

Summer 2015 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.”

Early experiences

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.

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?

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?

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

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Remember *not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply*. It is best to use initials instead of real names.

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?

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.

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?

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

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

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

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

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

Memory and imagination

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

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

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

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.

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?

Part 2: Dear 16 year old me

Write a letter to yourself at 16 and share any words of guidance, comfort and advice to your younger self.

Please start by telling us a little about you at 16.

What were your hopes and dreams? Has your life turned out how you expected it to? Do you still share the same ideals with your 16 year old self? If not, are there any that you wish you had retained?

Is there anything you would warn 16 year old you to avoid doing? Or is there anything you regret not doing?

Are there any decisions, choices or actions that you'd like to change? Or any moments that you'd like to encourage you in the past to savour? What have been the key moments in your life so far?

Please start the second part of the Directive on a new page with your MO number, sex, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

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Please post your response to: **Freepost: RTGU-AYJE-YSSC, The Mass Observation Archive, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, BN1 9BP** or by email to: moa@sussex.ac.uk

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