Of Special Interest

Photo Project
A photo project to map the digital native identity is being undertaken (See page 5)

Sub-groups
Topic-based discussions and sub-groups are self-organizing! The first one to pop is the Gender and technology cluster (see word around town)

Matrix part deux
The Talking back community, in an effort to experience the "matrix exercise" of the Johannesburg workshop, will be engaging with various media to express: discovery in the past month, a dream for the future, a design to achieve it and their perceived destiny. The deadline of submission is Thursday the 20th of Jan

Word *Around Town*

For those familiar with the Harry potter series, you might remember the time-turner, a device used by Hermione which allowed her to travel through time and thus attend all her lectures at Hogwarts. Harry, who did not know of the device, had the perception that Hermione was everywhere, at the same time! The logical conclusion of being present in the Facebook group is that Nilofar (a Muggle herself) has someone obtained a time-tuner of her own, because for the last two weeks she has been all over the place!

Chance favours the connected mind

To mark the 10th anniversary of Wikipedia we decided on "connections" as the theme for the 2nd volume (containing three issues) of **Links in the Chain**. Connections are one of the defining features of a wiki website, as the interlinked nature of pages or entries allow for easy navigation and accessibility to networks of information from any point of entry.

Connections are also a defining feature of the "Digital Natives with a Cause?" research project. There is the author–-reader connection that I am making with you right now, so often seen in the website that our servers were down on January 4th because we exceeded our upload limit. There is also the deeper albeit short-lived connection made by participants at the workshops.

Part of the objective of this project is to create the spaces, both online and offline, and platforms for those of you, who under other circumstance would not be able to communicate, to establish a common dialogue – to make a connection.

With the third and last workshop of the project being two weeks away, a whole new batch of connections awaits you.

There will be 20 new docks in which to anchor your own boat of experiences, and start the haul of goodies. You see, in the vast ocean through which we sail our own personal odysseys, the important moments are those of cargo exchanges, of serendipitous meeting in the middle of the ocean, or those orchestrated by the topography of life. Digital Natives is a bay - A bay where you all have anchored at least a part of your boat for the last couple of months. In two weeks, 20 new boats shall arrive from the Caribbean Sea.
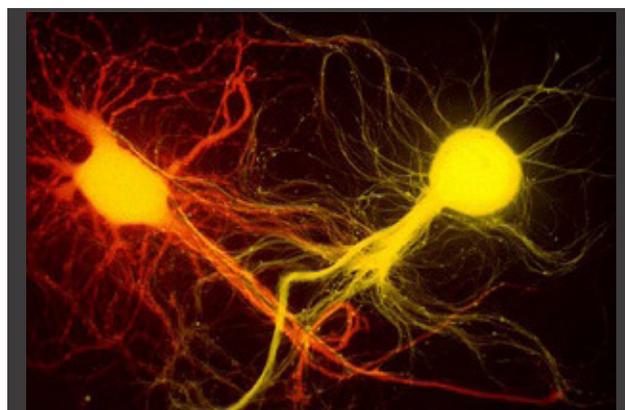
this is your brain on connections

Word on the deck is that they bring cocoa beans and rum, and they move to the beat of Salsa and Merengue...

As the first edition of **Links in the Chain** in 2011, I encourage you all to reflect on the connections you are blessed to possess and the new ones that can arise in this coming year. Volume II issue I features Nonku, who talks about the serendipitous nature of the friends-of-a friend structure while on a trip in the old continent. Noopur introduces an innovative photo project, aimed at representingthe digital (alter)native identity through its connections to gadgets. Lastly, Links in the Chain reaches out and connects with the greater community: Elonnai Hickok, researcher at CIS, writes a enlightening piece on the privacy of Facebook connections.

Best wishes in 2011

Samuel Tettner

Connected

By **Nonkululelo Godana**

The story begins with a relentless French-speaking guy who understands no English and an adventurous South African English-proficient girl who understands no French.

