a previously-unknown scale, as well as improved capability to parse it;
 - Yet historians need to reflect on the shape that Web-based primary sources will take, and **how we will be able to access them**

1990s

Could one
even study
the 1990s
and
beyond
without
web
archives?



Welcome to GeoCities Home

1,662 captures 22 Oct 96 - 6 Sep 15

INTERNET ARCHIVE WayBackMachine

http://www.geocities.com/ Go OCT DEC FEB Close X 20 1995 1996 1998 Help ?

TV TIME TUNNEL CLICK HERE

FOR A BLAST Click here for a Blast from TV's past!

GEOCITIES

Our communities are home to the most popular collection of **FREE HOME PAGES** & **E-MAIL** on the web. Please join or visit one of our 29 neighborhoods today.

PARIS **HERRINGBONE** **ATHENS** **TIMES SQUARE**

YOUR HOME ON THE WEB

- **ENTER HERE**
- **INFORMATION**
- **NEIGHBORHOODS**
- **WHAT'S NEW**
- **WHAT'S COOL**
- **WHAT IS GEOCITIES?**

* [Free Home Pages & Free Member Email](#) [Advertiser Information](#)

DIALweb Update

HOT **RESTORE**

GeoToon of the week

[GeoCities Daily Audio Update -- Sponsored by IBM VoiceType Simply Speaking](#)

Today's Cool Homestead
[Yosemite4273](#)
Sunsets, coastal seagulls and flowers are part of the photographic fare at inetd's homepage.

GeoCities News of the Day - 12/20/96

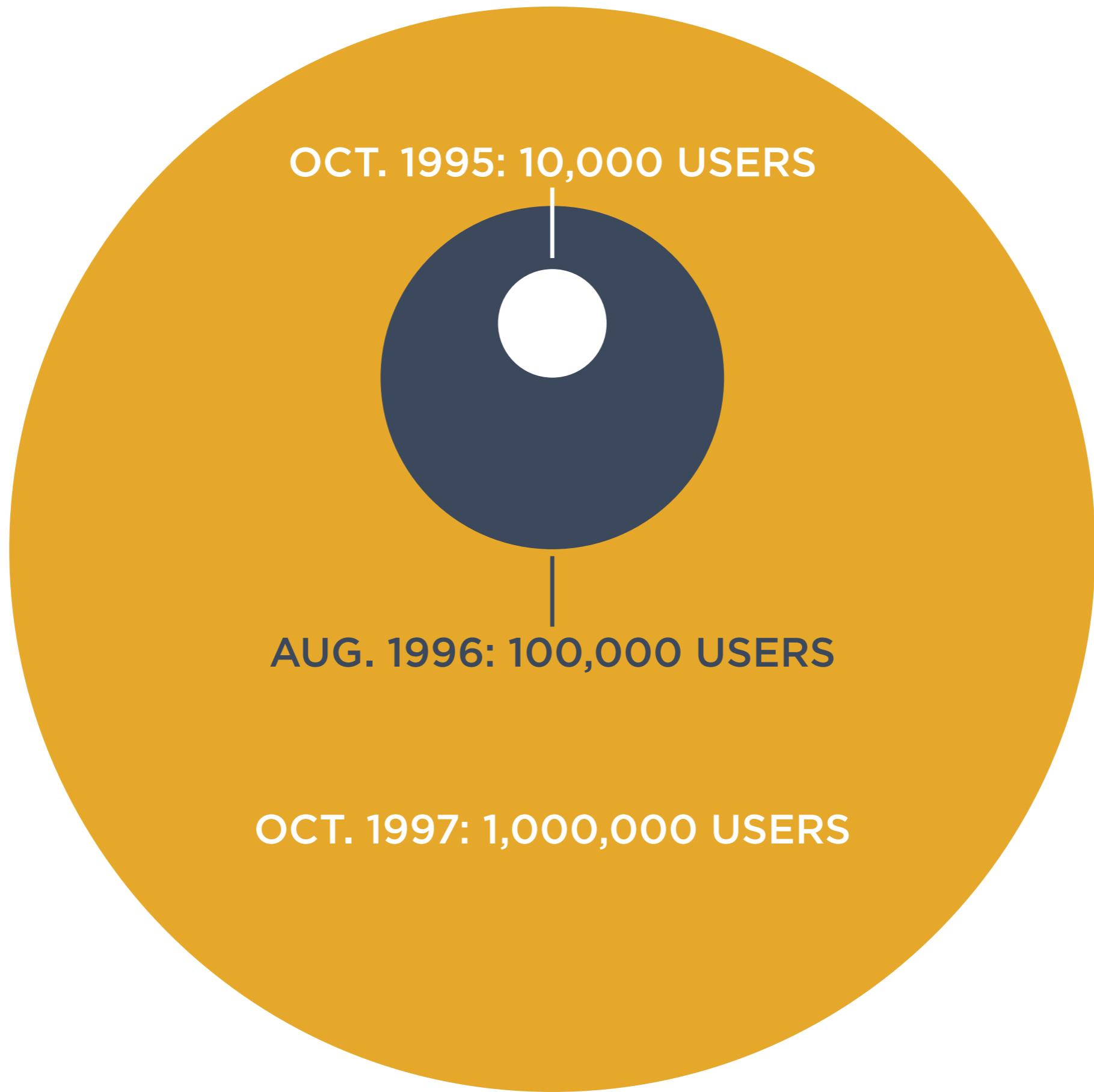
GEOCITIES LIVE CHRISTMAS TREE!
ON CAMERA!

Building a home page for the holidays?
Submit your letters to Santa, favorite holiday recipes and other holiday cheer to our special [NorthPole neighborhood](#). And share your holiday spirit with GeoCitizens around the world by helping us trim our [virtual holiday tree](#)!

Live at the GeoCities Mainstage

Check out our [schedule of events](#) and be a part of the next show...

GEOCITIES USERS:



[Join](#)  [GeoCities](#)

[Neighborhoods](#) [Members' Area](#) [Shopping Center](#) [Search](#)

Search the At Hand® Network Yellow Pages

CATEGORY CITY STATE

Visit These Neighborhoods

NEIGHBORHOODS

-  [GeoAvenues](#)
-  [Great GeoShops](#)
-  [Visit Virtual Offices](#)

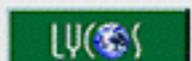
Search GeoCities [Yellow Pages](#) | [Domains](#) [Stocks](#) | [White Pages](#) | [IMPE](#)

[Home](#) [Help](#) [Info](#)

GEOCITIES

Our communities are home to the most popular collection of **FREE HOME PAGES & E-MAIL** on the web. Please join or visit one of our 29 neighborhoods today.

Next Stop 







Doom Level Design with DEU 5 - Netscape

File Edit View Go Communicator Help

Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop

Bookmarks Location: <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/2979/>

DOOM LEVEL DESIGN WITH DEU



Table of Contents

1. [Getting Started](#)
 - Introduction
 - Software/Hardware Requirements
2. [What Editor to Choose?](#)
 - Understanding the Editor
 - Understanding the Construction Features
3. [Building a New Level](#)
 - Inserting Vertices



Document: Done

Start Doom Level Design w...

NEIGHBORHOODS

WHAT'S NEW

WHAT'S COOL

WHAT IS GEOCITIES?

* [Free Home Pages & Free Member Email](#) [Advertiser Information](#)

Today's Cool Homestead  [GeoCities Daily Audio Update](#)

[HotSprings 1837](#)

So you hit the snooze bar ten times every morning. You might be lazy. But then again, you might have a sleep disorder. Find out here.

