Links in the Chain

A Newsletter of the Digital Natives with a Cause? Project

March 1st, 2011 Vol. 3 **Issue #1**

[UPDATE]

We now have a Digital Natives Google groups id. You are invited to join & email the community through:
digitalnatives@googlegroups.com

IFAR's Professional Development Program in 2011 will consist of the annual IFAR Small Grants Program, including the Ravi Tadvalkar Memorial Scholarship, and the Wilfried Thalwitz Scholarship.
http://bit.ly/eJGbgm

The Center for the Study of Global Change at the Indiana University has issued a call for applications for scholars pursuing research in global studies to apply for participation as Fellows in the Framing the Global working group.
http://bit.ly/g4hiUI

The Mosaic International Summit 2011 is inviting applications from individuals between the age 15 and 35 years in select countries offers young leaders the opportunity to take part in an exciting leadership development programme.
http://bit.ly/ifSYgG

Posted by:
Kara Andrade

Hey Everyone!

Welcome to volume number three issue one of "Links in the Chain". This issue and the next will have as a common theme some questions of identity and its relation with digital technologies. We have reached a point in our technological trajectory where the analogy of the "tool" falls short of describing our relationship with digital technologies. In our workshops the idea that digital technologies are tools for achieving social goals was presented as a way to change the emphasis from the technology to the people. "technology Is like a knife" I heard someone say at the Africa workshop, "You can use it to cut and prepare vegetables or you can use it to kill someone".

I think we must look for a different analogy which still maintains the inherent ethical non-determinism of "the tool" yet allows us to represent the transformative power of technologies. Maybe an Amulet or Talisman? An object which gives us unheard of powers as soon as we come in contact with them: Bruce Wayne becomes Batman when he puts on his trusty gadget belt (notice he does not have any super powers) and yet he is a super hero; A teenager in rural Africa becomes a digital activism (almost a super hero these days) when she grabs her phone and simply records. This is an idea that Carmelita touches on in this issue. Carmelita, a professor of film and cinema from Buenos Aires, Argentina, conveys that the reality behind the lens is not the same without it: we change our identity when exposed.

The interesting aspect of using historical perspectives is that it allows one to generalize the other way, into the future. Sibley Verbeck, facilitator at the Taipei workshop, shares his views on the kinds of issues we will face in the coming twenty to forty years in terms of identity and technology. As much fun as it is to venture into the vast darkness of the potential unrealized, it is important to be grounded in current realities. The DN in focus section in this issue talks with Evelyn Namara, native of Uganda who shares about herself and about the technology-identity relationship in the modern-day East-African country. Lastly, Fernanda Tuso's existential comic involving the angst of Nessy the Loch Ness Monster caused by identity loss due to "info-xication" would make Kafka proud.

I hope you enjoy reading!

Samuel Tettner

Happy Birthday
Mauricio Fino Garzon

Buzz
Around Town

Brendon O Brien Looks into the possibility of "too much digital campaign" in his piece, ***When The Digital Campaign Is Too Much...***
http://digitalnatives.in/brendonobrien/blogs/when-digital-campaign-too-much

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Read **Paola's** South America Nations and imaginary frontiers?
http://digitalnatives.in/paola/blogs/south-america-nations-and-imaginary-frontiers

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The English dictionary is ever growing, we see words added each year. **FernandaTusa** wonders if *Digital Natives* is becoming a verb!
http://bit.ly/ie6ah4

Something To Learn From Commercials, by **Brendon O Brien**
http://bit.ly/gRqpxG

Comment: *Do we have different identities online?*

By Maria Carmelita Lapadula Argentina

The digital revolution possesses an interesting question when talking about new technologies: ***are we the same people behind a camera, a blog or Facebook page than in real life?***

With the use of Digital content, we have the possibility of a collective signature, of edition, of working and handling all the pieces of truth we have in our hands to create new contents. Thanks to the development of ICTs we have now, in addition, a tremendous increase in the access to such tools: virgin, unaltered material at almost no cost, amateur editing software, and worldwide diffusion from our own houses.

The challenge then is to create the kind of consciousness that is necessary to understand and study all the possible ways there are to create sensible, honest and meaningful film productions: How do we do this? How do we work with teenagers in this field? we also have to consider also grey area: a low-middle class where maybe 10% of the students of a high school class have access to internet in their houses, but almost everyone has a digital camera, or a mobile phone that has one on it. How do we empower them so they can find their way in expressing themselves through the technologies they have their disposal, in this case, a digital camera?

Since Russian filmmaker, Dziga Vertov, started the Kino-Pravda (film-truth) series, in the early 1920's, it became evident that cinematographic reality was different from reality. He registered everyday life fragments, with no staging, no actors (his characters weren't even aware that they were being filmed). That practice could have been interpreted as the pure truth, but Vertov in his essays explained how those fragments of film organized together acquired a complete new meaning. The essential: using the camera as a filmic eye, more perfect than the human eye to explore chaos of the visual phenomenon that fills the universe. (Dziga Vertov)

Digital Native in Focus: Evelyn Namara

Interview by Samuel Tettner

1. What is your current project all about?

My current project is an exciting one. It is an innovative social enterprise that basically empowers women through economic opportunity.

Using a market based solution to eradicate energy poverty throughout my country Uganda and then we'll focus on Africa as a continent.

This project empowers women in rural areas of Uganda to come up with innovative ways of helping themselves get out of poverty by starting micro businesses using solar lamps to lift them out of extreme poverty.

With an Avon style distribution program for solar lamps, Solar sister [which is my current project] combines the breakthrough potential micro solar lighting with a deliberately woman-centred direct sales network.

Women become their own bosses and earn independent income as 'Solar Sister Enterprenuers'.

2. How is flesh Evelyn different from digital Evelyn?

Flesh Evelyn is more grounded and I think laid back in her approach to decisions. In terms of getting things done and expressing those views, Flesh Evelyn surprisingly may not do so well.

Many issues may come into play here, for instance with my current project, flesh Evelyn would be challenged with meeting with the women in rural areas and speaking the language they understand and try and connect with them and pitch the Solar Sister project to them in a way they can understand.

Challenges met, here I can not fully express myself, or bring out the points the way I ought to, maybe because of language barriers, environment, etc

Evelyn Namara is a Program Coordinator at Solar Sister in Uganda. She is enthusiastic about Technology and loves ICTs for development; she's a FOSS advocate/trainer; blogger and lover of nature! You can read more about Evelyn from her blog at http://enamara.blogspot.com or on Twitter (@enamara)

Digital Evelyn is more assertive, more passionate and would stop at nothing to get the message out there heard. If am doing digital activism, or digital marketing, etc I express myself more because then I have backup, I can use links to pages that can give more information, I can reliably and fearlessly get things done easily.

3. How do you think young people in Uganda are transforming their social identities through the use of Facebook, twitter and so on?

Young people in Uganda are rising up above all odds. A few years back facebook, was unheard of. Twitter was just a mystery, not many used these platforms to make their voices heard. Today we see a transformation of Ugandan youths. They are more aware of the changing generation worldwide and are embracing the change.

I will specifically focus on the last concluded Presidential Elections in the country. I saw a rise in the new generation of Ugandans that is now able to express their views through social media.

I took a tweep census sometime back of the number of twitter users we have in Uganda, and the first week, we had about 20-30 people signing up, today the list is growing and I see many young people embracing the change.

With the current uprising events in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, etc Ugandans learned that Social media can be used in many ways, and as Uganda went to the polls, I saw many Ugandans joining twitter, and constantly updating on current issues as they happened using the hashtag #ugandavotes, and that is just one part of the story.

Facebook was embraced more way back, and we see many Ugandans also using channels like youtube to put up videos for instance the president's rap 'Another rap' that went viral locally.

All in all to answer your question, the youth in Uganda are slowly but surely realising the importance of Social media and how it can be used positively to influence decisions, to start movements and to build businesses to mention but a few.

Am only excited about what will become of this great nation 5 years from now when we have to possibly elect a new Head of state.

4. What's something the online world will never know about flesh Evelyn?

Well that means now they will get to know if I tell you the answer :) Well that one thing is that the flesh Evelyn may not be as outgoing as the Digital Evelyn may seem! The flesh Evelyn is more of an introvert.. yet the digital Evelyn screams the opposite.

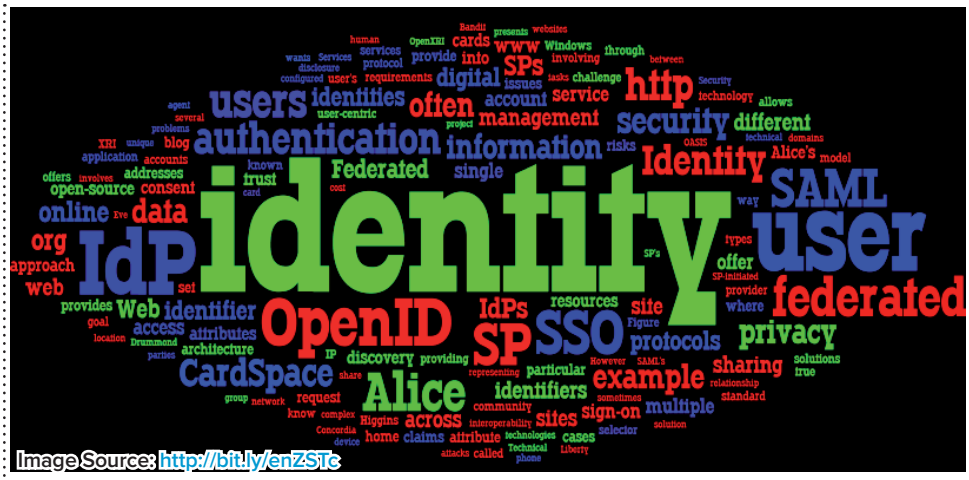
NEXT ISSUE: March 15, 2011

Deadline for contributions: Sunday March 13, 2011

Please send your contributions to: ajuonline@gmail.com

The Singularity & Digital Identity

By Sibley Verbeck



I was heartened to see Samuel's mention of the "singularity" in his opening article in the last issue of this newsletter. The whole digital natives project of which we are a part has been undertaken to help individuals and organizations working to improve our world better understand a part of the present - a part of what's going on today in the world digitally. That's hard enough to understand accurately and well. Harder still - and unfortunately very rarely even attempted - is the task of knowing what the future will be like and designing our efforts accordingly. But I firmly believe that we could all be much more successful if we look carefully into the future and work toward altering it as much as we do changing the current state of the world.

It may seem hopeless - how can we know that much about the future in such a rapidly changing world? But when it comes to technology in particular, there is now for the first time some very rigorously created and studied predictions about the details of the future.

It can be hard to convince people of that - people have what I call the "flying car reaction" when I tell them about now well-studied conclusions about our technological future. Sure, we can dream of those advances, but we still don't have flying cars that we've been hearing about for 100 years now (see the drawings from a century ago that Samuel posted recently on Facebook)!

But far from the dreams of science fiction or even individual inventors or scientists, today's technology predictions are based on an acute understanding of what fundamental capabilities we've been increasing at an exponential rate for many years now. It just sounds like science fiction when you realize what an exponential curve really looks like - for example that we're now doubling the entire amount of information created by humanity in all of history faster than every six months. I.e. in the next 6 months more information will be created by humans than has ever been to date. And that rate of doubling keeps increasing.

This fact that many metrics - not just total information, but computational power of computers, data storage capacity, medical scanning precision, DNA sequencing speeds, and so on - reveals an astonishing future when you examine it. Many of us can notice now that our phones today are far more powerful and more useful than the desktop computers of 20 years from now. The next 20 years will provide a much larger jump than that - by that point we'll have far more powerful and useful computers in our sunglasses than we can put on our desktops today.

What this means to digital identity is radical. We will not be taking the next 10 years to slowly work out the digital identity issues of today, e.g. management and privacy of the text, images, and video that we and others upload about us to Facebook and other sites. Rather, imagine how those issues will manifest when - within the next 20 years - we can be effortlessly wearing an object (such as glasses) that will record every sight and sound that we encounter in our lives and store that on the cloud. More importantly, that data stream will be automatically analyzed to create much more useful information - where we've been, who we've encountered, what we saw and were told, all accessible in response to indirect and complex human-language questions. And much of that analysis will happen in real-time for augmented reality - e.g. through an interface of simply thinking and blinking, we will be able to access all metadata of interest about every person and object we're seeing as we're seeing them. What do you want every person walking down the street to know about you when they see you for the first time? Or will this even be your decision?

In other words, the amount of data about ourselves and the accessibility of that data will make what we have today seem less than miniscule. On the one hand, there will be so much social and professional value to making significant amounts of that information available to others that few in society will choose not to do so (we're starting to see that online already). But on the other, there will be so much information created so quickly that it will not be possible to carefully determine exactly what we want shared with different people or systems.

From there, one has to start guessing as to how people, societies, and businesses will react to such technological capabilities. Surely we will have a much more fine-tuned ability to control our lives & thoughts with different specific people and groups of people. But when that management becomes burdensome, most people generally choose the lazy route and become more open. I think we'll see both increasing openness as well as automated tools that help us adjudicate who can access what parts of our lives - but I don't think we'll see laws or top-down efforts to combat or organize these issues remotely keep up with the explosive rate this will come about.

There's so much more to say and delve into, but I hope that this gives you an interest in learning about the technological future and debating how we'll deal with it. The further one looks the more astonishing the future of our own lifetime gets - the singularity Samuel mentioned is the point at which technology is intelligent and creative enough to invent itself without our help. I recommend looking into Ray Kurzweil's research if you're enterested to learn more. By that point - by most detailed estimates perhaps only 35 years from now - the very nature of what it means to be human will be redefined. Computers will be able to do everything that people can, but likely most people and computers will not be separate entities. We think we're getting tied to our devices now, but truly they will connect to our brains, as experimental devices have already done.

But in case that's all a bit too much, take a look at this - the wait may finally be ending for those flying cars:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/01/flying-car-on-sale-2011_n_633213.html

Who I ? dm
PUM !
flicker
YouTube
facebook
twitter
Loch Ness Monster,
"You have one identity. The days of you having a different image for your work friends or co-workers and for the other people you know are probably coming to an end pretty quickly ... Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity."
(Mark Zuckerberg)

Who I am?

This comic is about the Loch Ness monster's new life. In the technological revolution's context, Nessy left his lagoon and takes on a life immersed in digital culture.

One day, while Nessy is cooking, at the same time is talking on

a cellular phone (one of the characteristics of digital natives is the simultaneous use of the five senses.)

As consequence, Nessy suffers a kitchen incident where everything has flown out, specially the kitchen mirror. In one scene, Nessy is standing with a few pieces of broken glass all over his body. Also, he has one of these crystals in is hand.

A little curious, Nessy sees his reflection: the image is not the digital Nessy or the communicator Nessy. The mirror show him a simple "Loch Ness Monster" caught in the body of a cell phone.

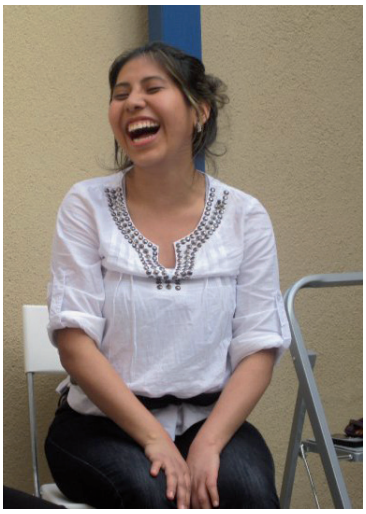
At the end Nessy understands: **"be not another, if you can be yourself"** (Paracelsus.)

To conclude, we show a quote of the creator of facebook

who says: **"you have one identity."** For Zuckerberg, the right use of social networks should teach us to keep our personal values without falling into a lack of integrity.

The remaining question is answer: **Who I am?**

As a subject with values, attitude and history, you don't have to lose yourself in a **"info-xicated"** world (digital universe has too much "information" but at the same time too much "intoxication")



Fernanda Tusa