Digital Youth Research Network: Defining The Field, Building Connections, and Exploring Collaborations

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Abstract
Digital youth is a critical area of research and practice within the iSchools movement. The goal of the Digital Youth Workshop at the iConference 2015 is to continue the efforts of two highly successful workshops in Fort Worth and Berlin through panels, breakouts, and brainstorming sessions focused on two thematic clusters. We anticipate this gathering will further cement the place of youth-related research and practice.
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1   Introduction

Youth today have unrivalled access to knowledge and ideas through digital media. Youth who are taking advantage of their access to new media are developing new modes of working, playing, and learning through affinity groups, social networks and new forms of user-generated content. Despite the many opportunities afforded by digital media and new technologies, many parents, educators, and policy makers are sceptical, if not morally alarmed, by the social practices and effects they attribute to contemporary media and communication technologies. They fear access to violent and hypersexualized content, misinformation and bias, cyberbullying and the crass commercialization of today's media landscape. To navigate these hopes and fears, the images of youth as villains and victims, agents and beneficiaries, we need a strong and coherent research agenda on digital youth.

Starting with the Digital Youth Workshop at the 2013 iConference in Fort Worth, researchers from the Universities of Washington, Michigan, and Maryland proposed a new digital youth research forum (Fisher et al., 2013). Building on this foundation at the 2014 iConference in Berlin (Juncker et al., 2014), organizers and participants further developed this initiative, establishing the Digital Youth Research Network (DYRN) with the following vision:

> The DYRN seeks to develop a common research field, grounded in philosophy, theoretical frameworks, notions and methodologies that allows us to collaboratively develop fresh approaches, perspectives, and knowledge spanning social sciences and humanities in the area of youth, information, and technology

The goal of the Digital Youth Workshop at the iConference 2015 in Newport Beach, California is continue these efforts refining and implementing this vision in a full-day workshop. With the conference theme of Create - Collaborate - Celebrate as our inspiration, we seek to develop research across disciplinary borders, explore new opportunities for collaboration, and lay the groundwork for a peer-reviewed publication centered around Digital Youth.

2   Proposed Format

Morning: Themes and Variations
The session will begin with a short introduction of the workshop organizers, followed by a panel of three invited presentations on issues related to the morning focus on "themes and variations" in digital youth

research. The goal of this panel will be to explore diverse interpretations of "digital youth" and unpack some of the important issues facing digital youth research. The three panelists will be followed by a discussant who will synthesize these talks and provide additional insights. A short coffee break will lead into a breakout session moderated by the organizers. This first breakout session will focus on three themes: *learning, playing, connecting*. Participants will rotate through discussion groups on these themes and creatively connect their work to the themes and to other participants. We will collaboratively summarize the breakout session with a general discussion before breaking for lunch.

Afternoon: Methods and Materials

The afternoon session will begin with another panel of three presentations on issues related to the afternoon theme of methods and materials. These presentations will explore issues of how to do research with and about youth, focusing on leading-edge approaches and participatory research designs, followed by a discussant who will synthesize the talks. A second round of breakout sessions will focus on three new themes: *making, designing, documenting*. Again, participants will rotate through discussion groups on these themes, documenting their discussion for a whole group conversation on the themes. We will conclude the day with an agenda-setting brainstorm that will bring together ideas from the morning and afternoon sessions.

3   Relevance to the Field

The Digital Youth stream of research within the iConference continues to build momentum and relevance within the iSchools and beyond. Following on two highly successful workshops in Fort Worth and Berlin, we anticipate this gathering will further cement the place of youth-related research and practice. Through the workshop activities described above, we seek to establish dialogues among researchers across continents, disciplines, and traditions, broadening the scholarly foundation, as well as exploring cutting-edge innovations.

Participants

Participants will be asked to submit a 500-word (max) position paper describing their current or proposed research in the broad area of digital youth. From these statements, the organizers will refine the themes covered in the breakout sessions to ensure that they are applicable to the participants.

This session will attract scholars at all levels, from students beginning a program of study to established researchers. Based on the format of the session, the maximum number of participants should be set at 50.

Workshop Goals

As a result of the workshop, participants will:
- Implement the vision of the Digital Youth Research Network;
- Contribute to the definition of the research field, identify issues, approaches, methodologies, notions, perspectives, and borders in an iSchool/university context;
- Identify opportunities for trans-disciplinary and international collaboration;
- Create a peer-reviewed publication in the area of Digital Youth.

Session Length

Full day workshop

Special Equipment

Digital projector, sticky notes, markers, large pieces of paper for group brainstorming, masking tape

4   References

Fisher, K. E., Dresang, E., Davis, K., Yardi, S., & Druin, A. (2013). Digital youth workshop: Calling all designers, researchers, and policy makers. Scholarship in action: data, innovation, wisdom. *iConference 2013*, Feb 12-15th, Fort Worth, Texas. www.ischools.org/iConference13/2013index/

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