GeoCities News of the Day - 10/22/96

Web Hosting from Yahoo S X Ian

← → C ⌂ http://geocities.com/ ⌂

Home Mail Search News Sports Finance Weather Games Answers Screen Flickr Mobile More ▾ Insta

YAHOO!
SMALL BUSINESS

Search Web Sign In Mail

Website Hosting Sell Online Local Marketing Commerce Central Domains Business Email Advisor

Create your professional website in no time

Easy-to-use tools, included business mail accounts, and search ad credits help you succeed.

cineflex

Need help ordering? [1-866-781-9246](tel:1-866-781-9246) (Mon-Fri, 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM PT)

Basic plan
Ideal for small personal sites

Advanced plan
Ideal for business sites **POPULAR**

Premier p
Ideal for heavy tra

\$0.75 \$5.00 \$0.00

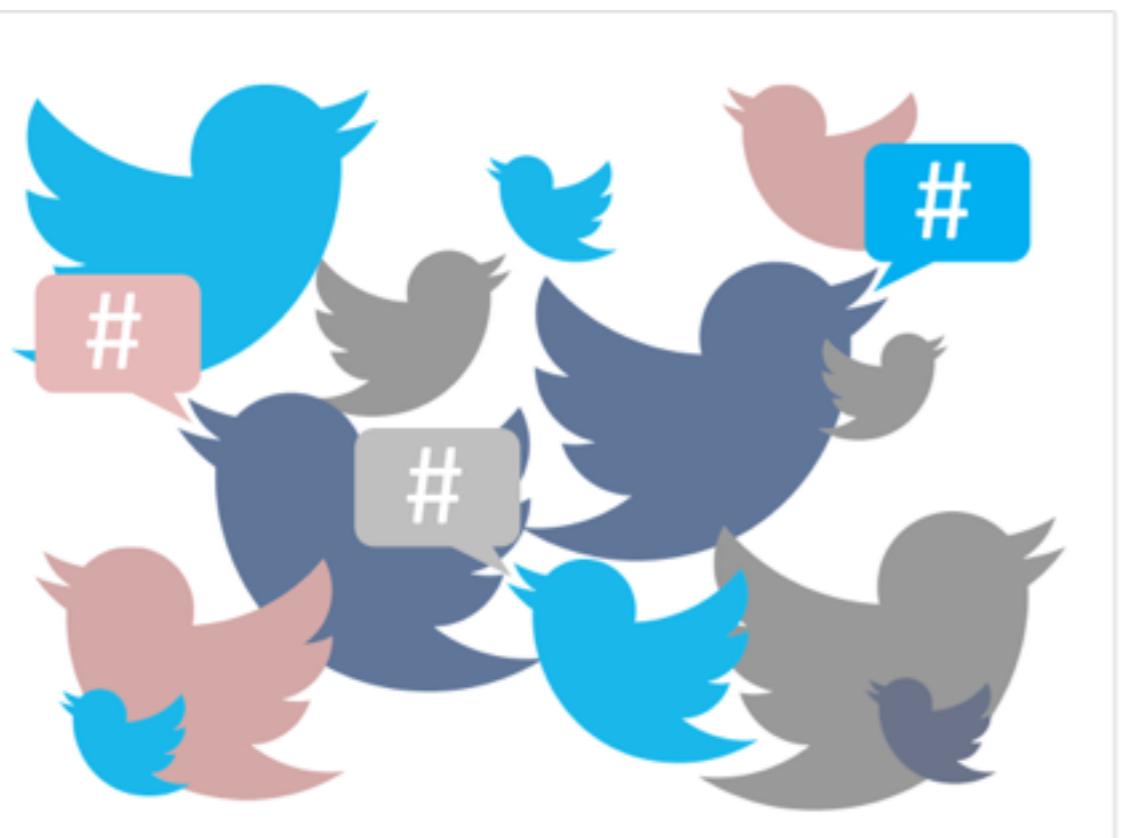
ARCHIVE TEAM



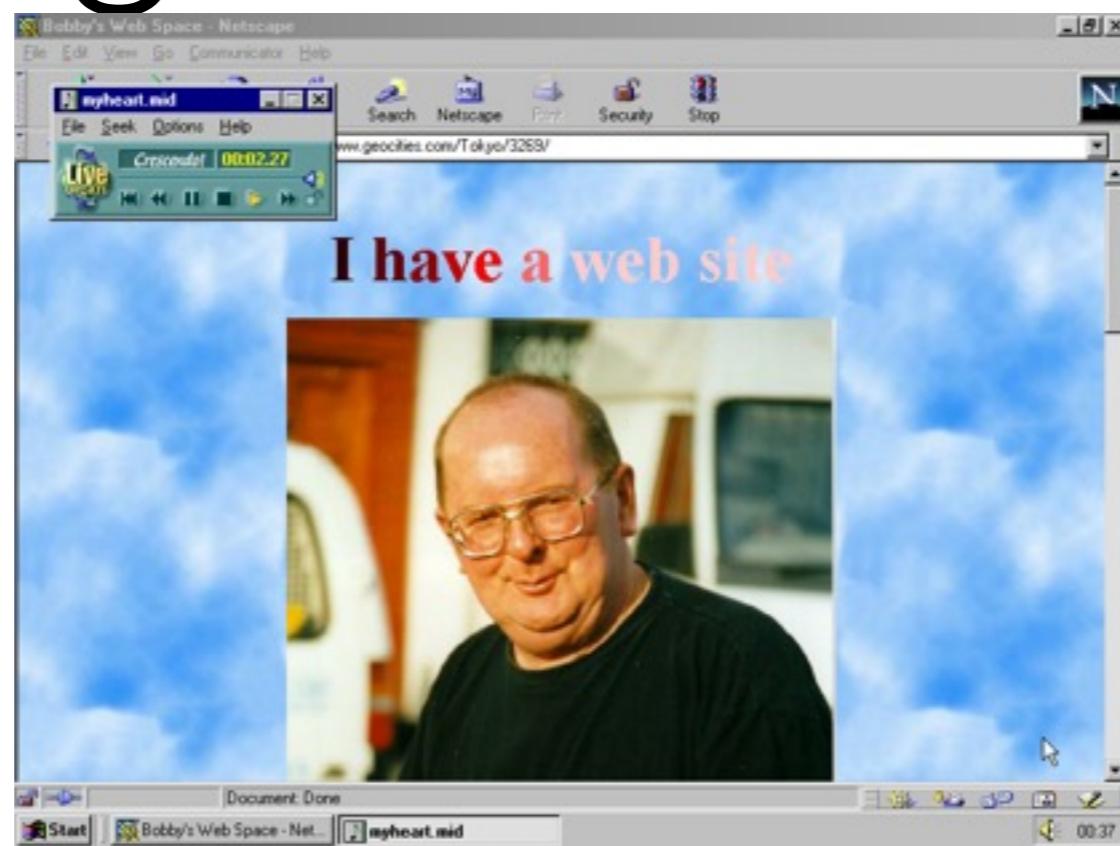
WE ARE GOING TO RESCUE YOUR SHIT



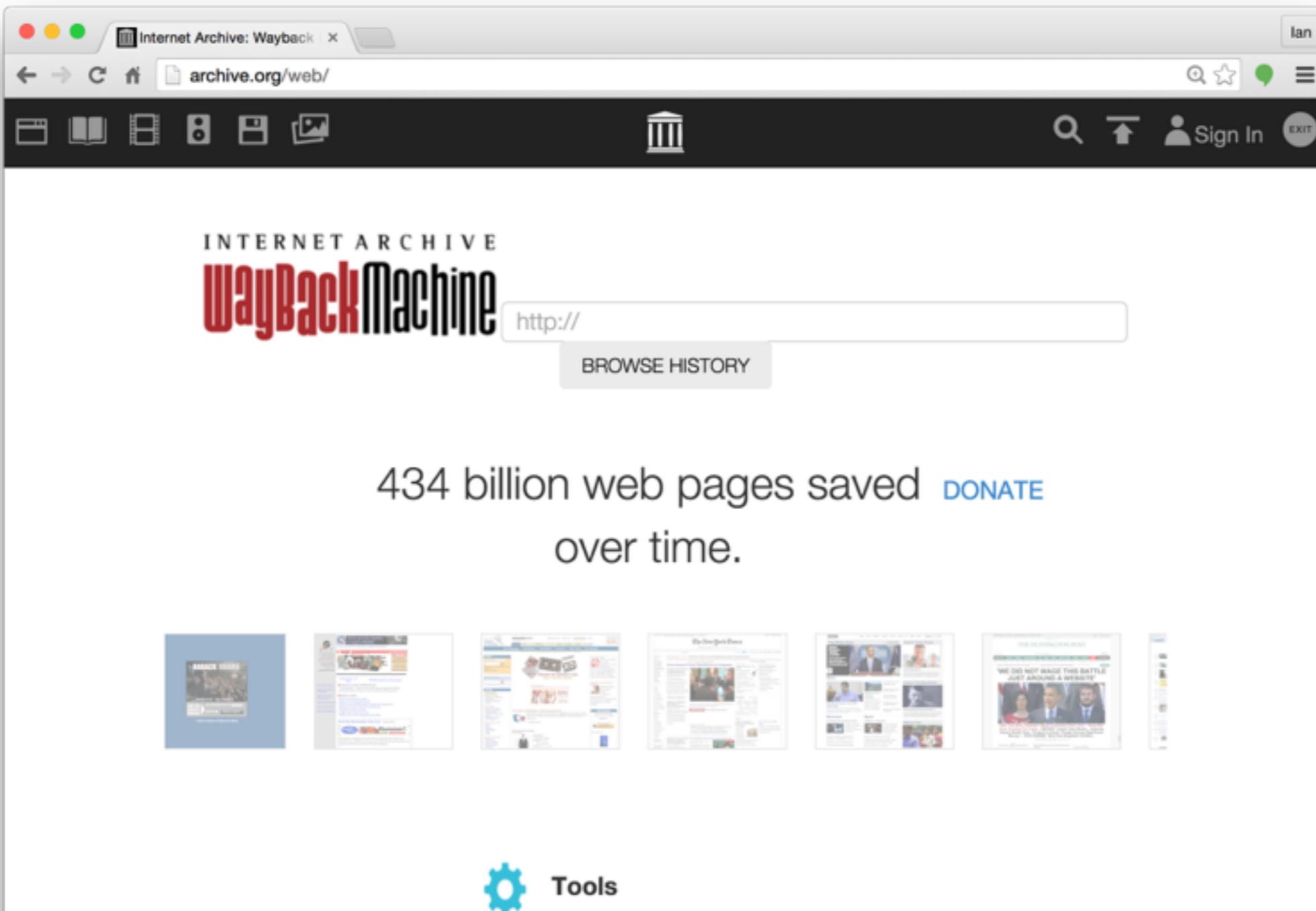
**Ethically
Navigating the
Records of
Seven Million
People**



