

# The Virtual Lab

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## ABSTRACT

The Internet and the Web have transformed society, spawning new industries, altering social and cultural practices, and challenging long-accepted notions of individual privacy, intellectual property, and national security. In this talk, I argue that social science is also being transformed. In particular, I describe how crowd sourcing sites like Amazon's Mechanical Turk are increasingly being used by researchers to create "virtual labs" in which they can conduct behavioral experiments on a scale and speed that would have been hard to imagine just a decade ago. To illustrate the point, I describe some recent experiments that showcase the advantages of virtual over traditional physical labs, as well as some of the limitations. I then discuss how this relatively new experimental capability may unfold in the near future, along with some implications for social and behavioral science.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.1.2 User/Machine Systems, Human factors, Human information processing

## General Terms

Economics, Experimentation, Human Factors

## Keywords

Online Experimental Social Science