

Internet-Based Approaches to Building Stakeholder Networks for Conservation and Natural Resource Management

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Social network analysis (SNA) is based on a conceptual network representation of social interactions and is an invaluable tool for conservation professionals to increase collaboration, improve information flow, and increase efficiency. We present two approaches to constructing internet-based social networks (**derived from information on the internet**), and use an existing traditional (survey-based) case study to illustrate in a familiar context the deviations in methods and results. Internet-based approaches to SNA offer a means to overcome institutional hurdles to conducting survey-based SNA, provide unique insight into an institutions' web presence, allow for easy snowballing (iterative process that incorporates new nodes in the network), and facilitate monitoring of social networks through time. The two internet-based approaches differ in link definition: 1) hyperlink approach is based on links on a website that redirect to a different website and, 2) the relatedness approach is based on a Google's "relatedness" operator that identifies pages "similar" to a URL. All networks were initiated with the same start nodes (members of a conservation alliance for the Calumet region around Chicago (n=130)), but the resulting networks vary drastically from one another. Interpretation of the resulting networks is highly contingent upon how the links were defined.

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