

Access to information and the enhancement of civic engagement

Bas Savenije

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Civic engagement

Active participation of citizens in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future:

- community service
- collective action
- political involvement
- social change

The utopian internet?

“The internet is generally excellent for consumers.

But it’s much more problematic for citizens.”

Andrew Keene

Datasubjectivism

“The datasubjective mind is a typical product of the neoliberal climate in society in which the market has a central position and competition prevails as a regulating principle, even on the individual level, thus suggesting that shortcomings are not a social problem but a personal failure.”

Hans Schnitzler

Algorithms

“We might understand how they work from the point of view of mathematical principles, but that math is so complex that it is impossible for a human being to truly follow. The idea that we don’t know the world that we’re creating makes it very difficult for us to operate ethically and mindfully within it.”

Ted Striphas

Government and data

Prepression = Prevention + Repression

Willem Schinkel

Open Government

- Citizens have the right to access documents and proceedings of the government
- Empowerment: citizens' participation and the coproduction of politics together with citizens

Social movements

“Social media can greatly empower social movements in 3 key areas:

- Public attention
- Evading censorship
- Coordination and logistics”

Zeynep Tufekci

Accessibility of information

Open Access

“The idea that publicly funded materials should be openly licensed materials, is a sensible solution that ensures the public’s right to reuse the materials it paid for.”

Creative Commons

Accessibility of information

Copyright

“The task of policymakers is to remake our copyright laws to fit our times: laws based on access nor physical ownership of goods, on creation by the masses and not by the few, and on global rather than regional markets.”

William Patry

The future memory

“Memory is not merely storage and efficient management, but also careful curation of significant differences and hence of the stable sedimentation of the past as an ordered series of changes”

Luciano Floridi

State of the art

“The logical end of the ever-increasing personalisation is each user having his or her own online experience, fully in line with his or her own perspective:

The internet as an echoing well.”

Hans Schnitzler

Where do we go from here?

“We need to stop thinking of the internet as a marketplace first and a public forum second. What is long overdue is a fundamental consideration of the primacy of the internet’s civic and aesthetic dimensions.”

Evgeny Morozov

Necessary conditions

- Availability and accessibility of information: reliable, authentic, multiform and including information about the past;
- Internet as a public square in which people feel free to join and form communities and take part in debates.

Actions

- Responsibility for the memory
- Independent access to information about culture, society, politics, government
- Blocking of websites solely for generally accepted social norms and security concerns
- Rethinking of copyright
- Public access to publicly financed information
- Open infrastructure for debate and community building

New (inter)national laws

- Control of monopolistic organisations
- Regulation of data collection and use by government and businesses
- Rethinking privacy
- Rethinking of copyright

Libraries' role

- Information infrastructure
- Access to information
- Prevent an information divide
- Active role in the public debate about ethics of internet, privacy, copyright

Challenges for libraries

- The library's organisation and building are secondary to its function in society
- Borders should be crossed:
 - Regional borders
 - Sectoral borders
- Cooperation in networks is essential

Because of the prevailing international aspect, IFLA can play an important role.

Conclusion

It is not technology that is threatening us, but the glorification of technology which leads us to consider values and social requirements as outdated. It comes down to impose human values on technology”

Maxim Februari