China in the Era of the Netizen
by Ronda Hauben, Feb. 14, 2010

I recently returned home from a trip to China. Back in New York City, I was left with the feeling that there is something significant happening in China. Some have referred to Beijing as the equivalent in the 21st century of the interesting environment that Prague symbolized for the 1990s. In the air in Beijing one senses that something new is emerging, something that must build on the old but will emerge with its new characteristics.

In Beijing, I had many interesting conversations trying to understand the significance of what is happening there. One was with a friend who is from China but who has lived outside of China over 20 years. She was back visiting China for a special event and also planned to visit her parents who live in China, as she does every year.

Comparing current day Beijing with the Beijing she knew as a university student, she observed that Beijing, as a world class city, has grown and developed in the Era of the Internet. Her observation helped me to realize that not only was Beijing being developed as a world class city with the benefit of the Internet's contribution, but also that Beijing is a world class city developing in the Era of the Netizen.

Some notes I wrote as I left Beijing observed, "The insight of the trip was that Beijing is a city being developed in the Netizen Era. It is perhaps one of the first world class cities of the Netizen Era. So perhaps a special characteristic of Beijing has to do with the emergence of the Netizen." It wasn't clear to me what the significance was of this observation at the time.

When I returned home from my trip, I came across a publication about the importance of the Netizens in China. The publication was the July 5 2009 edition of the magazine *News China*. This is the English version published each month of the Chinese weekly magazine China Newsweek. The subject of this particular issue was "The Netizens' Republic of China".

The magazine contains several articles and an editorial about the impact of netizens on the political sphere in China. (1) The editorial was titled "The Netizens Public Square". One of the articles, "Netizens, the New Watchdogs", had an equally alluring subtitle which asked the question, "Has the era of 'Internet supervision' pitted Chinese netizens against the government in the promotion of democracy and political reform?"

The particular form of .Internet supervision. the article was discussing was whether netizens empowered by the Internet could effectively monitor the actions of their government officials. Can the "era of 'Internet supervision'," be "one in which netizens can compel visible transformation in the behavior of government bureaucrats," the article asks. (2)

 The question of whether or not netizens can affect the actions of their government officials is a question raised by netizens around the world from the early days of Internet development. How this question is being explored by netizens in China is an important development. Yet few

around the world, especially those who do not read Mandarin, are aware that this question is being actively explored by netizens in China.

The issue of NewsChina devoted to netizens presents several examples of netizens speaking out online in Chinese discussion groups and forums. Their actions are having an impact on government decision-making processes and on uncovering fraud or corruption. The particular case described in the magazine was the case of Deng Yujiao, a 21-year old waitress who was sexually assaulted by a government official. (2) She tried to defend herself using a knife and in self defense killed her assailant. The magazine describes how her plight became a cause célèbre among netizens in China, who helped her to get a lawyer and to have the charge against her reduced so she didn't have to serve any time in jail.

The magazine gives several other examples of cases of injustice that Chinese netizens championed so as to have justice prevail. Among these is the case of a young college graduate who moved to a different city to take a job, but who didn't have the appropriate temporary residence permit. Picked up for his permit violation, he was placed in a detention center. He became a victim of foul play by residents of the center and security guards and was murdered, but the story was covered up by the police. Netizens began to discuss what had happened to him and the real story of his death began to be unraveled. His assailants were arrested and tried. Eventually the measures the young college graduate was detained under were abolished by the State Council.(3)

Similarly, Chinese netizens have challenged some of the many inaccurate reports about China in the mainstream western media. In 2007 some netizens started a web site that they called www.anti-cnn.com. On the web site they documented many distortions or mispresentations that appear in the western media. (4)

These are just a few of the many examples of netizen action online that have had an important impact on what the government does. Discussing such netizen actions, Zhan Jiang, a Professor at the China Youth College for Political Science, maintains that "the public supervision (of government-ed) via the Internet serves to promote public participation in political life." (5)

My visit to Beijing in September was my third trip to China. The first had been in November 2005 when I was participating in a panel at an international history of science conference held in Beijing. The title of my talk for the conference was, "The International and Scientific Origins of the Internet and the Emergence of the netizens". The second trip was in April 2008 when I gave a

 talk at the Internet Society of China raising the question .whether this is a new Age, the Age of the Netizen? One of the reasons for my trip in September 2009 was to participate in a Netizens. Day, the first anywhere in the world, which was to be observed on September 14, 2009. The importance of this date is that it marks the date listed on the first e-mail message that was to be sent from China onto the international e-mail network known as CSNET. The e-mail message and link were the result of collaborative research between German and Chinese computer science researchers. (6) The netizens celebration on September 14, 2009 was held at the CCTV Tower in Beijing. There was a stage set up in front of the tower for the ceremony. I was invited

to give one of the presentations for the program. (7) My talk which was presented in English and then translated into Chinese, I explained the origin of the concept of the netizen through the research in 1992-3 of Michael Hauben who was a university student doing pioneering online studies about the social impact of the development of the Internet.(8) I described how in the early 1990s, Hauben sent out a set of questions across the networks asking users about their experiences online. He was surprised to find that not only were many of those who responded to his questions interested in what the Net made possible for them, but also they were interested in spreading the Net and in exploring how it could make a better world possible. Based on his research Hauben wrote his article "The Net and the Netizens". (9) The netizen, Hauben recognized, was the emergence of a new form of citizen, who was using the power made possible by the Net for a public purpose, and who was not limited by geographical boundaries. The Net for Hauben was a new social institution and the discovery of the emergence of the netizen was the special contribution that he made to the field of network study. The celebration on September 14, 2009 in Beijing thus was an event not only to celebrate the research and technological advance making possible the connection of China to the international network CSNET. But it was similarly, and perhaps even more significantly, an event recognizing the emergence of the netizens in China and hence, of a new social identity.

