‘Will they come back? What makes virtual, place-based and hybrid communities successful?’

Abstract
For more than 20 years researchers have investigated what makes virtual, place-based and hybrid communities successful. While there is now a large body of literature on this topic, technology changes over the years, and so do the ways that people interact with digital devices. Furthermore, participants are increasingly diverse in all respects, including their expertise and interests. Communities that are primarily place-based often use information and communication technology; conversely, communities that are primarily virtual often have groups that are place-based. Movement in and out of communities is fluid and constantly changing. The issue of “what encourages participants to keep coming back” is therefore still of key interest, especially to community organizers and leaders. In this talk, I introduce the Reader-to-Leader Framework (Preece & Shneiderman, 2009) as a vehicle for examining enduring sociability and usability issues and for identifying new properties that have arisen during the last eight years. I draw on examples from citizen science, management and business studies.

Speaker: Professor Jennifer Preece

Jennifer Preece is Professor and Dean Emerita in the College of Information Studies – Maryland’s iSchool - at the University of Maryland, USA and a Fellow of ACM SIGCHI. Prior to moving to the USA twenty years ago, she worked at the UK Open University and she was a Research Professor at South Bank University. Jennifer’s research focuses on how technology can support citizen science and other volunteer activities. She has researched crowdsourcing, empathy and social support online, participation and reasons for not participating. She has received funding from the US National Science Foundation, UK funding agencies, the EU and various companies including Microsoft, Google and Yahoo. Currently she is the Principle Investigator of a large NSF-funded project - “Innovations in Development: Community-Driven Projects That Adapt Technology for Environmental Learning in Nature Preserves”. Jennifer is author of eight books and many other publications. She co-authored with Yvonne Rogers and Helen Sharp a best-selling text Interaction Design: Beyond Human-Computer Interaction (1st Ed. 2002; 2nd Ed. 2007; 3rd Ed. 2011; 4th Ed. 2015) www.id-book.com. She also wrote one of the first books on online communities in 2000 entitled Online Communities: Designing Usability, Supporting Sociability, published John Wiley & Sons.

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