

SEMINAR N – FUTURE TECHNOLOGY

“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity... Technology” Addressing the Digital Divide

Key themes / issues / questions arising from discussion:

- Why is it important to address the digital divide?
- How can we use technology in our organisations?

Get up out of the chair and meet three people we haven't already met.

Divided into groups- come up with three points on:

What does the digital divide mean to you?

What does the digital divide mean to your organisation?

- Infoexchange; aims to bridge the digital divide; access to technology and providing services. Access to information, economic developmental.
- Disability Services Commission; funding body, technology is something that they use. Accessibility in the disability service. Engaged individuals; how can they use technology. Vision impaired, adaptive technology. Including people digitally; how can we do this.
- Hills Community Support Group; youth disability, frail aged, bridge the divide in terms of aged use of computer at centre. Upgrades of organisations computers; onsell at a cheap price; works and doesn't work- many challenges. How can we do it better.
- Citizens Advice Bureau; advice referrals; need to provide the best service that they can. Ready access; how can we upgrade our service to provide information that is valued. People don't produce paper information anymore; people can not access it, so CAB print it off. Volunteers and IT training; enhance services and training. Not for the sake of technology
- Geraldton Resource Centre; many remote community clients, role for non-profits; conduit to information. Case mix; community development, education, case management. IT can be used to great effect to underpin. Non-profits are on the other side of the digital divide. In region; organisations and community workers knew that emergency relief existed. Positioned as a sector- virtual librarian. Community portal- strategic shift.
- Business plan; has to address the digital divide. Missing out on core group of client sector. Organisations need to think through how issues of diversity will be addressed. Online services; additional services that support the delivery of services. Not good enough for it to be only online. Not forget the telephone.

- Hard for small non-profit to be the responsible to break down the digital divide.
- e-government strategy; major need for NGO's to be linked into that. Need to engage with government on these issues.

What does technology do for us and why is it important?

- Facilitator
- Enables us to learn
- Share (and manage) information and knowledge (one to one, to many, from many)
- Communicate across boundaries and time, reducing isolation
- Build and manage relationships; email, websites.
- Develop skills

The 5 C's of digital inclusion;

- Connectivity
- Capability
- Content
- Confidence
- Continuity

What are the barriers to digital inclusion;

- Access (physical, geographical)
- Skills and confidence
- Financial- impact of unmetered charging
- Meaningful involvement and engagement
- Disability
- Cultural

More important things to worry about than the digital divide;

- Poverty
- Food
- Shelter
- Education/literacy

UK

- IMFO: homelessness
- Do-it.org.uk going mobile; volunteering
- Thesite.org online advice for youth
- UK online centres; people/organisations
- Mymanchester.net community information network

Purpose of ICT

- To do things better or do better things
- Facilitator to information and communication
- Enables us to learn

- Share (and manage) information and knowledge (one to one, to many, from many)
- Communicate across boundaries and time, reducing isolation

Do we really need our own PC?

- Access to services rather than equipment
- Mobile technology
- Access to shared services
- People need to want digital inclusion

Comments and feedback from the discussion

- Propensity for people to use a computer; fear of technology.
- Capacity to use computers; literacy
- Accessibility; web compatibility, access to computers full stop.
- Use of mobile phone as an email option
- Need for an email address
- Assumption that people are connected, and services are delivered on that basis
- Affordable access to technology
- Good equipment
- Inflexibility of platforms where people are trying to communicate
- Seniors having different learning styles
- Communications and mobile phones; people want to have conversations

Small group discussion

What are the barriers to digital exclusions?

- Rural/Regional
- Affordability

How is it being successfully tackled and could technology help further?

What are the weak points and key needs to help your organisations?

- RRR- Grant to establish video conference facilities. No Legal Aid in Geraldton- now able to link up to legal advice.
- Disability- ICT knowledge adapted the IT for use, also recycle computers and re-sell them for more reasonable prices.
- Videoconferencing become a real tool for people having access. RRR- don't have access to facilities and services. Need for services; easier than flying people places for 15 minute consults.
- Database called info link; information of all services available- use to provide information to clients. Some volunteers may not utilise it though. Should always be up to date as it is online. Relies on organisations updating it.

- Infoxchange; not video conferencing, provide affordable computers and affordable internet access. Internet networks in public housing estates; unlimited internet access for \$5 per month, as they are a bulk purchaser and re-seller. Original development; Australia's first ISP that was free; but not sustainable. If there's not a lot of relevant information on the web; people may not use it.
- Aim to provide information to organisations that are free; service directory available across Australia. News section of the site.
- Mobile technology used in Newcastle; young street workers and being mentored via mobile technology. Late at night; the service is a great support to vulnerable individuals.
- e-government strategy; relationship with legal aid WA. As simple as them allowing password access to information; resources are made available to the community services sector. Mutual vision and link into government strategies. Are there constraints on government? Yes and No.
- As a sector, we're not trained in ICT. Not sure what is out there and available. Cost save through the use of technology. Not a lot of innovation from the top, and a willingness to use technology. Not IT literate. Not core business.
- Technical side of IT, managerial side of IT is simple; how can that work with some input. Use of existing infrastructures that currently exist; where are the entry points for NGO sector; business and NGO partnerships.
- Historically; not putting to government; this is what we need. Competition for service provision; need to have a clear voice.

Key barriers

- Money; systems not appropriately set up for the requirements; need skills and knowledge to advance.
- Technical support
- Not knowing what access our clients have to digital technology; ABS stats are more generalised than specific.

Successful projects

- Videoconferencing
- Use of emails
- Centrelink clients; use of mobiles
- Telephone is still the most used device- 95% of contact

Weak points

- Telecentres; fee for service, no ongoing funding, maintenance of centres

- Time relevance of information; not refreshed
- Funding
- Technical training
- Need better data to make informed decisions about how to best reach the clients

Infoexchange Australia

- "Technology for Social Justice"
- Via; greenPC work in WA
- Founded 15 years ago.

Values

- Empowerment
- Integrity
- Innovation
- Excellence

Themes

- If you want access to technology; you can get it
- Whole of community approach

Three key business areas

- Affordable access
- eService partnerships
- GrassRoots networking
- Building on frustration in finding crisis accommodation
- Support Services Directory established
- Free community news service

Community sector needs good quality, unbiased, and responsive ICT advice. Who can they trust?

Services

- GreenPC
- Communications Service Provider
- IT health checks and staff skills audits
- Employment board
- Community and sector news
- Service seeker
- S2S, web applications for organisations

Employment Board- www.employment.infoexchange.net.au

- 30,000 individual visits a month
- \$35 to view and free to list
- Service just for the community service sector

www.serviceseeker.com.au

- Can find WA based services
- Updated annually
- 12-15 people work on the service
- 98% correct

Service Co-ordination tools

- Client and Case management
- Electronic referral
- Wait List
- Accommodation seeker
- Resource seeker
- People seeker
- Infoexchange service seeker

Technological philosophy

- Web based
- Centralised
- Interface customisation
- Sector knowledge
- Linking up