Duesers: A Case Study of the *Due South* Cyberfandom

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Marsha Ann Tate, Ph.D. (marsha@mtateresearch.com) and Valerie Allen (vaa2@psu.edu)

Abstract

The growth of global television program distribution in conjunction with increased Internet access worldwide affords individuals the opportunity to create and maintain international cyberfandoms based around their favorite shows. This article explores one such group centered on the television show *Due South*, through the examination of Web pages, Usenet postings, and the results of a 1999 Web-based fan survey. It then applies Howard Rheingold's definition of the virtual community to these findings in order to determine whether the term "community" is appropriate when used to describe Internet-based fan groups.

Introduction

As technological advances and changes in broadcasting regulations in many nations foster distribution of television programs worldwide, it is more likely that a particular show will attract fans from outside its country of origin. However, traditional methods for fans to share information about and express enthusiasm for a favorite program such as local clubs, fanzines, newsletters, and the occasional convention seem inadequate in this new global milieu. For a fandom whose members are scattered about the globe, constraints of distance, time, and money can prove considerable impediments to these conventional forms of fan interaction.

The advent of the Internet and in particular the World Wide Web has eliminated many of these constraints while also adding new dimensions to the fan experience. The Internet offers unprecedented opportunities to share news, thoughts, and creative output almost instantaneously, whether fans live on the other side of the street or the other side of the world. These exchanges provide the links in a chain connecting fans worldwide, in effect creating one large interest group.

Previous Studies of Fan Groups

Traditionally, studies of fan groups have taken one of three forms: (a) gender-based studies (e.g., Collins, 1997; Nightingale, 1990); (b) genre-based studies, such as soap operas (e.g., Middleham & Wober, 1997) or science fiction (e.g., Tulloch, 1995a; Tulloch, 1995b, Bacon-Smith, 2000); or (c) studies that combined genre and some other element, such as gender (e.g., Jenkins, 1995; Jenkins & Dancer, 1995) or age (Tulloch & Tulloch, 1995). Attributes such as nationality were rarely incorporated into studies, with the exception of the multinational audience research studies (Ang, 1985; Liebes & Katz, 1990) conducted on the nighttime soap opera *Dallas* during the 1980s.

Most studies on Internet fan groups have followed the forms of their traditional counterparts. Several have examined bulletin board usage, Usenet, or online fan fiction activities in relationship to soap operas (Bielby, Harrington, & Bielby, 1999; Baym, 1997; James, Wotring, & Forrest, 1995) or science fiction (Clerc, 1996; Jenkins & Dancer, 1995). While these genres have received considerable scholarly attention over the years less notice has been paid to the numerous thriving Internet-based global fandoms of other genres. Moreover, many of these studies label Internet fan groups "communities" without considering the implications of applying the term to the Internet. Some scholars (Wilbur, 1997; Foster 1997) have questioned whether Internet-based groups, fan or otherwise, merit the appellation "community" or whether they are merely a network of people.

The Concept of Community

Scholars have held widely divergent views on the concept of community, as evidenced by George Hillery's 1955 study identifying 94 definitions of the term. He reported that their only unifying factor was that "all of the definitions deal with people. Beyond this common basis, there is no agreement" (p. 117). Three fourths of these definitions emphasized physical boundaries or what Poplin later referred to as the "territorial unit" (1972) as fundamental to the concept of community. More recent theorists have viewed geography as less important, suggesting instead that community is more of a symbolic construct whose boundaries exist solely in the minds of its members (Cohen, 1985), and by those who assert that communications technology is redefining the term "community" by removing the need for proximity among its members (Wellman and Gulia, 1999).

Howard Rheingold (1998) has taken this one step further by applying it to the Internet, and by calling the complex networks of people he finds there "virtual communities." He defines

a virtual community as:

> a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks. When these exchanges begin to involve interwoven friendships and rivalries and give rise to real-life marriages, births, and deaths that bond people in any other kind of community, they begin to affect these people's lives in the real world. Like any other community, a virtual community is also a collection of people who adhere to a certain (loose) social contract and who share certain (eclectic) interests. It usually has a geographically local focus and often has a connection to a much wider domain (p.116).