I met Eric at Rotterdam train station. I was coming from The Hague, Netherlands on a spontaneous trip to Paris. He was headed home to Paris after working on a project in Rotterdam. I sat next to him, a friendly – looking guy with an attractive, high-tech video camera gadget. I started asking him about the gadget and hit a hard brickwall – he spoke ONLY French and Portuguese. From the sign language, illustrations and thin French learnt from Moulin Rouge and a brief romance with a French Canadian 10 years ago; I picked up that he lived in Paris with his mother (French-speaking from Angola) and sister. His father is Portuguese-speaking and lived in Brazil. For the first time in my life, I felt foreign and frustrated. Each attempt to have a conversation with him produced one penny drop in an ocean of blank stares and 'non comprende' (which I later find out is Spanish). He understands that I don't understand though. Shrug. We sit comfortably in silence and perhaps just a smile every now and then, when I catch him staring.

We happen to be seated next to each other on the hi-speed Thalys train; have coffee together, watch a Japanese martial arts film (with English sub-titles) and eventually listen to some Senegalese music on my iPod. He remembers that he saw Lucky Dube (a South African legendary reggae musician) performing in Angola and somehow I pick this up when he tells me enthusiastically. Unfortunately the internet is down on the train so I couldn't get on Google Translate to attempt a two-way conversation.

When we get to Gare du Nord station in Paris, he leaps into super Samaritan mode; determined to help me get to the hotel address written in my notepad. He navigated with ease in the strictly French-speaking terrain. I had an internal battle with my South African survival instinct which already questioned the safety of this scenario – how do I know he's not 'taking me for a ride', what does he get out of all this and how is it possible for someone (in a world where the universal languages are love, money and English) to not know basic English. I fine-tuned my instinctual powers and let him guide me.

He got us to the street where the address says the hotel was located but we couldn't find it (I later found out we were looking on the wrong side of the road!). So much for instinct powers. What I did find was free Wi-fi (yay!) at a McDonalds down the road. I Google mapped the hotel and found it. I also went into Facebook to find that a South African friend based in London had connected me with a friend of hers based in Paris. The friend and I started chatting; she offered me a place to stay and directed me where she was.

When I looked up with excitement (Google Translate tab open); my travel companion had disappeared. I said a whispered merci beaucoup to the cold night and hoped that the message would reach my kind stranger.

"Together as we began the think of the idea that people are connected in vast social networks, we realised that social influence does not end with the people we know. If we affect our friends, and they affect their friends, then our actions can potentially affect people we have never met... Beyond our own social horizons, friends of friends of friends can start chain reactions that eventually reach us, like waves from distant lands that wash up our shores... As part of a social network, we transcend ourselves for good or ill, end up becoming a part of something much larger. We are connected."

From 'Connected: The Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Us by scientists, Nicholas A Christakis and James H Fowler (2009).

Word
Around Town

The dark lord has managed to confuse the minds of the Wikipedia contributors, who have come up with a terrible entry for "digital native". Nishant has shown his Dumbledore-esque side and has issued an open call to all the internet-Wizards and witches to join in a battle against the evils of misconception, miss-representation and just plain horrible grammar.

Paidamoyo has been very active organizing a sub-group discussion around issues of gender and technology. The first edition took place on Friday the 14th. According to Paida, the results of the first run were positive, yet more people ought to join the dialogue.

The "gender and technology" room is not the only room that is open at the "Cyber dialogue café": a file with 5 other possible sub-group topics for the other rooms has been shared by Samuel and can be found here:
http://tinyurl.com/5s65839.
The café has a free chai lattes special for a limited time for group leaders...

There's no "place" like home profile account

By **Elonnai Hickok**

Facebook has always been a place for making connections. Connection with old friends, new friends, or just strangers. The new Facebook setting "places" brings the nature of connections that one is able to make to a whole new level. "Places" is a recent layer to Facebook's applications, as a Facebook user you can now identify where you are through your mobile device, and you have the ability to add others to your location. In his blog, Michael "Zimmer.org", Zimmer describes the technicalities of how to use the "places" application, and he demonstrates how difficult it is to opt out of the setting with the example of checking his wife into a place, even though she never agreed to the application. In a nutshell "places" is meant to be an opt-in service that must be installed on your mobile phone. Once it is installed on your mobile you can "check in" the place that you are at. You can also check a friend in with you at that location, even if they have not signed up for the application (what Zimmer did with his wife). The fact that you checked a person into a location will not appear on their news feed, but it will appear on yours. To opt out of "places" application after you have been "checked in" one must navigate the (confusing) privacy settings that Facebook has in place, and click the box that does not permit your name to be checked into a place. Though the "places" application might seem ambivalent to the everyday Facebook user, it adds a new dimension to the concept of a digital identity and privacy that should be explored.

In the digital world one is interacting with devices, digital resources, and policies. Through engaging and navigating these elements one creates a digital identity that has many layers. The base layer of our digital identity is as a consumer. Though many of us do not think of it, when we surf facebook and other pages, we take on the role of an internet browser, and in the eyes of ISP's and web pages we are consumers who have entered into a market based relationship between us and them. From this base layer people begin to shape and form their own digital identity and generate information about themselves according to what websites they visit, what products they buy, and what information they share or create on the internet.

Under the conditions that in the digital we are no longer defined by our surroundings or identified by our location, the implications of suddenly being able to be identified by your location on Facebook, or be identified by others by your location on FB, are many. The nature of Facebook has actually already changed the traditional idea of a digital identity, because information on Facebook transcends the digital and merges with the actual. Once you have joined Facebook you are forced to reproduce your body in a digital space. By being able to upload photographs, fill in information about oneself, and post comments or updates on your status a complex relationship is formed between ones digital identity and ones actual identity. Thus, Facebook becomes a space of liminality between ones actual identity and ones digital identity – a place that is neither here nor there. An individual is not forced to adhere to their actual identity when engaging in FB, but who they are perceived to be is built around their photos, comments, network of friends, network of groups etc. Facebook merges the digital with the actual because the facts about who a person is, is not contained only to Facebook. Today, Facebook is seen as a legitimate source of information. Employers, universities, spouses browse Facebook to see what another person is doing, what their interests are etc. Thus, actions on Facebook have real world implications and consequences. In this way Facebook has created friction between the public and the private. Typically Facebook and other technical social/identity systems gain the trust of users by revealing only as much information as the user consents to. Because information on Facebook can be applied to the material world, it is important to people that their information is protected and only shared with those whom they want to see it. Facebook has constantly struggled with privacy and being able to protect a users information. Zimmers wifes' experience with "places" creates another layer to the already existing privacy friction. If a person cannot control where they are being checked into by friends, they are unable to control their information, and their privacy is violated. Imbedded in this invasion of privacy is the fact that someone else is creating an element of their identity. Zimmer posted his wife as being at the liquor store. This was a fabricated fact, but to a person browsing Facebook it is logical for them to accept it as truth, and then make a judgment off of that assumption. By adding location to our digital identity, Facebook is further blurring the lines between the actual and the digital, and further complicating digital identity and digital privacy.