The September 14 event was covered in the online media and other media.(10) Being the first such Netizens Day, knowledge of the day was not yet widespread. Some net users commented that they weren't aware that there had been a Netizen Day. For me, however, the event on September 14, 2009 in Beijing was remarkable. In 1994, 15 years earlier the first edition of the Netizens netbook with Hauben's article about netizens had been put online.(11) At the time there was much less access to the Internet and many fewer Netizens. Nevertheless, the phenomenon first identified more than 15 years ago has continued to develop and spread around the world. And in Beijing, in a city where much is new, and grand, and hopeful toward the future, there was a ceremony out in front of the tallest of structures in Beijing, the CCTV tower, recognizing the importance of the Internet and of the Netizen.

This event in Beijing was the first Netizen Day, the first official recognition of the netizen anywhere in the world. It was a celebration to honor the fact that the phenomenon of the netizen continues to develop and spread and to be recognized as a new and important achievement of our times.

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(1) Yu Xiaodong, "Netizens, the New Watchdogs", in *NewsChina,* Vol No. 012, July 5, 2009. p. 17. The magazine website is: http://www.newschinamag.com/ See also, http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=60361336528&topic=8895

(2)Yu Xiaodong, "Netizens the New Watchdogs", *NewsChina*, July 5, 2009, p.17

(3)This is the case of Sun Zhigang. See "Selected Cases Exposed on the Internet," NewsChina, p. 20. This and other examples are described in a paper by Jay

Hauben, "China: Netizen Impact on Government Policy and Media Practice."
http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/j-paper.doc

(4)Ronda Hauben, "Netizens Defy Western Media Fictions of China: Ronda Hauben on the 'anti-CNN' forum and Web site", *OhmyNews International*, May 8, 2008.
http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?no=382523&rel_no=1

(5)Yu Xiaodong, "Netizens, the New Watchdogs", *NewsChina*, July 5, 2009, p. 17.

(6) Jay Hauben, "The Story of China's First E-mail Link and How It Got Corrected". http://www.scr.scas.cn/whlt/yjjz/

(7) See "Honoring the Netizen", talk presented on September 14, 2009. The url is:
http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2009/10/02/first_netizen_celebration_day_held_in_beijing_china_/

(8) See for example: Michael Hauben, "Preface: What is a Netizen" in "Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet," online version
http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120/ch106.xpr

(9) Michael Hauben, "The Net and the Netizens" in "Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet," online version http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120/ch106.x01

(10) On September 15, there was a program on the China Radio International (CRI) show "Beijing and Beyond" discussing the development of the Netizen in China. The url is:
http://english.cri.cn/7146/2009/09/15/481s515765.htm

(11)The book put online in 1994 is also now published in a print edition titled
Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet. The co-authors are Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben. Originally published by the IEEE Computer Society, the book is now distributed by John Wiley. The print edition was published in 1997. The url for the online edition is http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120
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http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2010/02/14/china_in_the_era_of_the_netizen/
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First Netizen Celebration Day Held in Beijing, China

Honoring the Netizen

Ronda Hauben

I would like to thank the Internet Society of China for inviting me to offer brief remarks today. I want also to congratulate the honored guests for their role in helping to make possible the development of the Internet and the emergence of the Netizens.

 It is wonderful that China is holding this netizen day, the first ever to be held anywhere in the world. Often there have been events celebrating the origin and development of the Internet but only rarely has there been recognition offered for the netizen, for those online users who have taken on to contribute to the development and spread of the Net and to making possible the better world that more communication among people will make possible.

The concept of netizen comes from the research and writing of Michael Hauben while he was a college student in the early 1990s. Michael was interested not only in how the Internet would develop and spread, but also in the impact it would have on society. In 1992 he sent out a set of questions across the computer networks asking users about their experiences online. He was surprised to find that not only were many of those who responded to his questions interested in what the Net made possible for them, but also they were interested in spreading the Net and in exploring how it would make a better world possible. Network users with this social perspective, or this public interest focus Michael called Netizens. Thus the Netizen was not all users, but users with a public purpose.

Another aspect is that the Net is international, so that netizenship isn't a geographically limited concept. To be a netizen is to be not only a citizen of one country but also a citizen of the net. These users are citizens who were empowered by the Net, or netizens. Based on his research, Michael wrote the article "The Net and Netizens: The Impact the Net has on People's Lives". The article and the concept of the Netizen spread around the world via the Internet.

Michael and I included his influential article as part of a book titled "Netizens" which we put online on January 12, 1994. Today's celebration of Netizen Day in China is for me also a fitting celebration of the 15th anniversary of putting the first edition of the book "Netizens" online.

In China there are many important examples of netizen activity, including for example, the many posts that netizens make discussing important social issues, and the creation of online forums like the anti-cnn web site.

Around the world the traditional news media is in crisis, especially in the U.S. and Europe.

Online developments like the anti-cnn web forum have helped to clarify some of the problem with the traditional news media in the West and how they report the news. Around the world online news sites are developing which are attempting to give a more accurate presentation of the News. I have been reporting for two such news sites, one in South Korea and one in Germany. I have found they help make it possible to explore how to do a more accurate and interesting presentation of the news. Recently several of my articles were awarded the silver award for online and print journalism for reporting about issues at the United Nations.

To me this was not only an honor for these articles, but even more important, an honor for efforts to develop what I call "netizen journalism" a form of journalism that endeavors to determine how to report the news from a social rather than political or commercial perspective.

Though today is the first national netizen day, I have recently seen on the Internet a call for a World Netizen Day. So the importance of establishing a netizen day begun by the Internet Society of China is a proud beginning what I hope will become a new tradition, recognizing the importance of the contributions made by Netizens to the continuing spread and development of the Internet.