It is upon this definition of virtual community that this study is based. It provides a snapshot of the "Duesers", a fan group formed around the Canadian television show *Due South*. This paper will describe the Duesers and their activities in an attempt to determine whether fan groups can be considered communities. Background research for this study was conducted almost exclusively on the Internet. It included an extensive review of newspaper and magazine articles as well as other miscellaneous materials related to *Due South*. These items were located via searches on Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, Westlaw and a variety of other online databases and Web search engines. In addition, both authors viewed all episodes of *Due South*.

Attention was then turned to the *Due South* cyberfandom. Initial research of the Duesers included monitoring postings of the Usenet group alt.tv.due-south and visiting numerous fan-created Web pages as well as the official *Due South* site from Alliance/Atlantis. Additional information was gathered via correspondence with the following individuals via email: Annie Keitz, organizer of the Friends of *Due South* write-in campaign, William Rydbom and Elyse Dickenson, co-owners of William and Elyse's *Due South* Page (http://home.hiwaay.net/~warydbom/duesouth.htm), as well as Lorene Turner and Caroline Mockett, long-time fans and Web page owners from Canada and the United Kingdom respectively. Since this study focused exclusively upon the fan group, no one associated with the show's production was contacted. The final phase of the study consisted of a Web-based fan

survey conducted from July 24, 1999 to September 27, 1999.

Due South

Produced by Alliance Communications,[1] *Due South* was the first Canadian television

show to air on one of the big three American networks in prime time. The show debuted as a

telemovie simulcast on CTV in Canada and CBS in the United States in April 1994. It was

subsequently developed into an hour-long weekly series for broadcast on those same two

networks as part of their 1994/95 television season. It endured a tumultuous run, rife with

preemptions, schedule shuffles, episodes aired out of sequence, near cancellations and last-

minute renewals (primarily attributed to the Friends of *Due South* write-in campaign organized

on the Internet) before its eventual demise on CBS in 1996. While fans in the United States and

Canada continued to voice their support, *Due South*'s syndication in Europe had created a

significant fan base, particularly in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Broadcasters

from these three countries (BBC, TF1, and Pro Sieben Media AG) approached Alliance with an

offer of funding to keep the series afloat, which resulted in the production of 26 additional

episodes. According to Variety, as of January 1999, *Due South* had been syndicated in 149

territories worldwide ("World Travelers," 1999).

Due South's premise was reminiscent of *Crocodile Dundee*, *Northern Exposure* and many

other fish-out-of-water movies and television shows: Benton Fraser, a Royal Canadian Mounted

Police (RCMP) constable from the Yukon is transferred, along with Diefenbaker, his deaf, lip-

reading wolf, to the Canadian Consulate in Chicago. While there he befriends Ray Vecchio, a

Chicago police detective and together they engage in weekly adventures. In later episodes the

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[1]Alliance Communications merged with Atlantis Communications in 1999 resulting in a new corporation named Alliance Atlantis Communications, Inc.

ghost of Benton's father frequently appears to dispense unsolicited advice.

This seemingly simple premise served as the basis for a sophisticated multifaceted television show. The writers poked fun at Canadian and American stereotypes. Episodes interwove farcical comedy with film noir. Inside jokes, some Canadian and some American, were cleverly inserted into the dialogue. Visual puns abounded. *Due South* also showcased the music of many Canadian artists such as Sarah McLachlan, Loreena McKennitt, and Stan Rogers.

During Seasons 3 and 4, the look and feel of *Due South* changed significantly. David Marciano, the actor who played Detective Ray Vecchio, was replaced with Callum Keith Rennie, who joined the cast as Detective Stanley Kowalski – a literary in-joke. In addition, the show's other lead Paul Gross took over as executive producer and after this point some of the episodes had a rather surreal quality. Airing in first-run syndication in the United States during the 1997/98 season, the show was largely relegated to late-night time slots and received little publicity.

Due South ceased production in early 1998 and according to Mr. Gross there are currently no plans to produce another season (McLeod, 1999). Nevertheless, the *Due South* cyberfandom continues to thrive and grow. Evidence of this vitality can be seen in the amount of postings to the alt.tv.due-south Usenet group, the proliferation of *Due South* fan fiction, the number of show-related fan Web sites, and the number of hits on major fan Web sites such as William and Elyse's *Due South* page. According to W. A. Rydbom, a co-owner of this site, "If anything, we are getting more visitors now that the show has ceased production"(personal communication, June 26, 1999). As of June 11, 2000, the counter at this site had registered 266,913 visitors since January 21, 1996, which according to Mr. Rydbom is approximately when the site went online.

The Due South Cyberfandom

The *Due South* cyberfandom crosses not only national boundaries, but also those of gender, age, and native tongue. An investigation of Web site guest books and birthday greeting pages dedicated to various *Due South* actors showed online fans from every populated continent, with Web pages dedicated to *Due South* appearing in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.[2]

These factors alone do not make the Duesers unique, since similar groups have formed around other television shows. The Duesers differ from other fan groups previously studied in several respects. First, *Due South* does not fall into either the science fiction or soap opera genre but is instead a comedy/drama, if it can be classified at all. Secondly, the *Due South* cyberfandom was initially formed during 1994/1995, a period of time when public Internet accessibility was rapidly expanding in the United States and elsewhere. Duesers relied primarily upon the Internet to organize and execute a successful campaign to save the show from cancellation at the end of its first season. The *Due South* cyberfandom has continued to evolve over time, and its diversity is evident in the multitude of fans' Internet activities.

Although an official *Due South* site does exist, it has not been updated in a very long time.[3] This is understandable since the show is no longer in production. The site includes an episode guide, biographies of cast and crew, and a variety of production information. It also contains a Trading Post page where *Due South* related merchandise is available for purchase.

The majority of *Due South* sites are fan-administered. They offer one or more of the

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[2] Fans were identified from the following nations: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

[3] The Official *Due South* Web Site (http://www.duesouth.com) is owned and administered by Alliance Atlantis Communications, Inc.

following elements depending upon the preferences of the site owner: photos, graphics, and

sound clips related to the show, fan-created fiction based on characters from the series, news and

information about cast members and production, episode guides, and links to other *Due South*

pages. Most of these pages continue to be revised and updated on a regular basis.

Usenet and listservs play a prominent role in the continuance of the *Due South* fandom,

acting as the primary means of communication among most members. Fans exchange opinions,

ask for clarification upon plot points, disseminate news, and explain inside jokes drawn from

references to Canadian history and culture that appear in many episodes. One of the Usenet

groups and many of the listservs exist solely for the purposes of *Due South* fan fiction.[4] In an

attempt to recognize the efforts of some of their favorite writers, fans created the Due Credit

awards in 1999, a process whereby fans nominate and later vote for the best works of *Due South*

fan fiction. Over 1000 nominations in 29 categories were received for the year 2000 awards.

Personality clashes and disagreements among *Due South*'s cyberfans are inevitable.

Friction has occurred between the fans of the first two seasons and those of the latter two.

Differences have also arisen among fan fiction writers and readers over what sort of content they

deem appropriate for a story. Some prefer G- or PG-rated stories while others prefer works of a

more adult nature. One such disagreement led to the creation of the Usenet group alt.tv.due-south

by Annie Keitz and others during the summer of 1995, partly in response to a perceived

intolerance among members of the *Due South* listserv.[5] Although the newsgroup has no official

owner, its members abide by regular Usenet customs and are encouraged to post in the "spirit of

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[4]A search conducted on eGroups (http://www.egroups.com/) on June 12, 2000 revealed 26 listservs devoted solely to *Due South* fan fiction and six listservs devoted to *Due South* "crossover" fiction (i.e., combing the characters of one television series with another).

