

# Reasons to be cheerful: a funeral and absent kids

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Two rays of sunshine cross my otherwise gloomy desk in the last 24 hours. I spend a lot of my time hearing about how the Internet and new media is driving us to hell in a handcart so here are two oddly cheerful anecdotes to counter the pessimism.

One of the key accusations against digital communications is that it is fragmenting society. The generation gap is growing as children take to their PCs, mobiles and iPods. It's the argument in Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone". We used to do stuff together and talk to each other, he argues. Now we are separated by electronic distractions. I just don't think it's true. Evidence?

First up from [Yorkshire Post](#) features chief Sheena Hastings who was interviewing me about a talk I am giving at the [Bradford Media Museum's annual jamboree](#). Sheena mentioned a lovely story about how a relative in the west of Ireland had died recently and family members had put up a tribute video on [YouTube](#). It is sentimental and simple but full of lovely content. And of course within hours over 100 relatives had viewed and got in touch. Other people had linked relevant websites and videos of their own. So now a life that had ended has been celebrated online and re-connected with many others in a modest but rich piece of citizen media. You couldn't have done that without the Internet.

The second example springs from comments by [Cherie Blair](#) that her grown up kids don't ring their father enough now they are off at University. But LSE research fellow [Martina Klett-Davies](#) says that the opposite is usually true. Mobile phones now mean that parents expect – and get – far more communication with their offspring:

*"If we compare it to even five years ago, kids didn't necessarily have a mobile phone. Because of the internet and Skype there's a lot more contact between people than there's ever been before. Not so long ago you only had letters."*

Of course, if you are the adult child then that might not be such a reason to be cheerful – especially if you are a Blair babe...

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