Congratulations not only to those who have been honored here today, but to all netizens in China and to netizens around the world. May the tradition of the netizen, along with the development of the Internet, grow and flourish.

Netizens Create Anti-cnn Forum to Challenge Media Distortions of China

Who will win the contest to be the new global media, CNN or netizen media like the anti-CNN online forum and web site? This is a question that students in the global media literacy seminar at Tsinghua University in Beijing were given to grapple with as their final project.

The creation of the anti-cnn online forum and web site by netizens in China has been a significant development. The global media literacy seminar at Tsinghua University is taught by Professor Lee Xiguang. Professor Lee's background is as a journalist, covering science and technology, and as a journalism professor who is the author of significant papers about the role of the Internet in the development of the changing media environment in China. Professor Li had invited me to speak to his students in the global media literacy seminar about the spread of netizens and the impact of the Internet on society for his April 16th class.

In a future article I plan to describe the context in which this invitation came and the research I have been doing about the role of netizens in the development of a significant new form of journalism, a form of journalism which expands the spectrum of issues and problems from the more limited range common in the traditional forms of media.(1)

Shortly before my trip to China was to begin, however, something quite unexpected occurred. When the western mainstream media, from CNN to BBC, pictured the events that occurred in Lhasa, Tibet, as a peaceful demonstration, Chinese netizens immediately documented that their coverage was often inaccurate or misleading.

Within a few days of the inaccurate reports, an online forum appeared on the Internet called anti-cnn. (**http://www.anti-cnn.com**) The forum included articles and videos documenting some of the many distortions in the coverage of the Tibet events. The forum also had areas in English and in Chinese for discussion and debate.

I had discovered the online forum while still in New York and was intrigued by the fact that it not only provided an important source of clarification about the misrepresentations in the media, but also it made available a space for discussion in both English and Chinese about the importance of identifying and countering the false narrative that the mainstream western media had been creating of the events in Tibet.

While the online forum was named anti-cnn it was not limited to countering errors in reportingin CNN. Rather the founder had chosen anti-cnn for the name as CNN has a global spread and the purpose of the anti-cnn forum was to counter the misrepresentations of China and events in China in the global media.

I was particularly excited to be going to China at a time when a netizen media form had been created to critique the narratives being circulated by mainstream western media organizations.

We arrived in Beijing early in the morning on April 16, the day I was to give my talk to Professor Li's seminar.

We had arrangements to see Professor Li's assistant in order to get ready to go to the class for my talk. It was 3 pm, a little while before I was to get ready to go to the class, when Professor Li's assistant called up to our room and asked if she could come up. It was good to see her. I was in the process of putting some finishing touches on my slides for my talk.

She came into our room out of breath, explaining that she had tried to send an e-mail, which I hadn't seen. She said that several journalists had come to debate with Tsinghua University students about the frustrations netizens in China had with the reporting by several of the western media organizations. She urged us to come immediately with her to hear the debate.

I saved the version I had of my slides and we left to follow her across the Tsinghua University campus to the meeting between the students and the journalists.

The meeting was in a large room in the journalism building. Four journalists from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) were seated at a large table, along with Professor Li and a number of students. Other students filled the rest of the room.

The conversation was being held in English and Chinese with Professor Li doing translation from one language to the other depending on the speaker.

There were perhaps as many as 80 people filling the room.

I later learned that the journalists were probably part of a nine person delegation from the IFJ who had come to speak with the Chinese government about working conditions for the 30,000 journalists who were expected to come to Beijing to cover the Olympics.

While the purpose of the IFJ delegation appeared to be as advocates for the journalists who were to be covering the Olympics, the situation in the debate they were having with Tsinghua students was quite different. At this meeting the students were presenting their frustrations and complaints about the kind of erroneous reporting that had been documented on the anti-cnn forum and asking for an explanation of how such misrepresentations could have happened.

One of the students asked why the Western media did not report about the victims who had died in the fires set by those who took part in the riots. Another student asked why the western media reported that religious effigies had been burned but didn't report about the people who had died as a result of the fires and other violence in the riot. The student wondered why journalists would give more weight to the destruction of property rather than of human life.

Still another student asked how journalists could cover the story of Tibet if they didn't first take the time to learn the history of what had happened in Tibet in the past.

"Does a free press mean the freedom of the journalist to present his or her own personal views or does it mean the freedom for the public to know the information," asked one of the students.

Many students had hands up when there was the call for questions.

The head of the delegation, Aidan Patrick White, who is the General Secretary of the IFJ, headquartered in Brussels, gave most of the responses, though others in the delegation also answered some of the questions raised by the students.

White explained that when he went into journalism he thought it would be something connected with public service. He had since learned that there is political pressure on journalists no matter what country they are from.

The manager of the anti-cnn web site, Qi Hanting, is a Tsinghua University student. He was at the meeting and his presentation to the journalists was eagerly greeted by the students. He explained why the students were upset with the distorted coverage they had documented as prevalent in the reports of western media organizations.

Qi explained that there was a difference between a mistake in a story and a distortion. He offered as an analogy the core of an atom and the electrons surrounding it. The electrons can appear any place around the atom, but if an electron goes too far away it can break away.

Though reporters might write about different aspects of a story, he explained, their stories still can be accurate. But if the report is too far from the reality, it could be explosive.

The journalists from the IFJ responded that they weren't trying to justify bad reporting. There wasn't a conspiracy in the western media against China. Qi proposed that there was a need to have reporters who emphasize different aspects of a story in order to help there to be the proper understanding of a story, but that was different from presenting a distorted or inaccurate presentation of the story as had happened with a number of the reports of the Tibet riot in the western media.

With less than 100 days remaining until the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, the issues and questions presented by Qi and the other Tsinghua University students to the IFJ journalists take on a broader significance. How will the 30,000 journalists who are expected to come to China to report on the Olympics, portray the story of China?

China has recently gone through a significant transformation. One indication of the changes are the many new buildings, the huge majestic structures that fill the Beijing skyline. These new structures, along with the people who live and work in them are a sign that Beijing has become a world class city. Can the journalists who will come to Beijing in August recognize that there is an important story about what is developing in China? Can they become a force to investigate this story and present it, so that that there is an accurate portrayal in the media for people around the world?

This question is being considered by netizens in China and abroad.

Formerly, it may have seemed to netizens in China that the western media could be a reliable source of information about events and viewpoints that were not available in the Chinese media. Now the view that the western media could be relied on to present accurate news has been transformed in just a few short weeks in March and April 2008.

Instead netizens working together online are telling the story, not only of what they see is happening in Tibet, but even more importantly, they are documenting the failure of the western media to be a reliable source of information about China.

In place of the western media has sprung up a netizen media, contributed to by some of the 210 million Internet users in China, and some of the many overseas netizens. There are many online sites where discussion among Chinese netizens takes place.

The story of these netizens in China and abroad is an important story as they have demonstrated a resolve not to surrender the framing of the story of the Beijing Olympics to the distortions of a powerful Western media. Through their own active participation and collaboration, they are working to provide an alternative narrative.

Qi explained that the anti-cnn forum and web site has a staff of over 40 volunteers. These netizens do the technical work, and the fact checking of the posts and the responses to the posts.

If a submission to the web site is emotional, he explained, it will appear, but the moderators will not allow any responses to it in order to prevent the discussion from becoming too heated.

A post in the anti-cnn forum raised the question of whether it would be possible to create an east west cultural exchange platform to facilitate communication across the cultural differences between the Chinese people and those from other cultures who will come to China for the Olympics.

During an interview with him a few days after the debate with the journalists from the IFJ, Qi expressed his view that it can be possible to communicate despite the differences and to be able to find out where the differences lay.

Every difference has two aspects, he explained, an emotional component and a rational component.

Even if people can't agree, they can communicate, he proposed. He was hopeful that discussion would go in more communicative directions rather than netizens in China just feeling that they wanted an apology from western journalists who distort the news about China.

His hope was that the anti-cnn forum on the Internet would make it possible to have comments on issues from a wide range of differing perspectives, rather than such differences leading to polarization and hostility.

His long term goal was that the forum become a site to support many different points of view but also where deviations from the truth would be critiqued.

Talking with Qi I found it important that he was seeking to open lines of communication with western journalists despite the fact it seemed so difficult to do so. He was actually proposing a conceptual framework to make such a communication process possible.

Listening to his views made me remember a struggle netizens had with the U.S. media in the early1990s. There was a plan for the privatization of the U.S. section of the Internet which had been built with public funds. The U.S. press was misrepresenting the struggle of netizens who were challenging the illegitimate privatization process and who were upset with the spate of commercial ads that had begun to flood the Internet.

One reporter for the Wall Street Journal had written an article that misunderstood what the struggle was about. Netizens contacted him and asked if he would be willing to learn some of the history and background of the struggle. He welcomed the input.

The next article he wrote was very different from the previous one. It talked about how netizens were struggling over the "soul of the Internet". This was indeed a helpful description of the struggle and it was good to see that this reporter had changed in his perspective.(2)

It is not to dismiss the possibility of journalists who are part of the western media who are interested in learning about what is happening in China and in providing an accurate portrayal. It is a worthy effort to seek out a means to make such communication possible.

The goal of the netizens who are contributing to the anti-cnn forum and web site is a goal that is an important one for China and for the many people around the world who want the 2008 Beijing Olympics to contribute to friendship and further understanding among the people of the world.

This is also a worthy goal for those of the western media and for other netizens around the world who want to be part of the creation of a 21st century media that spreads understanding rather than the political propaganda of one's own government. The Internet and netizens have begun to create such a truly global media.

Notes

(1) I recently returned from a trip to China and South Korea. This is the first of a series of articles exploring some of the important developments I encountered while on this trip.

2)Steve Stecklow, "Cyberspace Clash: Computer Users Battle High-Tech Marketers Over Soul of Internet", Wall Street Journal, September 16, 1993, p. 1.

An earlier version of this article appears in OhmyNews International
"Netizens Defy Western Media Fictions of China"
http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?menu=c10400&no=382523&rel_no=1

The 1987 Birth of the China-CSnet E-mail Link and How Its History Got
Corrected by Jay Hauben

In September 1987 an e-mail link was established between the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Germany. That link allowed China to participate in the CSNET, an international e-mail network. It was the first link of China into an international e-mail system based on a mail server in China and a major step toward China's joining the internet.

The following article tells some of the details of how that link was developed and how the story of that development was corrected in China. It documents some of the international collaboration that characterizes the science and technology on which the internet is based.

(1) Finding Werner Zorn

In the early 1990s, Ronda Hauben and Michael Hauben sought to find and document where the internet came from, how it was developed and how it was spreading. They found substantial evidence that the internet developed as an open, scientific and engineering collaboration. All the evidence was that the process was international from the very beginning and was guided by a vision of a major advance to human society from a new universal inexpensive communication system.[1]

In 2004, Ronda Hauben and I were in Germany. Ronda had heard that the first permanent e-mail link between China and the rest of the world was connected to the University of Karlsruhe[2], a major institute for education and research in western Germany. While in Germany, we were told if you want to know about the Germany-China link see Werner Zorn.

We located and interviewed Professor Werner Zorn in Berlin. He shared his memories and some documents from 1983 to 1987. During those four years, a Chinese-German international collaboration prepared the link so that China would be part of a worldwide e-mail system called CSNET. Professor Zorn particularly gave credit on the Chinese side to Professor Wang Yunfeng who was the Senior Advisor of the Institute for Computer Applications (ICA) in Beijing. The Institute of Computer Applications was located at the Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT). It was under the Chinese Ministry of Machinery and Electronics Industry. The ICA was created to provide data processing and computer services to small and medium organizations that were not large enough to have their own computer installations. It became a foremost computer networking center. From 1987 to

2010.