Legal = ! Ethical



Wayback Machine = Privacy by Obscurity



Torrent = It's All There

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://archive.org/details/2009-archiveteam-geocities-part1>. The page title is "The Archive Team Geocities Snapshot (Part 1 of 8)". It was published on October 2009. The page content describes a collection of Geocities data downloaded by the Archive Team in 2009, before Yahoo! shut down geocities.com. It mentions the collection is compressed in a UNIX filesystem with 7zip archives and tape archives (gtar). The collection was put together by nearly 100 folks assembling at the news of the death of Geocities, a website that allowed free hosting of web pages from roughly 1994 to 2009. It was purchased by Yahoo! for three billion dollars. At the time of purchase, Geocities was the THIRD most popular website on the Internet. Even by the time of its shutdown, it was in the top 250. The page also notes that Yahoo! succeeded in destroying the most amount of history in the shortest amount of time, certainly on purpose, in known memory.

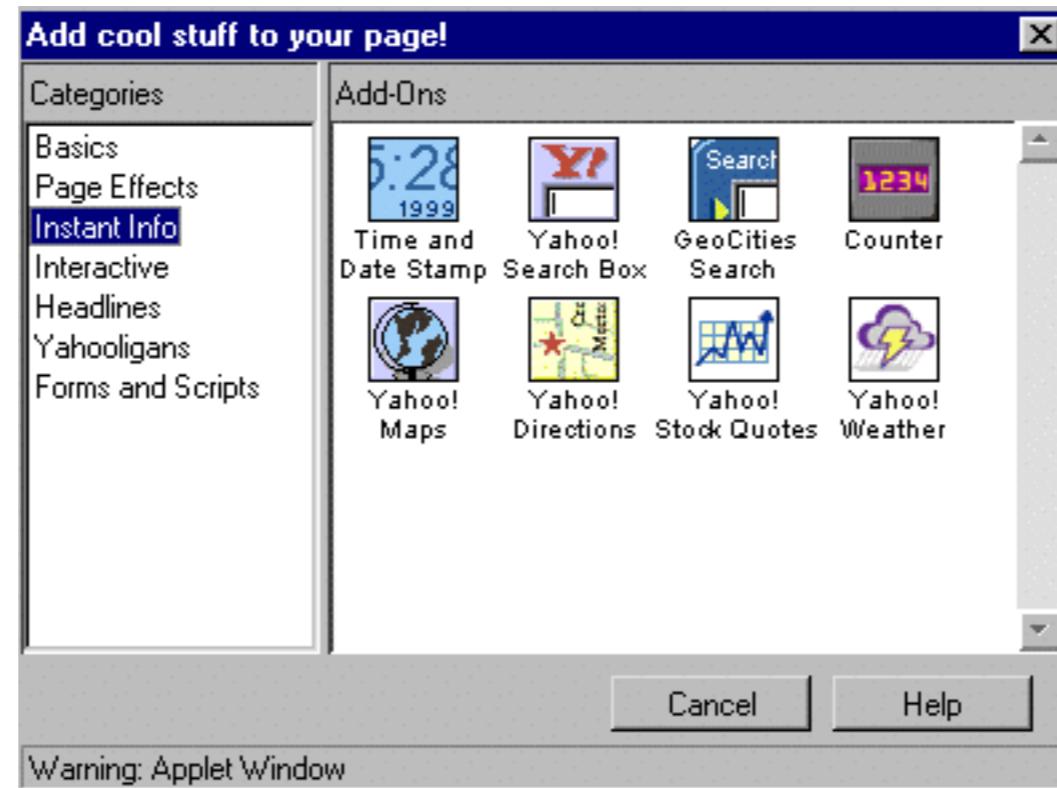
DOWNLOAD OPTIONS

ADVANCED AUDIO CODING	19 files
GZIP	2 files
JPEG	2 files
PNG	1 file
TEXT	3 files
VBR M3U	1 file
VBR MP3	2 files
WAVE	1 file
SHOW ALL	986 Files
	985 Original

