


Social Digital Series: Reflecting on the State of Social Digital Behaviour in the UK

 Social digital behaviour, in the form of building digital skills and improving digital literacy, has been part of the political, social and academic landscape in the UK for at least a decade. Initiatives have been set up by the government, the third sector, and commercial and other partners, with the aim of improving socio-economic well-being and creating greater equality through improving access to computers and the internet, and giving people the skills they need to use them.

Now is the moment to evaluate and reflect on how effective the existing campaigns have been, and to bring together the information that exists on the success of these initiatives, and how much they have been able to affect social digital behaviour.

In the next couple of weeks we will be running the Social Digital Series in which people working in this area will be presenting research, positions and policy suggestions in the form of guest blogs. This series of blog posts is linked to the Social Digital Research symposium organised by the LSE's [Media Policy Project](#) and [UK Online Centres](#).

Why organise the Social Digital Research Symposium now?

Later this year, [Race Online 2012](#), which brings together over a thousand initiatives that aim to get as many people online as possible before the Olympics, will come to an end. This could lead to a shift in the social digital behaviour landscape, and it seems logical that only the most effective programmes and projects will survive. Let's hope effectiveness will be interpreted in terms of not just costs but also outcomes.

According to [ONS data](#), household access to the internet continues to rise. However, the general increase in uptake says little about equality in uptake of different services or of use. In the [Digital Underclass policy brief](#), it was argued that certain groups are at risk of being left further and further behind. The fairness that David Cameron referred to during his video speech at the 2010 National Digital Conference is unlikely to be achieved through policies aimed purely at getting people online.

Along these lines, this blog series will be looking at the following topics related to social digital behaviour:

- The barriers and issues people face getting online
- What happens to families and communities when they do get online
- How social networks can impact upon this, both positively and negatively
- How technology can affect social outcomes such as well-being, employability and education
- How we develop a demand for digital services such as broadband amongst those who are offline
- 'Digital by default' or the shift of service delivery to online channels and how this will affect the people who use those services.

Subsequent posts in the blog series will discuss these themes and issues.

Sound off in the comments if you wish to challenge, highlight other themes, or have anything else to contribute.

The Social Digital Symposium will take place on 22 March 2012 at the London School of Economics, from 10:30 am – 3:30pm. To share your latest research plans as well as any downloadable versions or links to your latest research papers and reports on social digital behaviour or for more information about the event, contact peter.farrell@ukonlinecentres.com.

Tweet about it using #SocDigRes!

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