1994, ICA was the mailserver and hub on the Chinese side for the CSNET e-mail exchange between China and the rest of the world.

(2) A Chinese-German Collaboration Builds China's First International E-mail Link

Many factors contributed to make that link possible. In the early 1980s, the World Bank supported the import of computers for use in universities in China. At that time, export of computers from the U.S. to China was forbidden by the U.S. government. The German government also subscribed to the COCOM[3] export rules but some computers made by the German company Siemens met the criteria to be allowed export to China. In 1982, the World Bank Chinese University Development Project I was allotted $200 million. It used some of that money for the import into China of 19 Siemens BS2000 mainframe computers manufactured in Germany. One of these Siemens computers was delivered to the ICA.

As part of the project, Professors Zorn and Wang collaborated to organize the first Chinese Siemens Computer Users Conference (CASCO – Symposium '83)[4] which took place in September 1983. At the conference, Professor Zorn led a seminar on the German Research Network project. One of the Chinese interpreters challenged Professor Zorn, remarking that lecturing was not enough. Would Professor Zorn do something more for China? That planted the seed that grew into the Chinese-German computer networking collaboration which developed the e-mail link based on the Siemens BS2000 computers installed at the ICA in China and in the Karlsruhe University in West Germany.

In 1983-4, Professor Zorn was part of the effort that connected Germany to the CSNET[5], a network begun in the U.S. in 1980 to provide e-mail connections among university computer science departments. To connect to CSNET, a computer would need particular communication functionality as part of its operating system. The specifications or protocols providing that functionality for CSNET had not yet been implemented in the Siemens BS2000 operating system. In late 1984, Professor Zorn decided to undertake this task together with his students but only as a background job. It took two years to complete. The work was financially supported in part by the government of the West German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Its Prime Minister Lothar Spaeth was friendly to China.

The CSNET international e-mail network was based on ordinary telephone lines and switches using a communication protocol with the name X.25.[6] In 1985, both China and West Germany were developing internal X.25 e-mail traffic systems. But there was no physical path to carry such e-mail traffic between them. With the help of the PKTELCOM data network administered by the Beijing Telecommunications Administration, the Karlsruhe team made contact with the Italian cable company Italcable. Italcable had some leased lines via satellite between China and Italy. The Italian company agreed to open its switches to route X.25 e-mail traffic between China and

Germany. Italcable was able to open its switches on Aug. 26 1986. From that day on, reliable remote computer-tocomputer dialogue was available between Karlsruhe University and ICA through PKTELCOM. But a CSNET e-mail link was not yet possible because the Siemens computers at the ICA and in Karlsruhe did not have the necessary functionality to handle CSNET e-mail messages.

In late summer 1987, Professor Zorn was in Beijing for the third CASCO conference but also to work with the staff of the ICA to set up the e-mail link between China and Germany. His team at Karlsruhe University had succeeded in getting the CSNET protocols to work on their Siemens BS2000 computer.

In a little over two weeks, September 4 to 20, 1987 the Chinese and the German teams implemented within the operating system of the ICA Siemens computer the necessary protocols, installed the necessary communications equipment and overcame the many technical problems to make possible e-mail connectivity with Karlsruhe.

(3) The First E-mail Message from China to the CSNET

On September 14, 1987, the joint German and Chinese team composed an e-mail message with the subject line, "First Electronic Mail from China to Germany". The message began in German and English "Across the Great Wall we can reach every corner in the world." Not only was the message addressed to Karlsruhe in Germany, it was also addressed to CSNET computer scientists, Lawrence Landweber and David Farber in the U.S. and Dennis Jennings in Ireland. It was signed by Professor Werner Zorn for the University of Karlsruhe Computer Science Department and Professor Wang Yunfeng for the ICA.

Eleven coworkers are also listed as signatories, Michael Finken, Stefan Paulisch, Michael Rotert, Gerhard Wacker and Hans Lackner on the Karlsruhe side and Dr. Li Cheng Chiung, Qiu Lei Nan, Ruan Ren Cheng, Wei Bao Xian, Zhu Jiang and Zhao Li Hua on the ICA side, suggesting the complexity of the task. But they could not send the message they composed. to their great disappointment, the message failed to leave China.[7] There was a last technical problem to solve. Successful connectivity was achieved in a few more days. On September 20, 1987, the first CSNET e-mail message, the one

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(Message # 50: 1532 bytes, KEEP, Forwarded)
Received: from unika1 by iraul1.germany.csnet id aa21216; 20 Sep 87 17:36 MET
Received: from Peking by unika1; Sun, 20 Sep 87 16:55 (MET dst)
Date:    Mon, 14 Sep 87 21:07 China Time
From:    Mail Administration for China <MAIL@ze1>
To:      Zorn@germany, Rotert@germany, Wacker@germany, Finken@unika1
CC:      lhl@parmesan.wisc.edu, farber@udel.edu,
         jennings%irlean.bitnet@germany, cic%relay.cs.net@germany, Wang@ze1,
         RZLI@ze1
Subject: First Electronic Mail from China to Germany

