

## Current Directive

### Part 1: You online

It seems that the Internet is now part of daily life and is a tool that many people use to socialise, represent themselves and communicate with others. This Directive explores your attitudes towards identity and the Internet.

Please note this directive is NOT aimed just at people who spend time on the Internet or social media, but all of you. We want to know what you think – or imagine – about identity and the Internet, whether or not you have ever been online. Please use the questions below as prompts...

### First task

Please list the first five words or phrases that spring to mind when you think about the term “Internet and online communities.”

social media sites like facebook, twitter, instagram  
boundless information on anything and everything  
news from around the world delivered on many different formats  
finding new friends and keeping in touch with family or friends in other places  
online shopping

### Early experiences

Now I use the internet on a daily basis and very frequently.  
When I first went online it was 1998 and I was studying at uni, I used it to research for essays and assignments mostly. I did not use it as heavily as I do now. I would use email a lot to communicate with friends back in the early days, and just to find information for uni mostly. Back then, it was common to log into chat room like the Yahoo browser chat rooms, I think it was one of the first ways to get in touch with random people elsewhere in the world. I guess the novelty was fun to speak to people in america or elsewhere for free! Back then I made some chat room friends who were other students in other countries, though in the chat rooms you had to avoid weirdos who were just out to have explicit conversations with anyone willing. But they were often easy to avoid coz they usually had obvious user names! Back in those days there was no Facebook and such. I am glad because I'm pretty sure I would have got far less studying done.

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Do you use the Internet?

If you do, please write about your first memories of using it. What sites were important to you when you first explored the online world?

If you don't use the Internet, please write about why you have avoided it and say if you find it difficult not being online.

Daily routines and practices

When and where do you use the Internet today? On what devices? Do you ration your Internet usage or that of your family? What sites do you regularly use?

Have you ever completed a course to help you use the Internet or a computer? Tell us about this.

I use the internet constantly. It's ridiculous, from everything to checking the weather to reading the news, to chatting with friends who live abroad, to internet shopping. On my phone and laptop mostly.

I actually think I use it too much. Back when I didn't use the internet so much I used to phone people on my landline, and now only about 3 people even know my landline number. I do think, that although the internet is a great thing, it has for me, cut down on the amount of actual contact I have with people. My friends and I tend to text on things like whatsapp/ viber/facebook rather than phone, which is ok but I do miss actual communication. It's had a weird effect actually. One of my good friends lives in australia and she created a whatsapp group chat which we (five of us) all chat on. It's good in some ways as if you miss out on 'chat' you can log on later and "catch up" on the news, but it's not the same as actually talking. I can't remember the last time I actually talked to one of them on the phone. Only my parents, or sister ever ring my landline. It's kinda sad how having more communication channels seems to have reduced the amount of actual communication.

Often I find myself logging on to sites like facebook, my email account, and say BBC news on one device, only to (about 3 mins later) open the same thing on my phone. It's so stupid! I think I do need to give myself actual internet breaks now and again as it kind of sucks you into this unreal world. I think that the whole online chat/community is in fact detrimental to communication. Even when I am running my clinic most of the younger patients (about my age and younger) will have their phones in their hand constantly when I am trying to ask them questions etc. The younger ones (20 and under) hardly look up to answer you sometimes! I have actually told people to put their phones down during appointments to which I usually get looks of horror. HAHA.

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So basically even though I am a high internet user, I think I mostly don't really like the concept of it all when it halts real life interaction, which I think it does frequently.

Do you use any apps or "wearable technology" that try to influence your behaviour? For example, to help you diet, manage a health problem, run faster, concentrate better, etc.? Do you prefer sites that connect you to a community or do you prefer to go it alone?

Yes I use a 'fitbit one' pedometer and activities tracker. I actually really like this device. I play touch rugby in the summer and go to fitness classes/ the gym in the winter and I like to see how much progress I have made/ steps I have taken in the day. I like that the fitbit device links up to the 'my fitness' app as well, as then I can keep a wee food diary and this takes into account how much activity I have done and adjusts my advised calorie amount accordingly. This might sound like control freak madness but I like to be more aware of my health and this suits what I like to know. You can also link up with friends online who also have a fitbit but I only have it linked with one friend and thats just so we can encourage each other, we talk frequently though so it's not our only means of contact.

Communities and social networking sites

Are you a member of any online communities? Or forums? Or review sites? What do you get out of it?

Hmm... I am in a few Facebook groups. Mostly for my profession, they are not really much use in practical ways although you get the occasional bit of useful info. Mostly it's just people whinging about something or other, so I don't pay them a huge amount of attention.

To be honest, I try to avoid them as it's just another way to spend hours staring at a computer or phone and I don't want to do that.

Do you use social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn?

Which ones and how regularly? What do you use them for? Do you use the sites for the purpose they were built for, or for a different function (for example, using Instagram to keep a food diary)?

Do different sites "feel" distinct from each other? Have you left any sites, if so, for what reason? If you don't use (any or particular) social networking sites, why not?

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Yes, Facebook and twitter and instagram.

Facebook all the time, for social stuff, keeping up with people in the unreal way we all do these days (I actually think I hate FB, its so FAKE! I think it makes you lose touch with people as all you do is read stuff they write or flick through their pictures while drifting further apart as you've had no real interactions with them in months! I think a lot of people think the same about FB but because everyone is so obsessed by it no one gives it up!)

Twitter and Instagram I only use for work, for sharing links to relevant news items or sharing pictures. The sites are definitely different for me as I use them for different things. I like instagram the best as its just pictures and find it easier to filter out people I have no interest in.

Again though, I feel like real life ebbs away the more everyone gets obsessed with the internet and social media.

