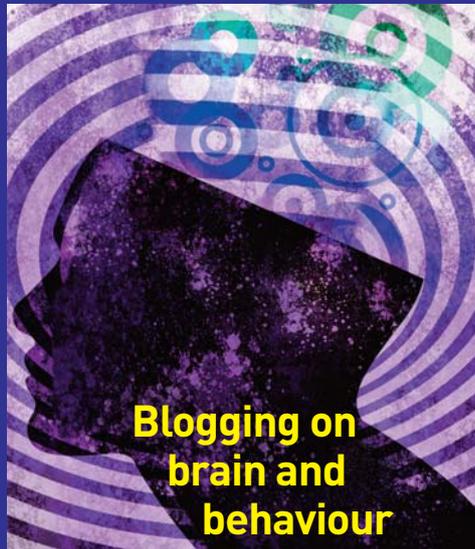




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## Untangling the web

Image by Lynsey Irvine and Peter Storey, for a series written by Aleks Krotoski. E-mail ideas for 'Big picture' to [jon.sutton@bps.org.uk](mailto:jon.sutton@bps.org.uk).

How has the most revolutionary innovation of our time – the internet – transformed our world? What does it mean for the modern family? How has it changed our concepts of privacy? Of celebrity? Of love, sex and hate? Psychologist Dr Aleks Krotoski has been investigating, in a major series for *The Guardian* (see [tinyurl.com/utwalekcl](http://tinyurl.com/utwalekcl)). A book extending the series, *Untangling the Web*, is due out next month.

Krotoski has a PhD in social psychology from the University of Surrey, for a thesis which examined how information spreads around the social networks of the web. In February 2010, she presented *The Virtual Revolution*, a TV documentary series described by the BBC as 'charting two decades of profound change since the invention of the World Wide Web, weighing up the huge benefits and the unforeseen downsides'. Followed by 20,000 on Twitter, she also presents the BBC Radio 4 series *The Digital Human* (back in October for a

second series). She describes this as 'a long-view about the true revolutionary nature of the web. For example, in the episode about "capture", we look at the web's effects on memory, and how our historical attempts at capturing phenomena throughout the ages reflect social hierarchies and power dynamics.'

She tells us: 'I'm also pursuing my own academic study based in the Media and Communications Department of the LSE where I am a Visiting Fellow, funded by the Nominet Trust and Google. I am investigating how the designers of the web services we use every day have fit the "messy", holistic human into binary systems: what have they chosen to include and what have they chosen to ignore? The first outcome of this line of inquiry is the "Serendipity Engine", a system that critiques the assumptions Google have made about end-user attributions of insight, relevance and value. See [tinyurl.com/serendipityengine](http://tinyurl.com/serendipityengine) for more information.'

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