Michigan researchers hunt for Internet remnants from time travelers

January 4 2014, by Nancy Owano

Image by Sam Rohn, flickr.com/photos/nylocations/

Time travel has captured the public imagination for decades, not excluding screenwriters and creative writing instructors who encourage creative leaps about stepping back and beyond the present through time. What about evidence?

Two researchers from the Department of Physics at Michigan Technological University decided to search the Internet for such evidence and have completed the study, "Searching the Internet for evidence of time travelers," submitted on December 26 on *ArXiv*. Authors Robert Nemiroff, professor of physics, and Teresa Wilson, a PhD candidate, said, "The modern ubiquity" of the Internet lends itself to far-reaching methods to search for time travelers. They said a benefit from their effort, given the great reach of the Internet, is that their search is "the most comprehensive to date."

Specifically, they embarked on a hunt for information about anyone who may have jumped forward in time, rather than focusing on persons who had traveled to the past—those who passed through our time who could have left some trace on the Internet. This may have been revealed in the form of a blog post, tweet, or search revealing they knew ahead of time what was to happen.

For those who support the concept, time travel is no laughing matter. The authors said that time travel to the future "stands on firm scientific footing. Special Relativity has clear sub-luminal solutions that correspond with time travel to the future. A famous theoretical example is the twin paradox. Such future time travel has been experimentally verified, for example, using a pair of clocks one of which was taken on an airplane. The flying clock recorded a relative time delay of order 10-7 seconds, in comparison to the more stationary clock."

To conduct their research, they used three search implementations. They said "The first search covered prescient content placed on the Internet, highlighted by a comprehensive search for specific terms in tweets on Twitter. The second search examined prescient inquiries submitted to a search engine, highlighted by a comprehensive search for specific search terms submitted to a popular astronomy web site. The third search involved a request for a direct Internet communication, either by email or tweet, pre-dating to the time of the inquiry."

No time travelers were discovered.

"Unfortunately, as of this writing, no prescient tweets or emails were received," they stated. The authors however, are not convinced that their coming up with zero means zippo to time travel theory. "Although the negative results reported here may indicate that time travelers from the future are not among us and cannot communicate with us over the modern day Internet, they are by no means proof."

One reason suggested is that it may be physically impossible for them to leave remnants of their stay in the past, and it may be physically impossible for us to find such information, violating "some yet-unknown law of physics, possibly similar to the Chronology Protection Conjecture." [

The authors also raised the question that time travelers may not want to be found, "and may be good at covering their tracks." Other reasons they came up with zero may have been that the time travelers did not leave the specific event tags that the authors searched for. "Finally, our searches were not comprehensive, so that even if time travelers left the exact event tags searched for here, we might have missed them due to human error, oversight, incompleteness of Internet catalogs and searches, or inaccurate content time tags." Nor will the authors abandon their interest. "Given the additional exposure that the public listing of this manuscript gains, we will continue to search, on occasion, for active tweets and emails involving potential time travel."

More information: arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1312/1312.7128.pdf

Citation: Michigan researchers hunt for Internet remnants from time travelers (2014, January 4) retrieved 2 May 2024 from
https://techxplore.com/news/2014-01-michigan-internet-remnants.html