

TOPICS

Most listed readings will be available at the OII Library at 1 St Giles.

1. Social Research on Information and Communication Technology (25 April)

Tutors: Bill Dutton with Alex Caldas, Corinna di Gennaro, and Limor Shifman

Most mainstream approaches to social research can be used in the study of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). However, the study of ICTs often presents a number of challenges. For example, policy-makers and practitioners are often interested in the future impact of an emerging technology, rather than descriptions of yesterday's uses and impacts. In order to influence policy in a timely way, we require an understanding of the potential social implications of developments long before they are in place. How can we develop empirical research to better think about the future of technology and its social implications? This first session of the seminar will address these challenges, as well as providing an overview of new opportunities for research employing the Internet and related ICTs.

Reading:

On recent calls for research on the societal impact of ICTs:

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCContent/researchfunding/e-Society_specification.asp
<http://virtualsociety.sbs.ox.ac.uk/intro.htm>

(and some of the research results in Woolgar, Steve (2002) *Virtual Society?* OUP)

General reading:

Papers compiled for the MIT-OII Workshop on Social Research on Emerging Technologies, held 15-16 April 2005.

Teich, A. H. (1997) (ed.), *Technology and the Future*, Seventh Edition. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Chapters from Brody to Mazur inclusive (pp. 105-194)

Williams, F., Rice, R., and Rogers, R. (1989), *Research Methods and the New Media* (New York: Free Press): 70-90.

2. Interpreting Survey Data on Internet Use: data analysis from the Oxford Internet Surveys (OxIS) and World Internet Project (25 April)

Instructors: Professor Bill Dutton and Dr Corinna di Gennaro

The Oxford Internet Institute has launched a series of surveys focused on the adoption, use and impacts of the Internet – the Oxford Internet Surveys. The OII is also a participant in the World Internet Project, which enables OxIS data to be used in more cross-national comparative research. The director of OxIS and the OII's survey research officer will present some of the initial findings, focusing on issues of use and non-use and trust to illustrate how the critical analysis of survey data is dependent on strong theoretical underpinnings. This session will also provide a means for students to turn the database towards addressing some of their own questions about the social and political role of the Internet in Britain.

Reading:

What is the nature of the digital divide in Britain? What difference does it make?

Dutton, W (1999) *Society on the Line: Information Politics in the Digital Age*, Oxford: OUP, pp227-47.

Chen, W, & Wellman, B. (2004) 'Charting Digital Divides' forthcoming in Dutton, W. et al (eds) *Transforming Enterprise*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press

Dutton, H. & Shepherd, A. (2003) 'Trust in the Internet: The Social Dynamics of an Experience Technology', OII Research Report No. 3 (Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford). Available at: <http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/resources/>

Liff, S., and Shepherd, A. (2004), 'An Evolving Gender Digital Divide', OII Issue Brief No. 2 (Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford). Available online at: <http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/resources>

Norris, P (2001) *The Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet Worldwide*, Cambridge: CUP

Robinson, J. (2004) 'The Social Impact of the Internet' forthcoming in Dutton, W. et al (eds) *Transforming Enterprise* Cambridge MA: MIT Press

Links to other data sources can be found at: <http://www.webuse.umd.edu/>

3. Threats to the Validity and Reliability of Online Polling (9 May)

Tutors: Corinna di Gennaro and Rebecca Eynon

The Internet provides a tool for researchers that could substantially reduce the cost of administering and fielding questionnaires. However, there are risks as well as opportunities. This seminar will look at the use of Internet surveys, discussing their strengths and weaknesses and strategies for using them in valid and effective ways. Specifically, this seminar will address: 1) Can you conduct a political poll on the Internet, given problems of self-selection and the unrepresentative nature of the Internet population of users? 2) Can weighting remedy these problems with respect to population estimates, including the marginals and relationships among variables? 3) What can be done to make online polling more representative of the target population?

