Systematics as Cyberscience: Computers, Change, and Continuity in Science (Inside Technology)

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The use of information and communication technology in scientific research has been hailed as the means to a new larger-scale, more efficient, and cost-effective science. But although scientists increasingly use computers in their work and institutions have made massive investments in technology, we still have little idea how computing affects the way scientists work and the kind of knowledge they produce. In Systematics as Cyberscience, Christine Hine explores these questions by examining the developing use of information and communication technology in one discipline, systematics (which focuses on the classification and naming of organisms and exploration of evolutionary relationships). Her sociological study of the ways that biologists working in this field have engaged with new technology is an account of how one of the oldest branches of science transformed itself into one of the newest and became a cyberscience. Combining an ethnographic approach with historical review and textual analysis, Hine investigates the emergence of a virtual culture in systematics and how that new culture is entwined with the field's existing practices and priorities. Hine examines the policy perspective on technological change, the material culture of systematics (and how the virtual culture aligns with it), communication practices with new technology, and the complex dynamics of change and continuity on the institutional level. New technologies have stimulated reflection on the future of systematics and prompted calls for radical transformation, but the outcomes are thoroughly rooted in the heritage of the discipline. Hine argues that to understand the impact of information and communication technology in science we need to take account of the many complex and conflicting pressures that contemporary scientists navigate. The results of technological developments are rarely unambiguous efficiency gains, and are highly discipline-specific.Christine Hine is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Surrey. She is the author of Virtual Ethnography. "I came away from this book with new insights about the sciences of systematics and with a sense that I had been given a rich panorama of an emerging cyberfield."--Geoffrey C. Bowker, Center for Science, Technology and Society, Santa Clara University"Christine Hine moves with analytic mobility, sidestepping the buzz in cyberscience buzzwords to reveal with respect and wonder the heart of a discipline."--Karen S. Baker, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego

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