Wired History

March 01, 2006

With just a few clicks of the mouse, there they are: over 250 of the most historic works in the history of psychology. The site, Classics in the History of Psychology (http://psychclassics.yorku.ca), was developed by Christopher Green at Toronto's York University. It is a collection of texts ranging from Bandura's famous Bobo doll studies to Broca's initial write-up about his patient, Tan (in the original French), and even William James' *Principles of Psychology*, reproduced in its entirety.

Green and his colleagues have collected works spanning the entire history of psychology, and they have made them available in one easily searchable online resource.

The site, launched in 1997, was primarily conceived as a resource for history of psychology educators. Green feared that, no matter how well intentioned, many teachers of psychology history are not specialized in the area, and he wanted to provide immediate access to a primary source of key works.

"They may know vaguely about some primary articles they would like their students to read, but locating them, reproducing them, distributing them, paying for them, etc. all take too much time and effort. With the Classics site, all they have to do is give their students a few URLs and the job is done," says Green.

At the time the site was launched — almost 10 years ago — such online resources were extremely limited. Despite today's ever-growing wealth of internet materials, most journals have only posted material from the 1980s onward, making Classics one of the few Web sites where a comprehensive set of older psychological works is available, including James, Freud, Maslow, Jung, and Cattell. The site also includes works by authors not traditionally associated with psychologists, such as Plato, Edgar Allan Poe, and Charles Darwin, but whose writings about the mind are no less compelling than the revered members of the field.

Classics has had over 3 million hits last year and over 10 million hits since its launch. People from more than 70 different countries use the resource, a particular point of pride for Green since "many of these places do not have easy access to the material in print form." The success of Classics spurred Green to start another Web site devoted to sharing historical knowledge of psychology: the History & Theory of Psychology Eprint Archive (http://htpprints.yorku.ca), where researchers and theorists may post their own work.