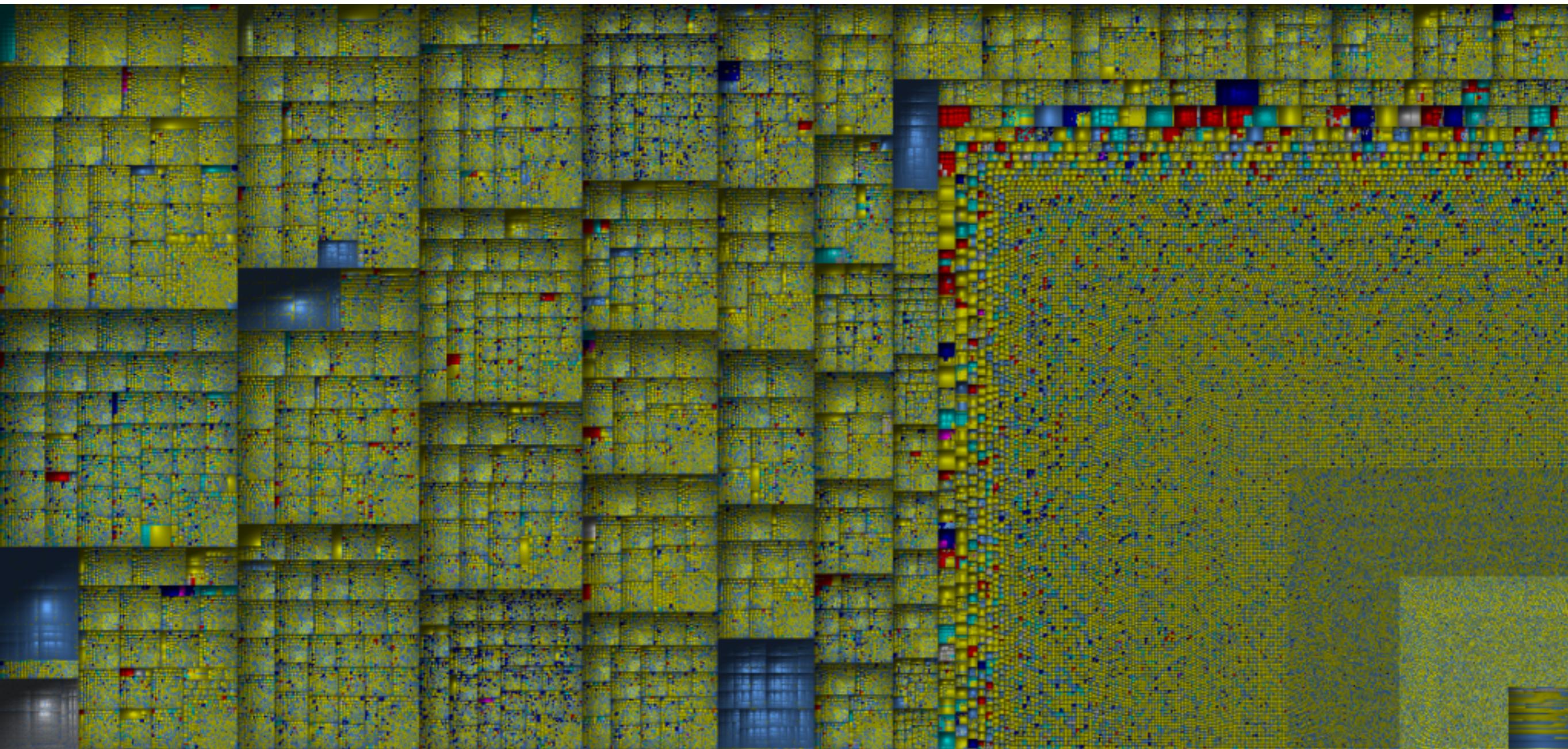
Ethical Dilemmas

What to do with GeoCities?

- (1) Distant Reading vs. Close Reading
 - Can't read thirty-eight million pages!
- (2) Expectation of Privacy
 - Inbound links?
 - Guestbook?

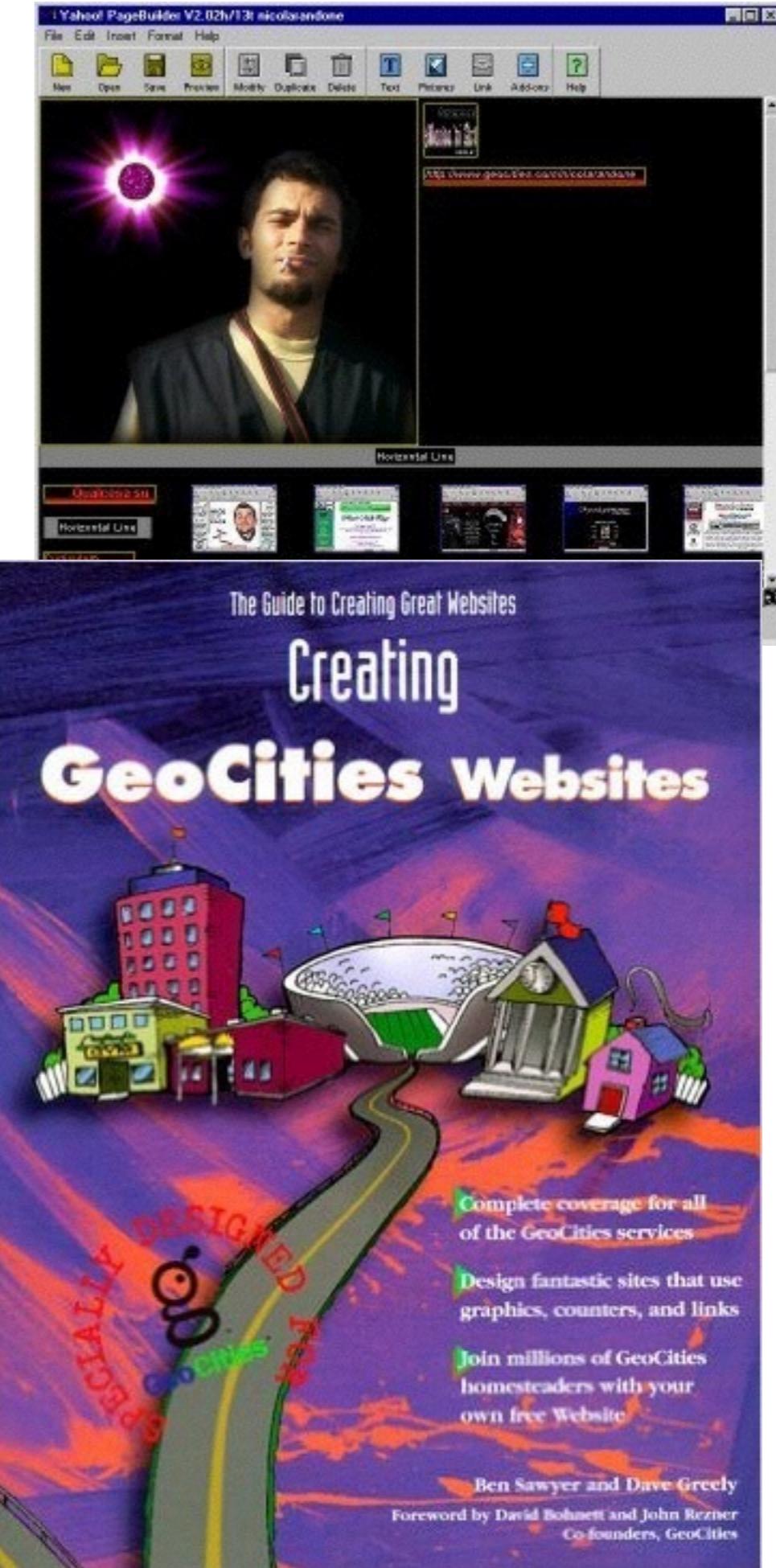
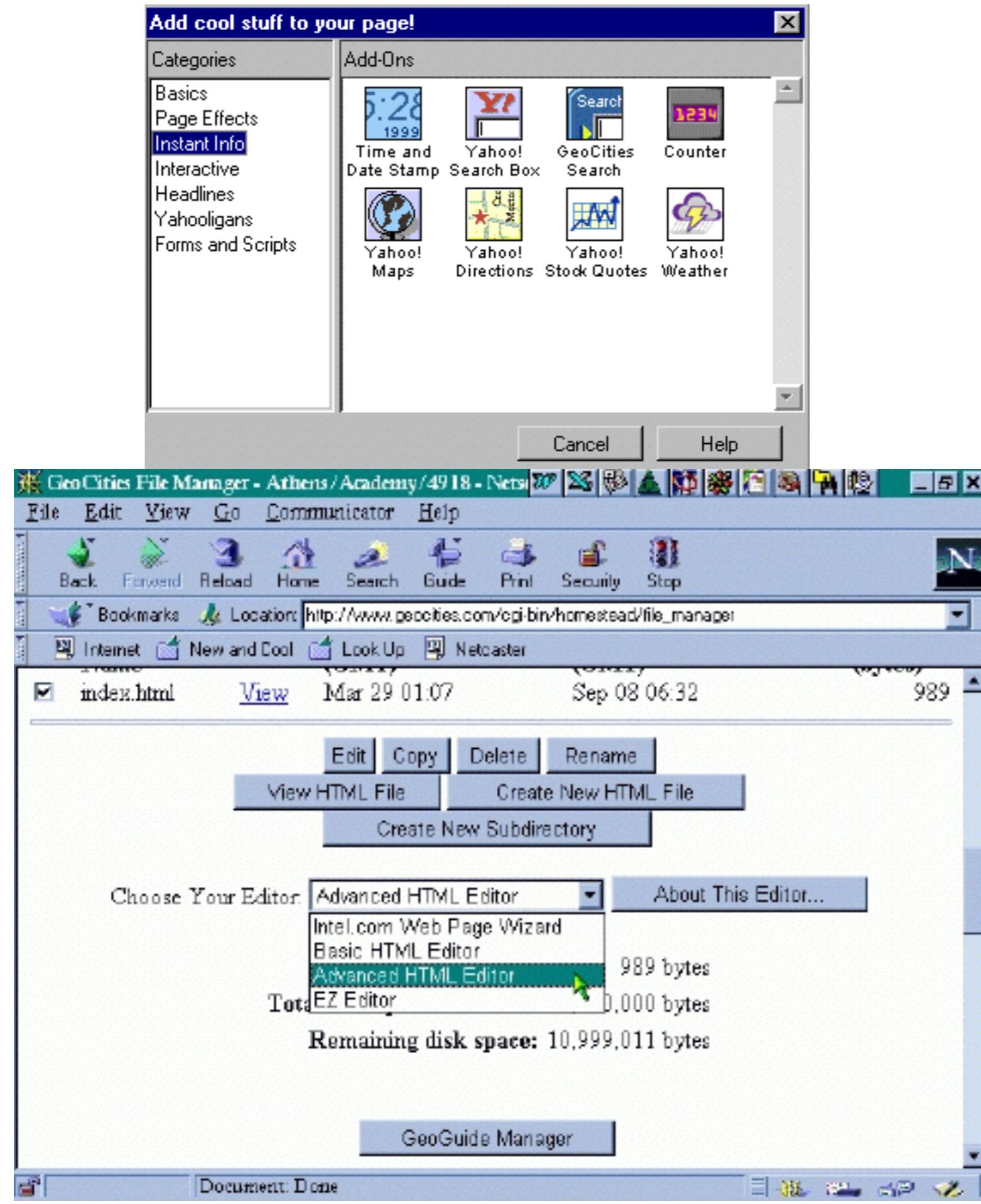