"Ueber die Grosse Mauer erreichen wie alle Ecken der Welt"
"Across the Great Wall we can reach every corner in the world"
Dies ist die erste ELECTRONIC MAIL, die von China aus ueber Rechnerkopplung
in die internationalen Wissenschaftsnetze geschickt wird.
This is the first ELECTRONIC MAIL supposed to be sent from China into the
international scientific networks via computer interconnection between
Beijing and Karlsruhe, West Germany (using CSNET/PMDF BS2000 Version).
   University of Karlsruhe      Institute for Computer Application of
-Informatik Rechnerabteilung-   State Commission of Machine Industry
      (IRA)                     (ICA)
Prof. Werner Zorn              Prof. Wang Yuen Fung
Michael Finken                 Dr. Li Cheng Chiung
Stefan Paulisch                Qiu Lei Nan
Michael Rotert                 Ruan Ren Cheng
Gerhard Wacker                 Wei Bao Xian
Hans Lackner                   Zhu Jiang
                               Zhao Li Hua
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composed on September 14, could The First E-mail Message for CSNET to Leave China actually be sent to Karlsruhe .
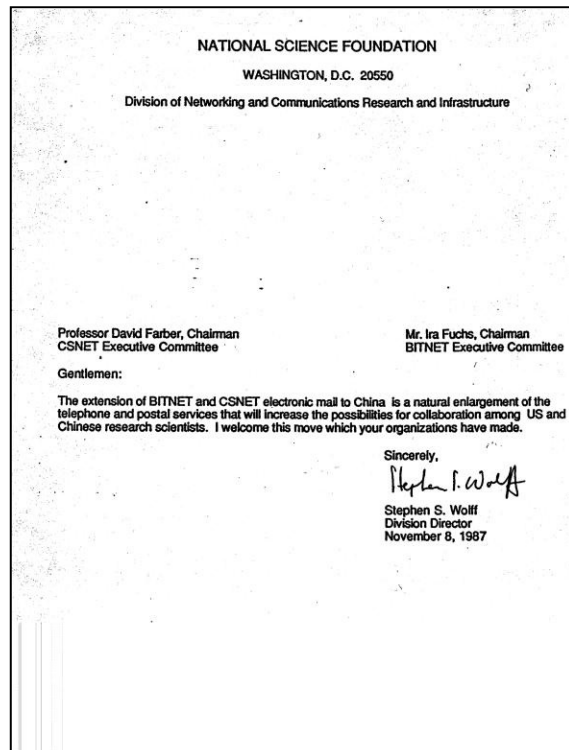
The transmission of this first e-mail message went over an X.25 connection. At ICA, the sender dialed using a 300 baud modem to one of the X.25 ports of the PKTELCOM Beijing. PKTELCOM Beijing was connected over a satellite link to ITAPAC, which was the X.25 packet network of Italy. From there the message was sent via a gateway to the German X.25 network DATEX-P, to be delivered to the Karlsruhe Siemens host. This route was very expensive because it included international telephone charges for each separate link.

The Siemens host in Karlsruhe was connected via the Karlsruhe local area network with a VAX 11/750. That computer acted as the central CSNET node for Germany. It polled the CSNET relay in Boston several times a day. Thus the CSNET node in Beijing was, with that first e-mail message, fully integrated into CSNET and via CSNET to the rest of the e-mail world. With this first e-mail node in China, a step was taken for the people of China to begin online communication with people around the world. But this was not an internet connection but a very expensive e-mail link.

(4) China Welcomed into the International E-mail Community

E-mail connectivity between China and Germany was only the necessary technical precondition for an e-mail service. What was missing was the official approval of the U.S. authorities that funded CSNET. The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) was the umbrella institution for all CSNET networking within the U.S. and also abroad at that time. Immediately after the technical connectivity was achieved, Professor Zorn worked with Professor Wang to win acceptance from the NSF for worldwide e-mail traffic to and from China. With the help of Lawrence Landweber, the Chairman of the CSNET project, and other U.S. computer scientists, acceptance by the NSF was achieved less than two months later. On November 8, 1987, in a letter to the executive committees of CSNET and BITNET, Stephen Wolff, Director of the NSF Division of Networking and Communications Research and Infrastructure welcomed the CSNET e-mail connectivity with China.

This letter was the official political approval, of what technically was already implemented. As far as I can tell there was no government to government activity, no treaty or signed agreement. The story is

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20550

Division of Networking and Communications Research and Infrastructure

Professor David Farber, Chairman
CSNET Executive Committee

Mr. Ira Fuchs, Chairman
BITNET Executive Committee

Gentlemen:

The extension of BITNET and CSNET electronic mail to China is a natural enlargement of the telephone and postal services that will increase the possibilities for collaboration among US and Chinese research scientists. I welcome this move which your organizations have made.

Sincerely,

Stephen S. Wolff
Division Director
November 8, 1987

told that Stephen Wolff did get a command
from the U.S. White House to rescind
permission after he had already given it,
but as he says, "you don't ask permission
in advance. You ask forgiveness
afterwards."[8]

Without Wolff's letter, the China-Germany
e-mail connection would have been
vulnerable to a cutoff. The NSF could
decide to deny forwarding of e-mail
messages to and from ICA in Beijing.

Professor Zorn considers November 8, 1987 as the time China became officially
connected with the rest of the world via the CSNET e-mail system. E-mail received from
        Letter from Stephen Wolff, Nov. 8, 1987 China at Karlsruhe would be relayed
from there to whichever CSNET host worldwide it was addressed. And the reverse, any
CSNET host worldwide could send e-mail to ICA in Beijing and it would be relayed from
there to users of the China Academic Net (CANET) throughout China as well as to users
in other Chinese institutions outside CANET. The international computer science
community and Chinese students abroad who learned of this connectivity answered with
their warm congratulations.

Still these were small steps. Even with the support of the Chinese State Science and
Technology Commission, hardly any Chinese institution and no individual scientist could
afford to send or receive e-mail messages to or from abroad. That was because X.25 for
international traffic increased in cost as the size of the e-mail message increased. The cost
on the Chinese side included charges for every message received as well as sent. Longer
e-mail messages could cost 150 RMB, for a professor the equivalent of a whole month's
salary. The monthly charges for the link, between $2000 and $5000 paid by each side,
were more of a burden for the Chinese side than the German side[9]. E-mail usage was thus
severely restricted.