[5]A very heated debate occurred on the *Due South* listserv about homosexuality and slash fiction and according to Ms. Keitz, "The problem in that fight was that some folks (on both sides of the flame war B[y] T[he] W[ay]) wouldn't allow the other side the right to espouse their opinion or lifestyle." Usenet post to alt.tv.due-south, May 28, 1999.

the show" (i.e., with an emphasis upon tolerance and politeness). Other smaller interest groups have formed in a similar fashion. Members of these subgroups interact with each other on their own lists. Membership within these groups can overlap and information divulged in one forum is quickly passed on to the rest, resulting in a shared awareness among the Duesers.

This interconnectedness played a crucial role in keeping *Due South* alive each time the show's fate was in peril. The 1995 Friends of *Due South* and subsequent campaigns were all organized via the Internet and completely fan-initiated. As a result, a rather unique bond was formed between *Due South*'s production team and the fan community, both on and off camera. Scott Cooper, *Due South*'s story coordinator, shared show-related information with fans on the DUESOUTH-L listserv (C. Mockett, personal communication, August 24, 1999). The production team replied to fans' letters and also conveyed on camera thank-yous via "in-jokes". For example, the name of a Friends of *Due South* campaign coordinator was announced over an airport intercom in an episode from Season 3. The last episode of Season 2, then presumed to be the series finale, featured a good-bye to fans using a license plate with the numbers "RCW 139" as an integral part of the plot. This license plate number had special significance for the fans. They had noticed the frequent appearance of this plate on various vehicles throughout the series, and had adopted it as the name for their convention, held in Toronto. Cast and crew continue to make appearances at fan-related events. Paul Haggis, creator of *Due South*, has posted messages to the alt.tv.due-south Usenet group and Paul Gross has conveyed his thanks to the fans of *Due South* upon winning the Chrysler People's Choice Award in 1999.

Many Duesers have made lasting friendships online with some of them eventually contacting each other off-line. According to Mr. Rydbom, he and Ms. Dickenson met at one of the RCW 139 conventions, and frequently communicate via the regular mail and the telephone.

He stated that he has also met several fellow online fans that live near him, commenting, "It's always kinda fun to see people you've been E-mailing in real life" (personal communication, November 12, 1999). For some, these friendships are the most important parts of their lives. One woman actively involved in *Due South* and other fandoms died recently and bequeathed her entire estate to her fellow fans instead of her family, from whom she was estranged (May 25, 2000 posting to alt.tv.due-south).

RCW 139 is one popular venue for Duesers to meet face-to-face. Past attendees have included fans from throughout Canada as well as Australia, Europe, and the United States. In one instance, a couple was married at a RCMP station and spent their honeymoon attending the RCW 139 convention (Atherton, 1998, p. F1). Like the fan campaigns to save the show, this convention is completely fan initiated and run. All proceeds of the convention -- $80,000 CDN since 1996 (Brouse, 2000, p. 112) -- are donated to various charities either associated with the RCMP or chosen by various actors from the show. Duesers also contributed squares for a quilted wall hanging that was then donated to a hospital in the name of a deceased daughter of a RCW 139 volunteer who was also a RCMP veteran (Baker & Koellner, 1999). It should be noted that RCW 139 is not the only *Due South*-related convention. Other conventions include RivCon in Great Britain and Serge, a slash fan-fiction convention held in Toronto.

<p align="center">***Due South* Cyberfan Survey Method**</p>

Procedure

Although monitoring Usenet postings and exploring other Internet activities offered glimpses into the fan population, it was believed that a more complete understanding of the Duesers could be obtained through a questionnaire. To this end, a Web-based survey was created. It was comprised of open-ended questions exploring the reasons behind why and how

long individuals had been fans, and what initially attracted them to the show. Fans were also asked various closed-ended questions regarding demographics as well as their Internet and Usenet activities related to *Due South*.

Permission was granted from Mr. Rydbom and Ms. Dickenson to have a link to the survey made from their site's "latest news" page. The survey was available online from July 24, 1999 to September 27, 1999. Completed survey forms were received as attachments to email messages. Some Internet service providers experienced problems sending the form, resulting in the receipt of e-mail messages with only a return address. In those cases, an e-mail message containing the questionnaire was sent to respondents who were willing to retake the survey, and their responses were sent back in a return e-mail message. Upon receipt, responses were then analyzed, categorized, and correlated. A follow-up question regarding gender was sent to each participant individually between October 6, 1999 – October 9, 1999.