Reading:

Baker, Ken, John Curtice, and Nick Sparrow. 2003. 'Internet Poll Trial: Research Report'. Available on 4 November 2003 at <http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/2002/Internet-polling-paper-jan-03.htm>

Change, LinChiat and Jon A. Krosnick. 2003. 'Comparing Oral interviewing with Self-Administered Computerized Questionnaire: An Experiment'. Available from <http://psy.ohio-state.edu/social/Krosnick.htm>

Couper, Michael. 2000. 'Web surveys: a review of issues and approaches'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64:464-494.

Erikson, Robert S. and Kent Tedin. (2000) *American Public Opinion*, US: Allyn and Bacon. Read Chapter 2 only.

Hewson, C., Yule, P., Laurent, D., and Vogel, C. (2003). Is the Internet a Viable Research Tool? In: *Internet Research Methods: a practical guide for the social and behavioral sciences*. London: Sage

Kellner, Peter. 2003. 'The Case for Online Polls: YouGov's record and methods – and what it has learned from its rivals'. Available from author upon request.

Sanders, D. Clarke, H, Stewart, M., Whiteley, P., and Twyman, J. (2002), 'The 2001 British Election Study Internet Poll: a Methodological Experiment'. Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, August 27-31, 2002.

Schonlau, M., Fricker, R., and Elliott, M. (2001). Conducting Research Surveys via E-mail and the Web. Available at, <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1480/>

4. Internet Research Tools for Network Analysis (16 May)

Tutors: Dr Alex Caldas and Professor Bill Dutton

The Internet and Web can provide unique electronic data for social research, such as log files of how users explore a Web site, and links to explore networks of relationships among users. This seminar will explore some of the methods for using the Internet as a new source of data, along with some of the issues of validity involved.

Reading:

Online social networks:

Caldas, A (2003). "Are Newsgroups extending "invisible colleges" into the digital infrastructure of science?" *EINT Economics of Innovation and New Technology*, 2003, Vol. 12(1), pp. 43 - 60

Garton, L., Haythornthwaite, C. and Wellman, B. (1999) "Studying on-line Social Networks" in Steve Jones, (Ed), *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE

Wasserman, S. and K. Faust (1994). *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*, Cambridge: CUP.

Log file analysis:

Anderson, T. & Kanuka, H (2002) *E-Research: Methods, Strategies and Issues*, US: Allyn & Bacon. Chapter 10.

Dutton, W. H., Elberse, A., and Hale, M. (1999), 'Information, Democracy and the Internet,' *Communications of the ACM*, December, pp. 48-52.

5. Content Analysis of Cyberspace: Issues of Sampling and More (23 May)

Tutors: Limor Shifman and Professor Bill Dutton

Content analysis, a systematic method for analyzing the content of messages, has been used by communication researchers for decades. The rise of the World Wide Web presents unique challenges for content analysis based research. The features characterizing the WWW - Interactivity, hyperlinked structure, rapid change and decentralization - oblige researchers to re-assess some of the basic procedures of content analysis such as sampling, coding and developing content categories. This seminar will explore some of the challenges of internet based content analysis, focusing on the case study of Internet based humor.

Reading:

General articles about web-based content analysis:

Weare, C & Lin, W.Y. (2000) Content analysis of the World Wide Web - Opportunities and challenges, *Social Science Computer Review*, 18(3), pp. 272-292.

McMillan S.J (2000) The microscope and the moving target: The challenge of applying content analysis to the World Wide Web, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77 (1), pp 80-98 (also in <http://web.utk.edu/~sjmcmill/Research/research.htm>).

Examples (optional reading):

Okazaki, S & Rivas, A. A. (2002) A content analysis of multinationals' Web communication strategies: Cross-cultural research framework and pre-testing, *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications And Policy*, 12 (5), pp. 380-390.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The self online: The utility of personal home pages, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 46(3), pp. 346-368.

Zinkhan, G. M., Kwak, H., Morrison M. & Peters, C.O. (2003) Web-based chatting: Consumer communication in cyberspace, *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 13 (1-2), pp. 17-27.