

## VOLUME 10 (2006): ISSUE 1. DISCUSSION PAPER 5

### Discussion to the article by Anne Beaulieu &

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Since the emergence of the field of webometrics there has been a growing interest in hyperlinking patterns which has led to a plethora of studies concerned with the structures and motivations underlying such patterns. Predominantly based on quantitative methods these studies have applied the philosophy of scientometrics to present a bird's eye view of connectivity between scientific actors on the web, such as linking structures between academic departments and universities revealing small world scale-free clusters. In contrast to the founding hypotheses of webometrics, that outlinks and inlinks are synonymous with references and citations in the published literature, webometricians have observed that linking structures often have a symbolic, rather than informational, intention that acknowledges interpersonal networks such as a collaborative partnerships. There is, however, a lacuna in studies that contribute to understanding the motivations and social relations underlying these clusters of connectivity. In their ethnographic study, Beaulieu and Simakova make a valuable contribution to the field of webometrics by presenting a rich picture of one possible socio-technical microcosm underlying an emergent hyperlinking structure. The central objects in the study are five networked scientific databases with web access at the science communication interface, which Beaulieu and Simakova conceptualise as new infrastructures for knowledge production. Conceptualising hyperlinks as infrastructural, symbolic and interpretive routines embedded in the socio-technical networks around these databases they move the field closer towards developing a social theory of hyperlinking. They explain how different social and institutional accountabilities, personal preferences, and access to technical infrastructures have a differential influence on how and why hyperlinks are created. Furthermore, the study raises interesting questions for future research by identifying variation in the temporality of hyperlinks across settings, which extends enquiry beyond current interest in web persistence.

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MAIN PAPER	DISCUSSION
<p><u><a href="#">Textured Connectivity: an ethnographic approach to understanding the timescape of hyperlinks</a></u> Anne Beaulieu &amp; Elena Simakova</p>	<p>Discussion to the article by Anne Beaulieu &amp; Elena Simakova Jenny Fry</p>