Survey Findings

Fan Demographic Data

A total of 205 responses were received from 17 countries across five continents.[6] These countries included: the United States (147), Canada (22), United Kingdom (11), the Netherlands (6), Germany (3), Australia (2), Brazil (2), Belgium (1), Ecuador (1), France (1), Ireland (1), Israel (1), Italy (1), New Zealand (1), Portugal (1), South Korea (1), and Switzerland (1).

All responses were received in English with 181 (88%) of respondents identifying it as their native tongue. Of the remaining 24 (12%) respondents, 22 (11%) identified themselves as a non-native speaker of English or as multilingual.[7] Two respondents did not report their native

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[6] For compilation of the age and gender responses, the number 207 was used because two respondents answered for themselves and one other person.

[7] Other languages reported were: Dutch (4), French (3), German (5), Hebrew (1), Italian (1), Korean (1), Lithuanian (1), Portuguese (3), Spanish (1), Taiwanese (1), and Multilingual (1).

tongue. Respondents ranged in age from teenagers through those in their 70s, and were 78%

female and 12% male. 10% did not report their gender.

Participation in the 1995 Friends of Due South Campaign

45% of the survey respondents participated in the 1995 Friends of *Due South* campaign

by either telephone calls, faxes, letters, or email. While 54% did not participate, most cited that

they either did not know about the show at the time or were not online and were therefore

unaware of the campaign. The remaining 1% did not answer the question.

Due South Related Internet Activities

Since the fan survey was only available via the World Wide Web, it was assumed that all

respondents at the very least frequented one or more *Due South* related Web pages. As shown in

Table 1, 85% of the respondents, representing all age groups, reported involvement in at least

one other *Due South* Internet-related activity with most participating in several. 45% of the

respondents posted Usenet messages while 48% monitored (or "lurked" as it is known in Internet

parlance) via deja.com or a similar Usenet archive. 27% of the respondents indicated they both

monitored and posted to Usenet.

Table 1. Selected *Due South*-Related Internet Activities of Survey Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	Usenet			Listserv	Web	Chat	Fan Fiction		
	Post	Lurk	Both		Page		Write	Read	Both
Teens	8	6	3	3	2	4	7	13	7
20s	18	26	10	14	6	6	14	35	14
30s	25	25	19	9	2	9	13	24	13
40s	30	31	16	11	1	11	10	28	9
50s	10	9	7	3	0	3	1	6	1
60s	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
70s	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Unknown	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Total Respondents	94	98	56	41	11	35	45	108	44

20% of the respondents subscribed to DUESOUTH-L although several respondents indicated that they subscribed to other *Due South* listservs not mentioned on the survey. 5% had *Due South* related Web pages and 17% participated in Internet Relay Chat (IRC). 22% of those surveyed wrote fan fiction, 53% read fan fiction with 41% of respondents reading fan fiction also writing it. Both genders reported participation in all forms of Web activities studied. Some respondents indicated that a lack of expertise in Usenet or IRC has limited their Internet activities while others did not belong to listservs for fear of downloading viruses.

RCW 139 Attendance

Although this survey focused primarily upon Internet-based fan activities, a question about RCW 139 was asked in order to ascertain how many of these cyberfans have attended what could be considered a traditional fan activity. 11% of the respondents reported attending at least once and several mentioned plans to attend other *Due South*-related conventions.

Why and How Individuals Became Due South Fans

Fans' reasons for liking *Due South* were as varied as their ways of describing it and respondents of both genders often expressed similar opinions. These tended to fall into at least one of the following broad categories: cast; distinctiveness of the show; the overall tone and feel of the show; the writing; humor; and production elements such as cinematography, music or stunt work. *Due South* was likened to *Ally McBeal* by one respondent for its use of music "as an integral part of the plot". Fans often mentioned that the show did not underestimate their intelligence and its constant use of puns and in-jokes required fans' attention. As one female survey respondent commented, "You could not watch this show on cruise control".

