
Activity 4-1

'Where is Community?' Thinking Through Perceptions of Community

Start a conversation with yourself about the location of communities in digital spaces. Use these questions and ideas as guides, noting your responses and thoughts:

Consider your thoughts on 'Community'

What does the presence of social media and digital technologies suggest to you about community? Think as broadly as possible.

How do you understand community according to the insights digital media enable?

Consider the idea that the Internet *adds to* relationships with friends, acquaintances, relatives and neighbours rather than *detracts from* them by removing the 'personal element'; that the Internet facilitates a move away from bounded communities of people living in close proximity toward dispersed, multiple, and diverse communities.

In terms of Council community engagement initiatives, how does the presence of digital media change your practice?

Points to Note...

The *Module 4-1 Video* explores some of the changes brought to the structure and location of communities through the arrival of digital technologies, in particular 'smart devices' like smart phones and portable tablet computers, and what that means for social research in community engagement.

The Task

This task asks you to think in more detail about the nature of communities today as they take shape through digital spaces that remain linked to physical experiences. It creates an opportunity for you to re-imagine community spaces from your encounters with communities via digital media sources. Respond to these questions by considering how you might use digital media to enhance your understandings of community.

Social Research Toolkit:

using social research in local government
community engagement

Reflections on Community

Review the list of social media sites noted in the *Social Media Resources Guide* contained in the Module 4 Resources section. Think about how you might feasibly use these sources to develop insights into the communities you work with.

Do these new sites resemble an extension to an existing community, or an 'original' site of interactions in themselves- a formation of a *digital* community?

How does linking out to Facebook or Twitter, for example, change what you might gather from interviews or a survey conducted with participants at an event?

In summary, do you think Internet communities, including social media sites, encourage multiple ways for communities to appear and be experienced- are there similarities between 'online' and 'offline' communities?