Wired appendages

By **Noopur Lilly**
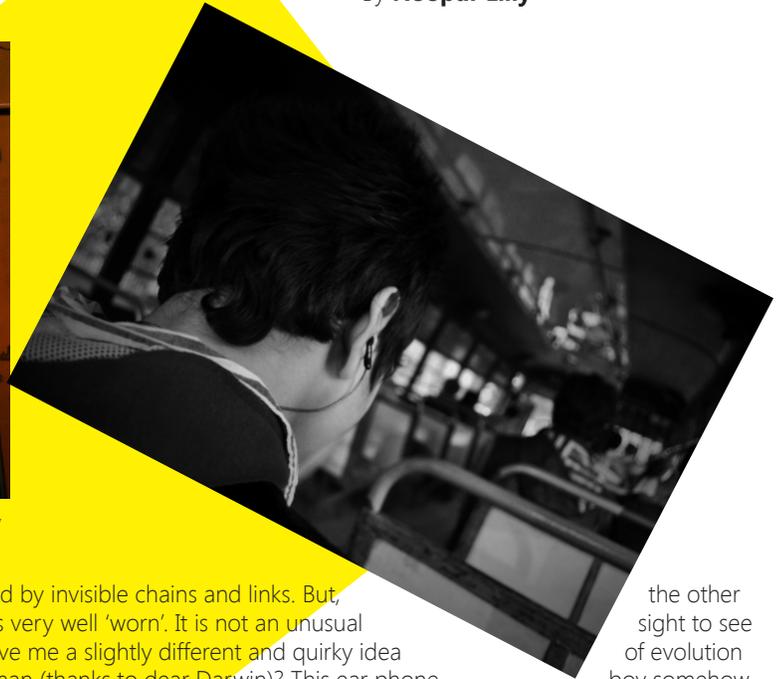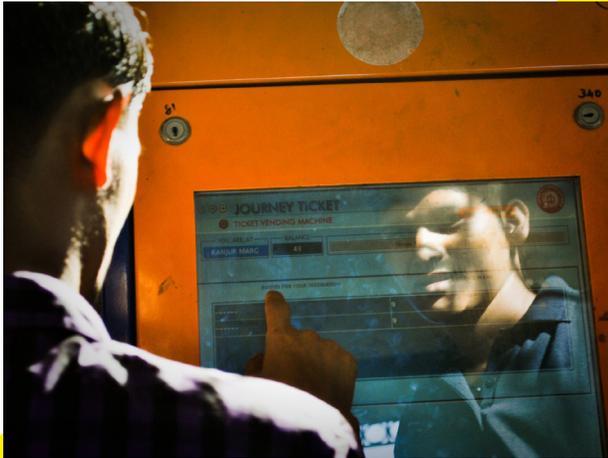
Photos courtesy of Noopur Lilly

We keep talking about how digital natives are connected by invisible chains and links. But, the other day, in the busy, I noticed this boy climbing in with his ear phones very well 'worn'. It is not an unusual sight to see more and more gadgets become accessories, only to say that gave me a slightly different and quirky idea of evolution itself. Remember that famous diagram where monkey becomes man (thanks to dear Darwin)? This ear phone boy somehow seemed like the next illustration in that series. Interestingly, the way we engage with digital spaces makes us tweak our physical routine habits, the things-to-carry-when-i-leave-home. This is just the most common example of the new age appendage, a sort of extended body as we make the digital leap. Its not entirely inconceivable to imagine mythological gods/goddesses with four arms and three legs (except that our future is increasingly becoming our present and those arms could be robotic!)

Do you have interesting pictures of digital natives and their physical connection with gadgets / electronics? send them to digitalnatives@cis-ind.org

LOL

Computer: Monitor, display this document OK?

Monitor: No problem boss.

Computer: Great, great – what's happening now?

Keyboard: Sir, he has pressed control and P at the same time.

Monitor: Oh god – here we go.

Computer: *Sighs* Printer are you there?

Printer: No.

Computer: I know you're there.

Printer: No I'm not.

Computer: Please printer, I know you're there

Printer: No I'm not! Leave me alone!

Computer: Woah! OK look, we rea…

Mouse: Sir he has clicked on the printer icon

Computer: Printer now you have to print twice

Printer: NO! NO! NO! I hate printing! Im turning off!

Computer: Printer, you know you can't turn yourself off, just print the document twice and we'll leave you alone

Printer: That's what you always say! NO! I am out of ink!

Computer: You are not out of..

Printer: I AM OUT OF INK!!!

Computer: *sighs* monitor please show a low ink level alert

Monitor: Sir, he has plenty of…

Computer: Just do it! OK!?

Monitor: Yes sir

Keyboard: Aaah! He is hitting me!

Computer: Stay calm, he'll stop soon, just stay calm.

Keyboard: He's pressing everything! I don't know what to do!

Computer: PRINTER! Are you happy now! Uh!?

Printer: That's what you all get for…hey..hey..he's trying to open me, oh no! he's tearing my cartridge off!! Aaarh!

Monitor: Sir should we do something?

Computer: Nah he did this to himself.