The multi-layered nature of the show also appealed to a large number of respondents. As an Irish fan wrote:

> What makes it *different* from other TV shows, what makes it stand out, is … an elusive quality which I can best describe as a willingness to cross boundaries. It's impossible to say one thing about *Due South* unless you then also say its opposite. I mean to say, it's a comedy, but also a drama; it's realistic, but has elements of fantasy (e.g. Fraser Sr.'s ghost) which don't under mine the realism at all; it combines depictions of the worst sides of society with a basically optimistic worldview. It can make you laugh out loud in one scene, bite your lip in the next, and bring you to tears in the one after that.

Respondents were next asked at what point they became fans of *Due South*. These answers were sorted by date and shown in Table 2. Fans who had not viewed the pilot during its initial airing on CBS were asked when and how the show caught their interest. These answers fell into several major groups. 66 were "accidental viewers" (term coined by a respondent) – that is, they found the show while channel surfing. 24 respondents had *Due South* recommended to them by a friend or family member. Subsets of this group were given taped episodes to watch with at least one respondent receiving them from overseas. 19 lost track of the show because of its frequent rescheduling and cancellations (some assumed it was gone forever), and found it

again in syndication on TNT. Nine respondents were casual viewers whose enthusiasm about the

show increased over time. Five respondents liked the music used in the episodes. Seven

respondents were fans of at least one of the actors, and initially tuned in to see their

performances. Three respondents liked the use of Mountie characters in the show. Seven

respondents read a review or an article in a conventional print medium (*TV Guide*, for example)

that piqued their interest. Six respondents saw either print or television advertising. Eight

respondents "backed into" the show via the Internet. They were either casual viewers who came

across the various *Due South* resources on the Internet (Usenet, Web pages, etc.) that gave them

more information and explanations about various aspects of the show, or they read *Due South*-

related fan fiction on the Internet and were intrigued by the characters. Many fans have also

remarked that their online friendships have enhanced their viewing experience. One female

respondent observed "I don't think that I would be nearly as interested in *Due South* if not for my

wonderful listsibs." Respondents also stated that they viewed *Due South* with family and friends.

Table 2. When Respondents Became Fans

Year	Number of Fans (out of 205 total responses)
1994	80
1995	23
1996	6
1997	16
1998	38
1999	29
Unknown	13

Discussion

It was anticipated that the majority of survey respondents would be female and this did

prove to be the case. However, respondents represented a surprisingly wide range of ages.

Approximately 10% of respondents were in their teens and an equal percentage in their 50s or

over with most age groups involved in various Internet activities. All age groups reported participation in Usenet and all but two groups reported participation on DUESOUTH-L. Fan fiction readership spanned almost all age groups and writers of fan fiction ranged in age from the teens through the 50s. Since the *Due South* cast did not include any teenage characters, it was surprising to find teens interested in the show. Moreover, the presence of Duesers over 50 disputes the notion that the Internet is solely the purview of youth.

As noted above, 11% of survey respondents were non-native English speakers. Several indicated that they were not always able to understand the dialogue, especially some of the humor, because of their limited knowledge of English. Show-related Web pages and Usenet postings helped them understand the show, and therefore, they not only gained a greater appreciation for *Due South*, but also increased their knowledge of English.

The Internet played an equally important educational role for English-speaking respondents. Many Usenet threads involving exchanges about history, literature, art, music, sports, or foods were sparked by something that occurred on an episode and oftentimes would evolve into discussions about cultural differences among various countries. In this sense, the *Due South* fandom functions as a form of cultural exchange.

Many respondents noted that they began watching the show on one level and after discovering other levels existed (often through conversations with fellow cyberfans) they re-watched episodes to try to catch the in-jokes and other particulars mentioned online. For this segment of the fans, watching *Due South* is essentially a multimedia puzzle-solving exercise.