Moving into GeoCities



From the *One Terabyte of the Kilobyte Age* blog (Dragan Espencheid and Olia Lialina)

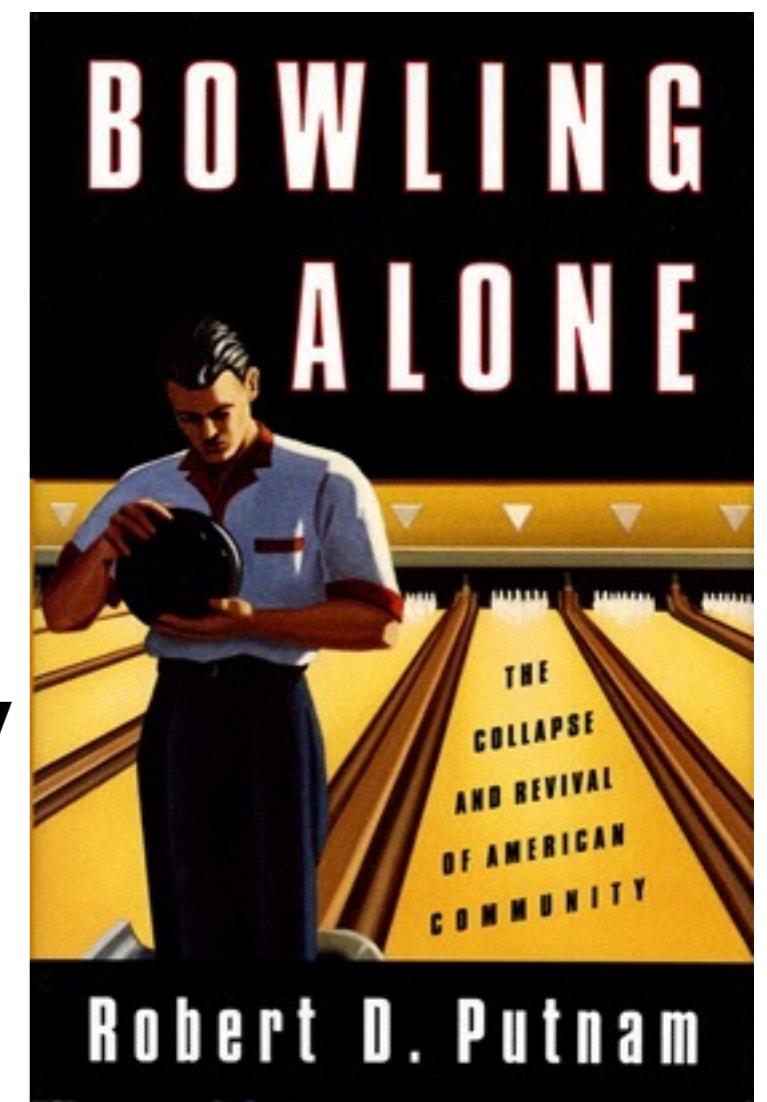
<http://contemporary-home-computing.org/1tb/archives/3297>



The Question of Community



Defining Community



“1. a dwelling with its land and buildings occupied by the owner as a home. 2. any dwelling with its land and buildings where a family makes its home. --v.t. 3. to acquire or settle on (land) as a homestead. --v.i. 4. to acquire or settle on a homestead. --home'stead'er, n.”

- GeoCities Homesteading Program Information,
February 1997

SOHO

WELCOME

RAINFOREST

ATHENS

Join



GeoCities

NEIGHBORHOODS

GeoAvenues

Start GeoShops

Visit Virtual Offices

Search GeoCities

 GO[Yellow Pages](#) | [Domain Stock](#) |
[White Pages](#) | [More](#)[Home](#)[Help](#)[Info](#)

ENTER HERE

INFORMATION

NEIGHBORHOODS

WHAT'S NEW

COOL

OCITIES

[Neighborhoods](#) [Members' Area](#) [Shopping Center](#) [Search](#)

Search the At Hand® Network Yellow Pages

CATEGORY

CITY

STATE

AL

▼

Go!