But for the five years during which expensive e-mail connectivity was the only network
connectivity that could reach the rest of the world, China prepared itself to truly join the
Internet.

With encouragement from the Chinese government, knowledge and understanding of
international computer networking was spreading in China, especially in the scientific
and computer communities. The Institute for High Energy Physics (IHEP) belonging to
the Chinese Academy of Sciences opened an e-mail connection in 1989 with its partner in
the U.S., the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) in California. Message
Handling Systems (MHS) were set up in 1990 between the German Research Network
(DFN) and the Chinese Research Network (CRN) and between the Beijing Tsinghua
University Network (TUNET) and its partner in Canada at the University of British

Columbia (UBC).

The e-mail and remote logon only phase of connectivity between China and the rest of the world came to an end in 1994. That is when IHEP worked together with SLAC to take the next big step in connectivity between the people of China and the people of the world. On May 17, 1994, IHEP and SLAC established a full TCP/IP connection between China and the U.S.[10] The use of the TCP/IP protocols allows data packets to take independent paths which meant the cost for e-mail could come down and file transfer (FTP) and remote logon (Telnet) would now be available. That connectivity opened the Internet to China and China to the Internet.

(5) Getting the Accurate Story

After Ronda and I interviewed Professor Zorn in 2004, I took up to write an article for the Amateur Computerist, an online news journal, about this history. My online journalism research for the article took me mostly to web sites in China. The story told there gave most credit for the China-CSNET connection to a Chinese engineer, Qian Tianbai whom Professor Zorn had hardly mentioned. Mostly missing from the history on the websites in China I found was any credit to Professor Wang or to the international component which Professor Zorn had stressed.

I sent e-mail to Professor Zorn asking him about the discrepancy. I also sent e-mail to Liu Zhijiang at the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) asking if there was any evidence for citing on the CNNIC website that Qian Tianbai was responsible for the first e-mail message. Professor Zorn sent me via e-mail more documents and the e-mail addresses for two Chinese scientists, Dr. Li Chengjiong and Ruan Ren Cheng, who had signed the first e-mail message. Dr. Li Chengjiong was the Director of the ICA from 1980 to 1990. A copy of the first e-mail message was online. I saw that Qian Tianbai's name was not among the 13 signatures.

The two Chinese scientists answered with more information about the September 1987 e-mail message and about Qian Tianbai. Particularly they both answered that Qian Tianbai was not in China at the time of the opening of the link in 1987 and that Qian Tianbai had not participated in this project. I found no evidence otherwise.

Through further digging and via e-mail correspondence with Dr. Li Chengjiong and Ruan Ren Cheng, I was able to confirm to my satisfaction Professor Zorn's story of the events.

(6) Spreading the Accurate Story

I wrote my article[11] and it was published in the Amateur Computerist giving justified credit to Professors Wang and Zorn and their teams and to Lawrence Landweber of the CSNET and Stephen Wolff. My article appeared online and I sent copies to CNNIC and other contacts I had made in China. Encouraged by my journalism, Professor Zorn intensified his efforts to get the story corrected in China.

A bit later Professor Zorn was invited by Ronda to tell the story at a panel planned in conjunction with the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) for Nov 2005 in Tunis in North Africa. In Tunis, Professor Zorn presented his story of the international effort and collaboration especially between himself and his team in Germany and Professor Wang and Dr. Li and the team in Beijing. Professor Zorn put up many slides showing the Chinese and German teams during the period and he put up one slide which said:

"The official time lines contain some seriously mistaken information and are also omitting important facts. They cause hereby fatal misinformation meanwhile spread all over the world."

In the audience in Tunis was Madame Hu Qiheng, Vice President, China Association for Science & Technology, and Chair of Internet Society of China. Mdm Hu rose and spoke of her friendship with Qian Tianbai but said she would investigate why the story told in China differed from the one Professor Zorn told. I gave her a copy of my article and Professor Zorn gave her copies of some of the documents he had given me.

VII.The CNNIC Internet Time Line Gets Corrected

Just before the Tunis event, Professor Zorn had sent documents to CNNIC supporting the roles of Professor Wang and the ICA team and of the Karlsruhe team. Also, Nanjun Li one of Professor Zorn's PhD students made contact with Wang Enhai Director of the Information Service Department at CNNIC to help it investigate the discrepancy between the CNNIC Internet Time Line and Professor Zorn's documents. When Mdm Hu returned to China from Tunis she asked CNNIC to investigate the 1987 e-mail message. As the editor of the CNNIC Internet Time Line, Wang Enhai took the task. He was assisted by Chen Jiangong.[12] During the investigation different experts and participants in the events gave different stories. Min Dahong of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences helped explain publicly the controversies that CNNIC had to investigate.[13]

The Internet Time Line Committee of CNNIC[14] met in March 2007 and decided, based on all the evidence, that entries on the official CNNIC website Internet Time Line should be changed to give proper credit to the work of Professors Zorn and Wang, their teams and the international effort that made the first e-mail link between China and the world via CSNET possible. It had taken 18 months. The first entry of the CNNIC Internet Time Line was changed in May 2007 to read:

In September 1987, with the support from a scientific research group led by Professor Werner Zorn of Karlsruhe University in Germany, a working group led by Professor Wang Yunfeng and Doctor Li Chengjiong built up an E-mail node in ICA, and successfully sent out an E-mail to Germany on Sep 20th. The E-mail title was 'Across the Great Wall we can reach every corner in the world.'