The main cohesive force behind the Duesers is a shared appreciation for one or more elements of *Due South*. Taken as a whole, the *Due South* cyberfandom attempts to embody Fraser's virtues of politeness, tolerance, and sense of decency in its interactions. However, since

Due South can be interpreted by fans in a variety of ways (e.g., as a comedy, as a drama, as a comment on homosexuality), some fans can be offended when they find their opinions challenged. The vehemence with which some members defend their viewpoints occasionally results in a perceived lapse of these "Fraser-like" qualities. Whenever this occurs, some members choose to leave while others who wish to remain a part of the larger fandom form their own special interest groups within it, sometimes complete with their own conventions (e.g., Serge).

As a group, the Duesers extend beyond the virtual realm in both social and economic terms. As mentioned earlier, various members have formed online friendships and some have traveled great distances to meet each other. Although no evidence of marriages and births resulting from these relationships could be found, a death did occur within the community and the online friends of this person were affected by it.

The Duesers economic impact on the real world is also readily apparent. Members infuse Toronto's and other local economies with the money they spend while attending conventions. Some, if not all, of the proceeds of these conventions are donated to charities around the world. The *Due South* fandom has also been targeted as a consumer group with a number of books, CDs, and videos either directly or indirectly related to the show available for purchase.

Based upon the evidence given above, it appears that the Duesers conform to Rheingold's definition of a virtual community: they may or may not meet face to face; most communication takes place online; friendships are formed and conflicts occur with real-life consequences; there appears to be a social contract based upon the virtues of the show's main character; and their uniting force is *Due South*. The Duesers differed from Rheingold's definition in only one respect. Although geography appeared to have very little significance, the lack of hardware, software, or computer expertise could severely curtail members' participation online. In this sense, it could be

said that technology rather than proximity defines the boundaries of the virtual community.

Like any other community, the Duesers are in a constant state of flux. A significant portion of those surveyed are fairly recent fans, although a number have considered themselves fans since the pilot first aired in their respective countries. In this respect, we feel that our survey results accurately depict the overall community membership. In the weeks following the completion of our survey, a number of new individuals began posting to alt.tv.due-south. The appearance of new members can be attributed to *Due South*'s continued airing on TNT and elsewhere combined with increases in Internet accessibility worldwide.

In the years since *Due South* has ceased production, the community holds on to the hope that more episodes will someday be produced. This may be partly attributable to the show's two earlier resurrections. The community follows the careers of all *Due South* alumni with interest, with special attention paid to Paul Gross. *Murder Most Likely*, his 1999 telemovie was eagerly awaited and discussed in-depth on alt.tv.due-south and elsewhere. His appearances in spring 2000 on the covers of *Vines* and *Toronto Life* prompted worldwide sales of the normally limited-circulation magazines. Mr. Gross's starring role in Hamlet at the Stratford Festival in Ontario during the 2000 season also generated considerable interest within the community. It was reported that ticket sales were at or near record levels although it cannot be ascertained how many attendees were *Due South* fans.

The Duesers long-term survival will also depend upon the continued availability of *Due South* episodes for viewing throughout the world. This article represents the initial phase of what is intended to be an ongoing study of the Duesers and their activities. Changes in the show's availability and other related events will be assessed for their effect upon the community. It will also be of interest to compare the Duesers with studies conducted by other scholars of cyberfan

communities. These endeavors offer valuable insights not only into the life of a cyberfan

community, the individuals within the community, and their activities but also embrace broader

issues such as multinational, multicultural, and computer mediated communication.

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About the Authors:
Marsha Ann Tate, Ph.D., is the author of *Canadian Television Programming Made for the United States Market: A History with Production and Broadcast Data* (McFarland, 2007), as well as a number of other books and articles about the Canadian media industries, Canadian history, and media literacy.
Valerie Allen lives in State College, Pennsylvania. She has a BA in English from the Pennsylvania State University and currently is a staff member at Paterno Library.

Please note:
The fan survey discussed in the above article was completed prior to Ms. Tate's affiliation with Penn State's Ph.D. program and was conducted following the American Psychological Association's "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct". The authors take sole responsibility for the survey and all other contents of the article. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Marsha Ann Tate, marsha@mtateresearch.com

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