Visit These

Neighborhoods



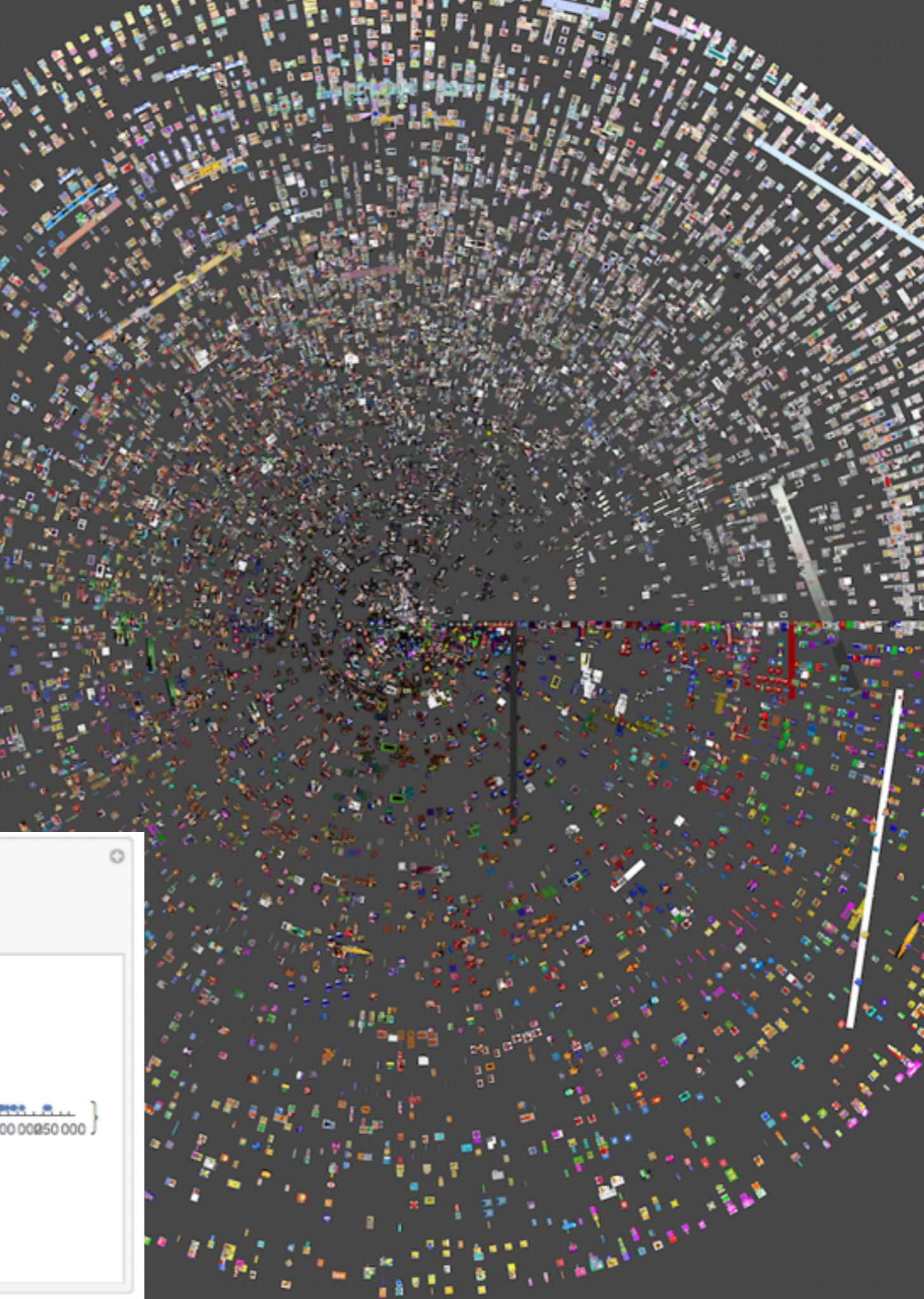
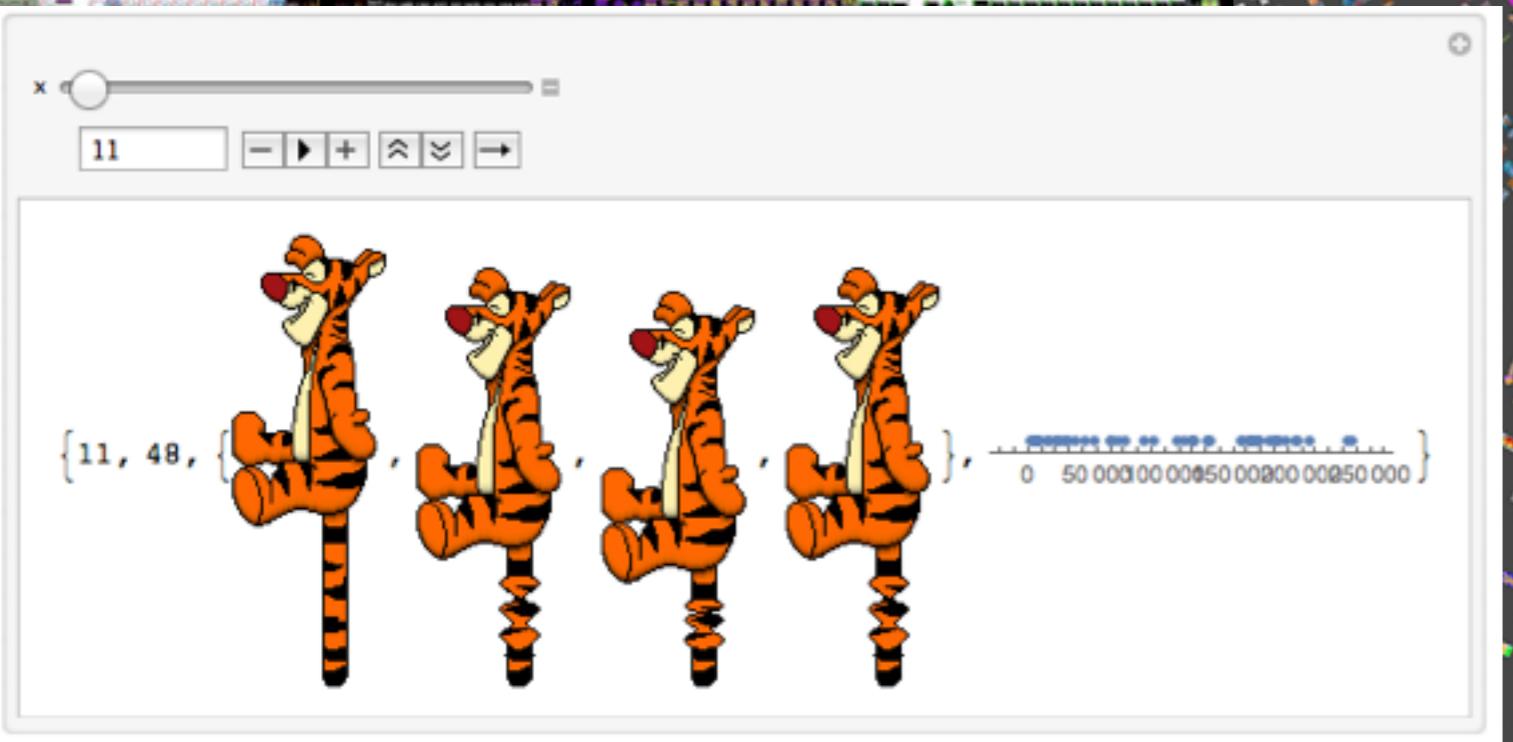
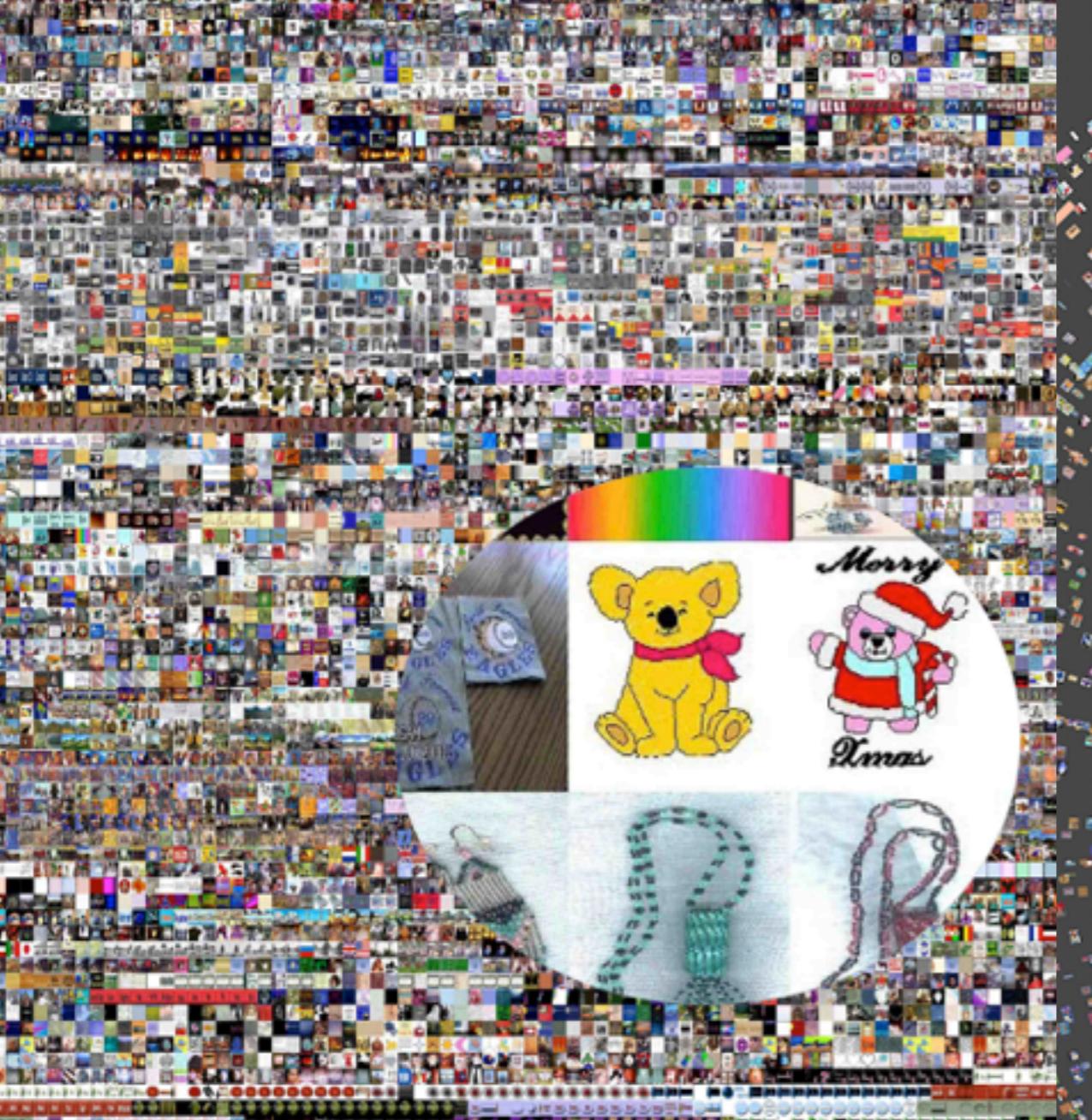
GeoCities members, or Homesteaders, create their home pages within themed communities called Neighborhoods. Find a Neighborhood that interests you, and see how our Homesteaders use their pages to showcase their interests and creative content for millions of people to see.

