

Re: looking for Fréchet's 1906 Ph.D. dissertation introducing metric spaces

# Re: looking for Fréchet's 1906 Ph.D. dissertation introducing metric spaces

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.math/2007-06/msg01065.html>

---

- *From:* Dan <[dgreenhoe@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:dgreenhoe@xxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Wed, 06 Jun 2007 03:45:34 -0000
- 

Thank you for your helpful and informative reply. I appreciate it.

I don't believe this journal is on-line, at least not freely available.

I would be willing to settle for a non-freely available one. I do have access to a number of (regrettably) non-free archives (such as JSTOR) through my university.

However, assuming you can read French, you may find much of the motivation and approach difficult to follow,

Despite the quote in my post from Abel ("... one should study the masters and not the pupils"), in practice I don't follow this. That is, I think that rather than learning from the master that introduced a concept while that concept was still in an immature state, it is better to learn from a pupil that has mastered the concept after the concept reached maturity and can connect it "in a natural illuminating way, with a large complex of other mathematical ideas" (G.H. Hardy).

For example, rather than learning about metric spaces from Frechet's 1906 dissertation, I would think it more expedient to learn about them from Rudin's "Principles of Mathematical Analysis" or some other standard text.

The reason that I look for these old classic papers is not so much to learn mathematical concepts from them, but rather to reference them in the stuff I write about to give myself and potential readers some idea of where and when and how a link in the web of mathematics came to be. I think knowing such background information is helpful and enlightening, even though not directly related to the concept itself.

And I guess the reason why I like to give online web links to these

Re: looking for Fréchet's 1906 Ph.D. dissertation introducing metric spaces

Re: looking for Fréchet's 1906 Ph.D. dissertation introducing metric spaces

sources is it kind of gives readers a sense of empowerment. It gives them the sense that the classic math papers that made history are not just available to researchers in a ~900 year old Oxford University or an ivy league school, but are available to anyone with an internet connection in any country no matter how impoverished.

I know that there is more and more intellectual material available online. And I don't like to be a whiner. But to be honest, it is a little difficult for me to understand how papers that have revolutionized mathematics (like Frechet's 1906 paper introducing metric spaces or Lebesgue's 1902 paper introducing Lebesgue integration) can remain so elusive and difficult to access. This is intellectual history that has changed the thinking of mankind. Shouldn't that mean something to someone enough to make it easily accessible to all? What if the U.S.'s "Bill of Rights" was as difficult to access? England's "Magna Carta"? The Code of Hammurabi?

Enough whining from me.  
Thank you again for your help!  
I wish you the best in your work.  
Dan Greenhoe