

The German SD-Forum on Internet

Ralf Bücken

rbuecker@prod-org.bwl.uni-mainz.de

André Nietz

anietz@prod-org.bwl.uni-mainz.de

The SD - Forum of the University of Mainz was first founded as a cooperation across all faculties. The Idea of System Dynamics was new and practicable with all kinds of science.

Even the start was great, just a small number of students know about SD. So our first aim was to get known. Some lessons in several faculties like the SD - Seminar in economics brought us in mind of the students. But we were still not convinced that lessons were enough. Although there already had been a supply of SD related lessons, the demand or better the knowledge of needing these information was far less as expected. Thinking about the great opportunities SD offers, it is unbelievable how small the lobby for SD in Germany is. In order to reach a greater number of people, even those who are not students in our university or no students at all, we decided to use the Internet to let Germany know what is SD all about.

The decision what kind of medium we will use, was quite easy. SD describes dynamic processes and the most dynamic medium in our days is of course the Internet especially the WWW.

We first showed up in some Web - pages just as a kind of general information. By the time some changes were made and the web pages, in the state of today, a visitor can see are not only information but a real tutorial and help in programming SD - models in PowerSim™, as well as the possibility to download some models to several themes. In this paper we like to introduce our idea of the SD - Forum in Germany.

The concept consists of three mayor ideas. The first idea of the SD - Forum was to reach a greater number of people. As mentioned above we tried some university lessons to offer students of the economic faculty the opportunity to get into system dynamics. Most of the students did not know what SD is all about. There was a lack of information. The print medium was occupied but the buying of books and papers is often too expensive to students, that was the reason why we decided to show up on the WWW. Most people are connected to the WWW at home or do have the opportunity to get connected at work or for students at their university. Therefore, it is the best possibility to reach people world wide. Another reason for using the WWW was the possibility that someone show up at our web-pages without having an concrete idea of what SD is all about and make him/her interested in SD, guide - and modeling - descriptions included. So we choose the WWW as a medium because of the great acceptance under people in Germany and even world wide.

The next idea was to exchange knowledge and information about SD. We like to give visitors a general information as well as information to people who are already into SD. Beside the information exchange, our next idea was to offer the service to download frequently used models (like modules) or even complete models. The need of this service is obviously. While constructing a huge model in Powersim™ it is often not necessary to program all parts of the model by yourself. So we offer the user the service, to download standard structures or parts of models which they can use for their specific simulations.

Another aim for the future of our forum is, that the German SD Forum will be the central harbor in Germany for those looking for information, support and answers relating to SD. On the other hand we aim to be a central pool for SD-models in Germany, growing day by day.

To coordinate and present information and models is our prime directive.

The concept we described above is realized as follows:

By entering our Web - site the visitor is confronted with a map of all sections of the SD - Forum. This paper will randomly go through these sections explaining our intention behind these special section.

The first section a visitor will view is the „Kurzdarstellung“ which contains a short overview of what SD is all about, history and development of the simulation software included. Another quite important point is to explain the visitor first the difference between a causal - loop and the flow - diagram as they were used in PowerSim™. At the end we show up a list of the most important literature round about SD and model - construction in SD related programs. So the visitor who was never before confronted with SD is able to get an overview about what is SD and where he/ she can get further information about SD. In mind that this page is special made for people who do not have already a concrete knowledge of what is SD, he/ she will find mostly general information on this page and if interested he/ she is able to use this information to view the rest of our web - pages which are much more specific.

After viewing the „Kurzdarstellung“ we hope that the visitor is interested in more information about SD and if he/ she never before heard about SD it is necessary to give him/ her the opportunity to learn how the SD - method works. His/her next stop on our tour will be „Lernen“. These pages will contain „do it yourself“ lessons, which helps autodidacs to get a first, deeper glimpse into SD related thoughts. The material will be much like the „Roadmaps“ of the MIT even they are in German, their intention is the same. These Pages are still under construction, which means at the moment not yet available. But most of this section is done and so the „do it yourself“ feature will be available soon.

If the visitor used all of our possibilities and information about SD, he/ she soon will be able to build his/ her own models. We chose the simulation - software PowerSim™, so the model - pool is filled just with this kind of models. The idea of the model - pool was to get in touch with other PowerSim™ user to arrange a change of models and thoughts around SD. When entering the „Modelle“ section the visitor is confronted with two frames, containing an index and a short description of each model which can be found there. The models which are available are divided into several groups: general - , supply - , store - , personnel - , production -models and general archetypes. Under these groups are several models hidden. By clicking on a specific model which is desired or needed, the visitor is able to download one of the models for his/ her specific need. The model can be used separately or even implanted in his/ her own bigger model. The „Modelle“ section of our Web - site will always be under construction because of the mass of models which will be build or are already build. We hope that also the visitors send us their models so it will be possible to present the public a static growing number of models to all kinds of themes.

Visitors who are not beginners can just join this section to change models and ideas. Another possibility to change thoughts and get hints is the „Kontakt“ section. There the visitor will find a form where he/ she can reach the whole SD - Forum of the University Mainz. The possibility to get an advice is much higher when all members are involved as if just a one on one exchange is possible. So if sending a mailing request, the questioner will get solutions and suggestions from all of our members.

If there is need or interest to know more of our team, we show up in the „Team“ section. Which gives a personal overview over the persons involved in this project.