- [Area51](#) Science fiction and fantasy
- [Athens](#) Education, literature, poetry, philosophy
- [Augusta](#) Golf and the finer side of the fairways
- [Baja](#) Four-wheeling, SUVs, off-roading, adventure travel
- [BourbonStreet](#) Jazz, Cajun food, Southern culture
- [Broadway](#) Theater, musicals, show business
- [CapeCanaveral](#) Science, mathematics, aviation
- [CapitolHill](#) Government, politics, and lots of strong opinions
- [CollegePark](#) University life, from academics to extracurriculars
- [Colosseum](#) Sports and recreation
- [EnchantedForest](#) A neighborhood for and by kids
- [Eureka](#) Small businesses, home offices
- [FashionAvenue](#) Top designers, beauty and fashion

Too much
information...

Topic Modelling Cohesion

Selected Neighbourhoods	Top Two Topics
Athens <i>“... based on education, teaching, reading, writing and philosophy”.</i>	<p>people things time person sense life man work world human good mind soul make nature body case made point</p> <p>part parts goddess witch healing incense witchcraft love energy pagan shaman witches sun spirit protection light circle earth religion</p>
EnchantedForest <i>“A place for and about kids. Games, stories, educational sites, and homepages created by kids themselves.”</i>	<p>blue page school home day kids clues fun time year room birthday family mom jordan play great party friends jq battalion show st jonny horse battery armored lt artillery camp sailor army field col pingu war area quest</p>
Heartland <i>“A family oriented neighborhood that represents Main Street in cyberspace. This is the place to find parenting, pets, and home town values.”</i>	<p>people time children book years child information year work make life school person system state world books government good</p> <p>family county church home years information st city born state war school mrs history birth records great cemetery death</p>



Heartland's Infrastructure

The screenshot shows a Mac OS X desktop with two windows open. The foreground window is a web browser displaying the Wayback Machine archive of [The Heartland Edition](http://www9.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/6047/indexf.html) from April 1997. The browser's address bar shows the URL <https://web.archive.org/web/19970420015954/http://www9.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/6047/>. A warning message at the top left says, "This site uses a plugin () that is unsupported. [Learn more](#)". The main content features a yellow header with the title "The Heartland Edition" in a stylized font, flanked by book icons. Below the header is a sidebar with links like "T.H.E. Front Page", "T.H.E. Editor", "Letters To The Editor", etc. The main content area includes a "Mike's Hotrod Pic of the Week" section with a thumbnail of a red car, and a "Drop in on a neighbor!" link. A banner at the bottom reads "Volume II, Issue 3 April 1997" and "Heartland Featured Page". A "No Frames Version" link is also present. The background window shows the "Heartland HeadQuarters" page. The Wayback Machine interface includes a "4 captures" link and a timeline showing the site's evolution from March 30, 1997, to October 23, 2009.

The Heartland Edition

T.H.E. Front Page

T.H.E. Editor

Letters To The Editor

Geocities Announcements

The Heartland Helpers

T.H.E Spotlight

T.H.E Classifieds

T.H.E. Resources

Heartland Features

Heartland Creations

Happy Birthday Heartland!

Heartland Celebrates!

A Heartland Funny

Heartland's Mother's Day Conte

Heartland Awards

T.H.E. News

T.H.E. Movie Reviews

T.H.E. Video Reviews

T.H.E. Honors

Volume II, Issue 3 April 1997

Heartland Featured Page

No Frames Version

Heartland Midi

April is here at last! This issue of The Heartland Edition (T.H.E) will bring you up to date on all the latest Heartland happenings. The Heartland Edition is a monthly publication, and all your stories, articles, information, questions and comments are always welcome! All you have to do is [E-mail me](#) with your submissions. I will get back to you as soon as possibly can. Feel free to email me anytime during the month with your contributions as I update The Heartland Edition frequently. The Heartland Edition is designed to bring you a variety of reading enjoyment. Inside it's pages you will find some thoughts from your editor, information about your community helpers, a classified section, information about seasonal contests, an awards page, creations made by the Heartland Community itself and a new feature for this issue - Sunny's Video Reviews! So grab a cup of coffee, sit down in your favorite chair, and enjoy.

W GeoCities Heartland Comm X

INTERNET ARCHIVE WayBackMachine

31 captures 21 Dec 96 – 28 Oct 09

<https://web.archive.org/web/19970413021817/http://www7.geocities.com/Heartland/leader.html>

http://www7.geocities.com/Heartland/leader.html Go



[Back to Heartland](#)

GeoCities Heartland Community Leaders

Here are the Community Leaders for the Heartland neighborhood. They are homesteaders who have volunteered to watch over your community and help their neighbors set up home pages, answer questions, and generally keep everything running smoothly. You'll see them in the chat rooms and newsgroups, and they may even e-mail you directly to introduce themselves. Feel free to contact them directly if you have questions -- they're here to help.

If you're interested in becoming a **Community Leader** yourself, please read our [Information Page](#) for more details on the program.

The Heartland leaders have set up a neighborhood resource center at [Heartland7546](#), where you'll find pointers to important GeoCities features and a list of leaders' block assignments.

chirho
chirho@geocities.com
[Heartland/Hills/1000](#)

Paula is a person who loves Jim, a mother of two grown daughters, resourceful, involved in her real-life community, and seeks to lead a spirit-filled life.

grannyrose
jrose@conterra.com
[Heartland/Hills/1563](#)

Granny got her first computer in April 1996. Her four daughters convinced her that she needed one to fill her time and now she's hooked.

W GeoCities Heartland Comm X

INTERNET ARCHIVE WayBackMachine

31 captures 21 Dec 96 – 28 Oct 09

<https://web.archive.org/web/19970413021817/http://www7.geocities.com/Heartland/leader.html>

http://www7.geocities.com/Heartland/leader.html Go

chirho
chirho@geocities.com
[Heartland/Hills/1000](#)

Paula is a person who loves Jim, a mother of two grown daughters, resourceful, involved in her real-life community, and seeks to lead a spirit-filled life.

wavehunter
utrviolet@hotmail.com
[Heartland/Hills/2988](#)

Lim speaks Chinese and is willing to help if you just ask him.

dustyt
dusty@ij.net
[Heartland/Plains/1027](#)

Dusty moved in Heartland/Plains in Nov., 96. He has two children. Dusty is familiar with HTML, Active X, and Java. He is always willing to help out.

jaystre
jaystre@weirdness.com
[Heartland/Plains/1061](#)

Jay started out just like everyone else, trying to make a home page without knowing anyone was there to help. He is always happy to lend a helping hand.

jayzangel
jayzangel@angelic.com
[Heartland/Plains/1339](#)

I am a friendly person who likes helping others and making new friends.

grannyrose
jrose@conterra.com
[Heartland/Hills/1563](#)

Granny got her first computer in April 1996. Her four daughters convinced her that she needed one to fill her time and now she's hooked.

shannons
shannonms@worldnet.att.net
[Heartland/Hills/3910](#)

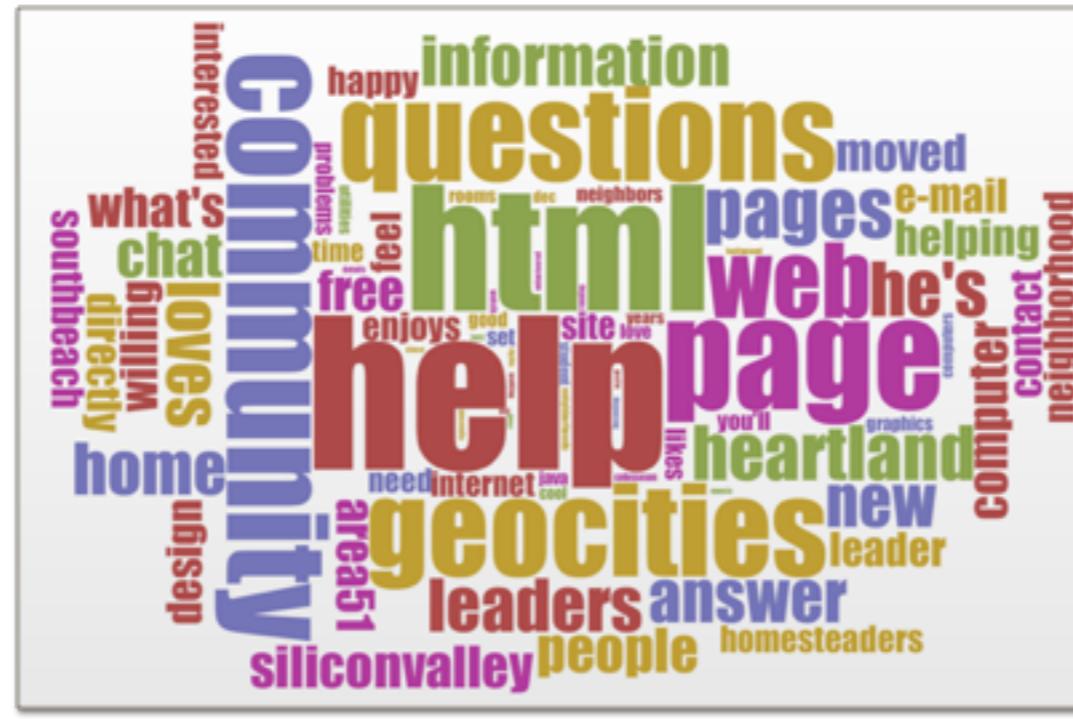
I am 29-years-old and work for a local newspaper. I have always had the belief whatever is given to me I must do my best to give back to the community.

