Post-Academic Manifesto

March 27, 2002

1 Scope

The publication of this document marks the start of a new movement, a movement hereafter referred to as the *post-academic movement*. This movement aims to shape a new institution, or perhaps simply a new paradigm, hereafter referred to as *post-academia*.

2 Motivation

The post-academic movement is motivated by the current state of academia, which is one of intellectual decay and derailment, largely due to overcrowding and blind self-perpetuation. "Academia" itself is a rather new entity, debatably not more that one-hundred years old. The current state of academia can be traced back perhaps fifty years, though as an outcome it might be seen as an inevitable. The state is marked by the following characteristics:

- publication as the central motivator
- research as an afterthought to publication
- an exhaustion of fundamentally worthwhile research areas
- overpopulation
- an excessive use of mathematics
- attempts to make rather trivial ideas appear more complex
- extraordinarily long papers that are filled with a rehash of past work
- "forced" references
- extraordinarily long reference lists
- heavy use of jargon words that add no more meaning than the corresponding common words would
- purposeful alienation of the layperson

- a flood of low-quality publications
- publication of ideas and work that do not demand publication
- an acceptance (and encouragement) of the current state of academia

3 Proposal

This manifesto proposes 9 corrections to the current state of academia. These corrections can be implemented on a per-individual basis. The benefit to the correcting individual dramatically increases if others are also implementing the corrections. However, a single individual, acting alone, can reap enormous self-benefit, even if he or she is the only one implementing the corrections.

The proposed corrections can be seen as reactionary: in essence, they call for a return to the state academia was in before academia as we know it existed.

The corrections are listed below. Greater detail about each correction is given in what follows.

1. a thirst for knowledge as the central motivator
2. publication as an afterthought to research
3. avoiding the use of mathematics where it is unnecessary
4. presenting ideas in the simplest terms possible
5. writing short papers that are to the point
6. including references only where they are completely natural and necessary
7. substituting commonly used equivalent words in the place of jargon
8. only publishing work that truly demands publication
9. refusing to accept the work of others who do not implement the corrections listed in this manifesto

a thirst for knowledge as the central motivator Research should be motivated by the thirst for knowledge. The money resulting from said knowledge (as from the sale of an invention) is not forbidden as a motivator for this thirst.

publication as an afterthought to research The idea of publication should occur after the corresponding research is complete and should be accompanied by a variation on the following thought: "You know, other people might truly benefit from learning about these results."

avoiding the use of mathematics where it is unnecessary Though mathematics can be a very precise language, it can also obscure simple relationships under a veil of symbols. The English language (as an example of a non-mathematical language) can be very precise when used properly.

presenting ideas in the simplest terms possible Simple underlying ideas should be presented with simple explanations. Simple ideas should never be "fluffed up" with overly complicated wording and explanations.

writing short papers that are to the point Papers should be as brief as possible while still including all necessary information. The focus of a paper should be on presenting the new idea and its associated proofs and experiments. Each paper should focus on the presentation of a single new idea: a collection of mediocre ideas is no substitute for one excellent idea. The addition of several mediocre ideas around one central, excellent idea does not improve the quality of a paper.

including references only where they are completely natural and necessary References should be used sparingly and never "forced" just for the sake of including references.

substituting commonly used equivalent words in the place of jargon Researchers should never hide behind jargon or use jargon to make simple ideas sound more complex. As an example, all occurrences of the word "stochastic" should be replaced by the word "random". Any jargon that is necessary for the sake of conciseness should be suitably worded and fully explained before being used. Coining new terms to replace existing, unclear terms may be necessary.

only publishing work that truly demands publication Not all work is worth publishing. Will people likely read the proposed publication in two years? If not, then the material is not worth publishing. Just because work is not worth publishing does not mean it is not worth doing. The history of research is filled with work that was great yet unpublishable.

refusing to accept the work of others who do not implement the corrections listed in this manifesto In doing so, you will help to reduce overpopulation and the flood of low-quality publications.