(8) Celebrating the International Collaboration

In spring 2007, Professor Zorn was organizing a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the success of the opening of the China-CSNET link for September 2007 in Potsdam Germany. He was overjoyed by the news he was receiving that Professor Wang and Dr Li and himself and the ICA and Karlsruhe teams were being recognized in China for their hard work in setting up the China-Germany CSNET link. He invited to Potsdam many of the international pioneers who helped spread the internet. And he invited Mdm Hu because the accurate story about that link was now spreading in China. For me, the celebration was for both the success of the e-mail link and the success of helping correct how the history was being told. At the celebration, Mdm Hu representing the internet community in China presented a souvenir from China to Werner Zorn, Lawrence Landweber and Stephen Wolff as representatives of the international internet pioneers. In her presentation she emphasized what Professor Zorn had always stressed:

"The international collaboration in science and technology is the driving force for computer networking across the country borders and facilitating the early
Internet development in China."[15]

But this is not the end of the story.

In late 2008, the Internet Society of China asked online users in China what date would they chose for a National Net Citizens (Netizens) Cultural Festival? It is reported that about 500,000 users voted. The largest number of those voting chose September 14. That is the day in 1987 when the first message to be sent on the China-CSNET link was composed. When the Internet Society of China organized the first-in-the-world Net Citizens (Netizens) Cultural Festival Day, it invited Professor Zorn. It also invited Ronda Hauben and me for our work about netizenship and about the international collaboration that made the internet possible.

The first Netizens Cultural Festival Day was held September 14, 2009 in Beijing at the CCTV Tower. It was a lively event with speeches and awards for some bloggers. An oral history panel was held discussing some of the problems of opening an internet link to China in 1994 so the Chinese people could have full internet connectivity. This first net citizens' day was not yet well known among the public or even among the then 350,000,000 net users. It was like a baby being born, small but of a big potential.

Instead of seeing that potential, a *Wall Street Journal* blog post framed the event as an **"**official day**"** that **"**didn't seem to muster much enthusiasm**."**[16] But the *Wall Street Journal* was not the only media covering the events. About 40 online media journalists attended and reported on the celebration. They did live online blogging of the event and put up text, photo and video reports so that online users could see and judge the event for themselves.[17]

On the oral history panel at the CCTV Tower, Qian Hualin, Chief Scientist and Vice President of the Internet Society of China informed the audience that:

"Just as Germany was helpful with China establishing an e-mail link with the CSNET in 1987, today China is offering its experience to Vietnam in network construction and to the DPRK in setting up and managing the domain name system of dot KP."

With this statement, Qian Hualin showed that the international collaboration that characterizes the internet continues.

(11) Summary

From 1983-1987, despite the Cold War, computer scientists in China and West Germany were able to collaborate to build up a link between China and the international CSNET e-mail network. They had support from the international computer networking community to transcend national borders, ideological differences, and political restrictions. After a

 false start, the history of this international collaboration is known and respected in China. With such collaborations and efforts to spread accurate stories, the internet will continue to develop and bring the people of the world closer together.

Not
es:

[1] See for example, "Part II The Past: Where it has Come From" in Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*, IEEE Computer Society Press, Los Alamitos, CA., 1997. There is an online version of the book at http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/
[2] See Cindy Zheng, "Current Computing/Networking Status in China," China News Digest, Special Issue on Networking in China, July 11, 1993, http://www.sdsc.edu/~zhengc/93trip.html.
[3] COCOM, the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls, was established during the Cold War to put an embargo on Western exports to East Bloc countries. It established multilateral export controls for strategic and military goods/materiel and technologies to proscribed destinations. [4] CASCO-Chinesische Anwender von Siemens Computern.
[5] The CSNET was the result of a proposal in 1979 submitted to the U.S. NSF by Lawrence Landweber to make computer network connections among U.S. and other university computer science departments. It started as a simple telephone-based e-mail relay network which became known as PhoneNet. By 1984, computer science departments outside of the U.S. began to connect. Canada, Israel, Germany and France had early connections, soon followed by South Korea, Australia and Japan. [6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X.25
[7] Wang Enhai tells this story at http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2008-11-06/09452560594.shtml (in Chinese)
[8] See, "Panel Discussion: The Road to the First E-mail", *The Amateur Computerist*, Vol. 16 No. 2, Summer 2008, page 5. Available on line at: http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn16-2.pdf.
[9] For computer networking activity, ICA was financially better off than were the Chinese universities. ICA was funded by the Ministry of Machinery and Electronics Industry. The universities were funded by the Ministry of Education which could not distribute as much money to each university as ICA received.
[10] http://www.nsrc.org/db/lookup/operation=lookup-report/ID=890202373777:497422478/fromPage=CN.
[11] "'Across the Great Wall': The China-Germany E-mail Connection 1987-1994."
See http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/china-email.doc.

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[12] E-mail message from Wang Enhai to the author, August 27, 2008. Wang Enhai gave an interview in 2008 to SINA which details the method and results of this investigation. It is online at: http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2008-11-06/09452560594.shtml and http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2008-11-06/09452560595.shtml (both in Chinese).

[13] See for example,   , "   " in *Economy of China* April 2010. Available online in Chinese at: http://www.economyofchina.com/cms/html/zazhi/wangqi/2010nian4yuekan/fengmian/2010/0501/661.html

and   , "   1   ", xinhuanet, Nov 22, 2006. Available online at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2006-11/22/content_5358191.htm (in Chinese).

[14] The Committee had been established in 2002. Its members were experts from governments, research institutes, newspaper agencies, Internet companies, universities, and retired Internet contributors. In 2007 Min Dahong was on the Committee.

[15] See "Cordial Thanks to Our Friends", *The Amateur Computerist*, Vol. 16 No. 2, Summer 2008, pages 13-14. Online at: http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn16-2.pdf.

[16] "China's Netizens Day Gets Scant Attention" by Juliet Ye. See http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2009/09/15/chinas-netizens-day-gets-scant-attention/tab/article/ [17] See for example the video at: http://my.tv.sohu.com/u/vw/21977107.