thedovers
kaye@mich.com
[Heartland/Plains/1306](#)

Kaye lives in Michigan. Her goal in life is to try to get people to smile at least once a day.

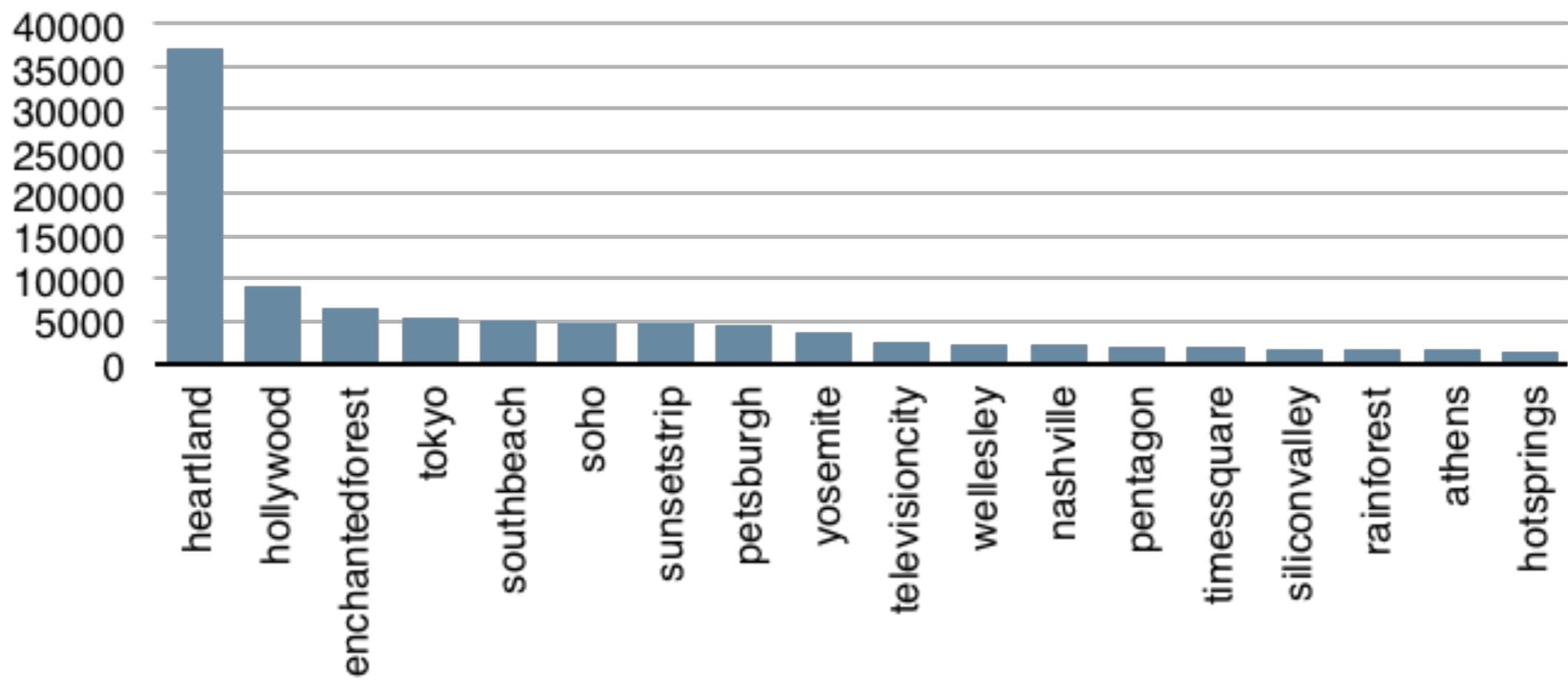
marilynsue
rebelgrl@ihot.com
[Heartland/Plains/1812](#)

Willing to help others with anything and everything to the best of my ability.



Word Cloud of All Community Leader Pages, 1996-1997 (6 scrapes)

Peer Awards



Peer Awards



Peer Connections

- Guestbooks
- Web-Rings
- Connections between neighbourhoods



Guestbooks

- Included in basic GeoCities code
- 43% of links from other GeoCities hosts!
- Semi-Public

The screenshot shows a Mac OS X desktop with a web browser window open. The title bar says "My Drive - Google Drive" and "Web Archives for Historical...". The address bar shows "http://web.archive.org/web/19990909165312/http://jupiter.guestworld.tripod.lycos.com/wgb/wgbview.dbm?owner=do". The browser interface includes a toolbar with icons for Apps, Keep, Lib, HistD, GM, W, MMA, RSS, and Globe.

The main content area displays a Wayback Machine archive of a guestbook from September 9, 1999. The page title is "Website: INTERNET ARCHIVE" and "Surfed On In". It shows "6 captures" and a timeline from "1999-09-09 08:10" to "9 Sep 99 – 23 Aug 01".

Comments: hello i like your site its really cool!

Record 249
Name: [JERRY KUNDIUP MOHABIR](#)
Website:
Referred by: AOL
From: GUYANA MOVE TO NYC
Time: 1999-09-07 21:28:14
Comments: HI MY NAME IS JERRY MOHABIR I'M LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY USA.. I WILL PALS LIST MY ADDRESS IS jERRY MOHABIR 1777 GRAND CONCOURSE # 11N BRONX NEW YORK CITY NY 10457

Record 248
Name: [Laura Rainey](#)
Website:
Referred by: Clicked on a 'Guestbooks by GuestWorld' Button
From: Paradise, Ca.
Time: 1999-09-07 01:28:27
Comments: Love to write letters and exchange photos, ideas, stories, etc... Enjoy corresponding with people who have the same hobbies..I enjoy cooking, camping, animals, road trips, and photography...

Record 247
Name: [Elizabeth](#)
Website:
Referred by: Just Surfed On In
From: Central new york
Time: 1999-09-07 00:23:25
Comments: Hi! I am really looking for a pen-pal that loves to write back! I love sports especially outdoor activities like basketball, swimming, and track. I have a busy scudule, but I will write back ASAP! I promise I will be a good pen-pal to someone ages 11-13. Boy or girl. E-mail me for more info.

Record 246
Name: [Madeline](#)
Website: [Talkcity](#)
Referred by: AOL
From: United States
Time: 1999-09-06 22:15:54

Webrings

<p>Genealogy</p>  <p>On The Web Ring Member</p>	<p>This Genealogy On The Web Ring site is owned by Carolyn K. FILER.</p> <p>Prev Skip It Next 5 Random Next List Sites] Want to join the ring? Click here.</p>	<p>Genealogy</p>  <p>On The Web Ring Next Site</p>
--	---	---

<http://geo.yahoo.com/serv?st=00000000<=0000000000&f=aa-a0>

<http://us.i1.yimg.com/us.yimg.com/limg/mc.js>

<http://www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=happyholidays&home>

<http://www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=happyholidays&home>

<http://www.fortunecity.com/millennium/magic/87/party.html>

<http://www.babysitter.com/~laurie/autumn/fall.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/enchantedforest/glade/3890/october/webring/>

<http://www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=hawr;home>

<http://www.geocities.com/heartland/prairie/2524/rock.html>

So was it a
community?

Thanks - and Questions!



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Ian Milligan
Assistant Professor
@ianmilligan1



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of History