Physics Colloquium

Michigan Technological University

Thursday, January 23, 2014
at 4:00 pm
Room 139 Fisher Hall

Searching the Internet for Evidence of Time Travelers

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Abstract: Time travel has captured the public imagination for much of the past century, but little has been done to actually search for time travelers. Here, three implementations of Internet searches for time travelers will be described, all seeking a prescient mention of information not previously available. Physics that seems to rule out time travel as well as physics that seems to allow it will be briefly reviewed. Public reaction to the appearance last month of the preprint underlying this work will be briefly discussed. Given practical verifiability concerns, only time travelers from the future were investigated. No time travelers were discovered. Although these negative results do not disprove time travel, given the great reach of the Internet, this search was perhaps the most comprehensive to date.

Biography: I worked at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, USA before coming to Michigan Tech. I am perhaps best known scientifically for papers predicting, usually among others, several recovered microlensing phenomena, and papers showing, usually among others, that gamma-ray bursts were consistent with occurring at cosmological distances. I led a group that developed and deployed the first online fisheye night sky monitor, deploying later models to most major astronomical observatories. I co-created the Astrophysics Source Code Library (ASCL) open repository. In terms of science writing, I am perhaps best known as a co-creator and editor of the Astronomy Picture of the Day (APOD) website. My current research interests include trying to limit attributes of our universe with distant gamma-ray bursts, and trying to develop a sky monitoring smartphone application.

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