Who do you imagine are typical users of social networking sites?

Have you experienced or heard any stories about people misbehaving on social networking sites? Please give details.

Everyone uses social networking sites, from young to old. The younger ones are more entrenched in it though, and use it more than my mums generation (she is a "baby boomer" - I also hate that term!)

People are always doing stupid things on social media, I have an uncle who posts stupidly offensive crap from racist groups (I had to block him and my sister tried to report him for posting some crap from the Britain First party but Facebook deemed it 'not offensive' HA the disbelief!!) and you always get news stories of people posting stuff on twitter and then getting sued or sent to jail for writing offensive or idiotic things.

Your identity

Would you/do you use your real name and face online? Do you use aliases? Is "who you are" the same across different Internet sites? Has this ever caused any problems?

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I use my real face/name in certain things, and use an alias in others. On facebook I have pictures but all my settings are the most private I can manage and I don't put on my second name as a deterrent for people finding me that I don't want to be "friends" with. I haven't had any problems with this so far. Let's hope it stays this way.

Do you worry about impersonation and identity theft online? Have you, or has anyone you know, experienced this?

I don't worry about this at the moment. No one I know has had any identity theft issues though I have had friends who have lost mobile phones have problems with people being able to access apps like FB etc. But this can be shut down quite quickly if you contact the mobile company and they deactivate the phone.

Are you bothered by the idea of governments and corporations accessing and storing personal data?

not really... I don't tend to surrender much personal data or save cards online when shopping etc.

What do you feel about online advertising? Is it different than how you feel about spam or junk mail?

online advertising is necessary to keep sites income but it's very annoying. esp when you have browed a pair of shoes on one site and the low and behold they haunt you in FB ads for ever more. atleast with online ads I don't have to throw them in the recycling, which is a daily task with the ridiculous amounts of junk mail I get. I expect my post man will develop a spinal kyphosis and then sue royal mail for using him as a human donkey.

Has the Internet changed your attitudes towards friendship, romance and sex? What about money?

Yeah as I said before I think the internet makes friendships lazy. Even writing all this has reinforced my thinking that I need to wean myself off the internet more. Or maybe just use it for an hour a day.

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Are there some topics that you would tell Mass Observation, but you wouldn't put or discuss online? Please give details.

I'm pretty sure most of the things I write to MO I wouldn't put online! haha! Count yourselves lucky! (or not)

Memory and imagination

Have you used the Internet to research something from your past? How was this experience?

I use the facebook 'on this day' feature which basically shows you what you were doing 1 yr/2 yrs/4 yrs ago or whatever. It's nice, but it's also kind of pointless, the past is the past. I am trying these days to try to live more in the present, as the past is gone and the future is non-existent!

The Internet is only 25 years old, how do you think it will influence society and personal identity over the next quarter century?

Bloody hell, I'm older than the internet. Will that be a saying like the sliced bread thing is now??

yes the internet has and will continue to shape the world we live in. In some ways a positive, but there are lots of negatives too, social isolation, social inclusion, wars, spying, paranoia, reuniting with lost relatives... so many different things. Often I think it would be nice to not have that constant need to look at stuff or check in at places via the internet. I have one friend who is extremely obsessed by having a busy and positive online presence. I can't go anywhere with her without her saying "wait a minute, I'm going to check us in on FB". I mean really, who cares! Also I think a lot of people are obsessed with what other people think of them online, especially on FB and instagram etc. It's almost like their online life means more than real life. My friend who is obsessed with checking in everywhere always checks who has liked her posts and who hasn't... it's a lot of utter crap really! That's why I really try to concentrate on the 'now' of a situation and not try to live a 'duel' life if that makes sense. I do genuinely worry about younger folk growing up with that kind of expectation that you have to have a perfect online life, the tendency being that there's a danger that you forget to enjoy reality. I saw a picture online (oh the irony) of a crowd of folk watching some sort of parade and only one person was actually watching the parade and everyone else was videoing it or taking pics on their phone. When you go to gigs now a lot of

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folk spend their time recording the gigs instead of enjoying the present moment of being there.

Has there been an event in your life that wouldn't have happened without the Internet?

not really, only indirectly. ie. I joined my sports club after looking for a sports club online, and other similar things, but if the internet didn't exist I would have looked for them in another way. By speaking to people and stuff, like in the good ole days haha!

### Media

What is the difference between: A letter and an email? A blog and a diary? A video chat (Skype/FaceTime) and a phone call? Tweets and text messages?

Do you present yourself differently on these formats? Please give examples.

Letters: are nicer, unless they are from the bank or a utilities company! I still send hand written cards and letters to a few people. I used to send letter much more ten yrs ago when my gran was still alive. but not so many people send letters now. it's a shame.

Email: slightly less nice than a letter but still fun to keep in touch, and obviously more immediate. I email friends and use it for business communication too. Letters are still more official though.

Blog: modern versions of diaries open to the public sometimes. I don't read any blogs. I went through a phase where I did, but I don't anymore.

Diary: I still keep a diary, not as frequently as I did when I was younger. I don't actually know why I started writing a diary when I was younger but I did write in them all the time. Especially when I was a teenager. I think it helped me figure out my thoughts. I still write in mine from time to time. I would write more personal things in a hand written diary than a blog.

Texts: handy way to send a short msge.

Tweets: I dont send many and its usually just for sharing any podiatry items in the news.

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A Task: Please search your own name (remember not to tell us what this is!) on Google (or a search engine of your choosing). Tell us what you think about the results. How does it make you feel?

Well I searched my name and nothing came up, just a random girl I know who has the same name as me.

When I search my full name (four names) then all that comes up is my university graduation degree announcements which were in the local papers.

I'm glad I have some degree of anonymity.