

Jane Vincent

GROWING UP WITH A MOBILE PHONE – EMAILING, TALKING AND TEXTING

Much of the research on the social practices of mobile communications users has concentrated on young adults, but what of the young adults of the future? This paper reports the outcome of a study of 100 children in the UK, aged from 11 to 16 years, which has explored and examined how they used mobile phones and other information computing technologies in their daily lives. Children kept a diary for a day recording their use of ICT and mobile phones in particular. Some of the respondents were interviewed and other groups of children were also asked to talk about ICT in their day-to-day lives.

The paper explores the differences and similarities in ICT usage identified in the study by looking at the children in three age groups, 11-12, 13-14 and 15-16 and by gender. The study was intended as a pilot for a larger scale survey of this age group and as such it raises many more questions than it offers answers for. For example issues surrounding the strategies that the children develop to maintain connectivity on minimal budgets whilst at the same time being highly dependent on their mobile phones are of particular interest. It was also noted that the majority of the respondents used their mobiles primarily for functional purposes and using them for chat and fun, as well as for image and video, was less common.

The paper concludes with some reflections on the emerging social practices identified in the study amongst this group of ‘teenies’ and how they might be further examined in the future.

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Biography

Jane Vincent joined the Digital World Research Centre as a Research Fellow in 2002 after working with them since 1998 managing BT Cellnet's research interests. Jane studied Social Sciences at the University of Leicester and moved into an academia after over 20 years with BTplc and mmO2. Her interests now are in the user behaviours associated with mobile communications, in particular, emotion and mobile phones, on which she has published various conference papers and book chapters. She has presented at academic and industry conferences and is currently delivering a study on young people's use of mobile phones whilst study for her PhD with the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey.