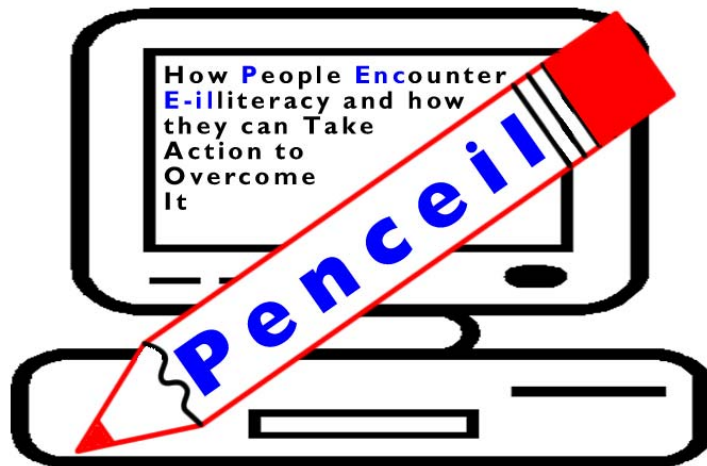


# Social exclusion and ICT (non)-use



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**Social Study of Information Technology – Open Research Forum**

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# Penceil Project

- How **P**eople **ENC**ounter **E-IL**iteracy and can action to overcome it
- Part of ESRC e-society programme, e-literacy stream.
- Action-research strand based on findings from semi-structured interviews to elicit experience of non-use.
- Based on and around a disadvantaged social housing estate in south London



# Definitions of Social Exclusion

- Isolation and alienation from economic, social, political and cultural life, including increasing isolation from even informal networks of support. (Oppenheim, 1998)
- The length of time that individuals and groups spend in poverty is identified as distinctive in understanding social exclusion especially in relation to the decrease in social resources and mutually supportive local networks. (Gregg 1998, Walker and Park 1998).
- The concept of social exclusion is broader and therefore more 'inclusive' – so that in policy and ideological terms it provides a stronger hegemonic concept. (Levitas, 1996)



# Social Exclusion

- Social exclusion rather than digital divide
- Social exclusion as problematic concept
  - From poverty to SE
  - From inequality to SE (Milbourne, 2002)
- Ample scope for misunderstanding formulations (Hills, 2002)
- From France to Europe to UK (Burchardt, 2002)
  - Via IPPR and CPAG to New Labour
- SEU in cabinet office and CASE at LSE
- Individual or social responsibility



# Incremental or structural change

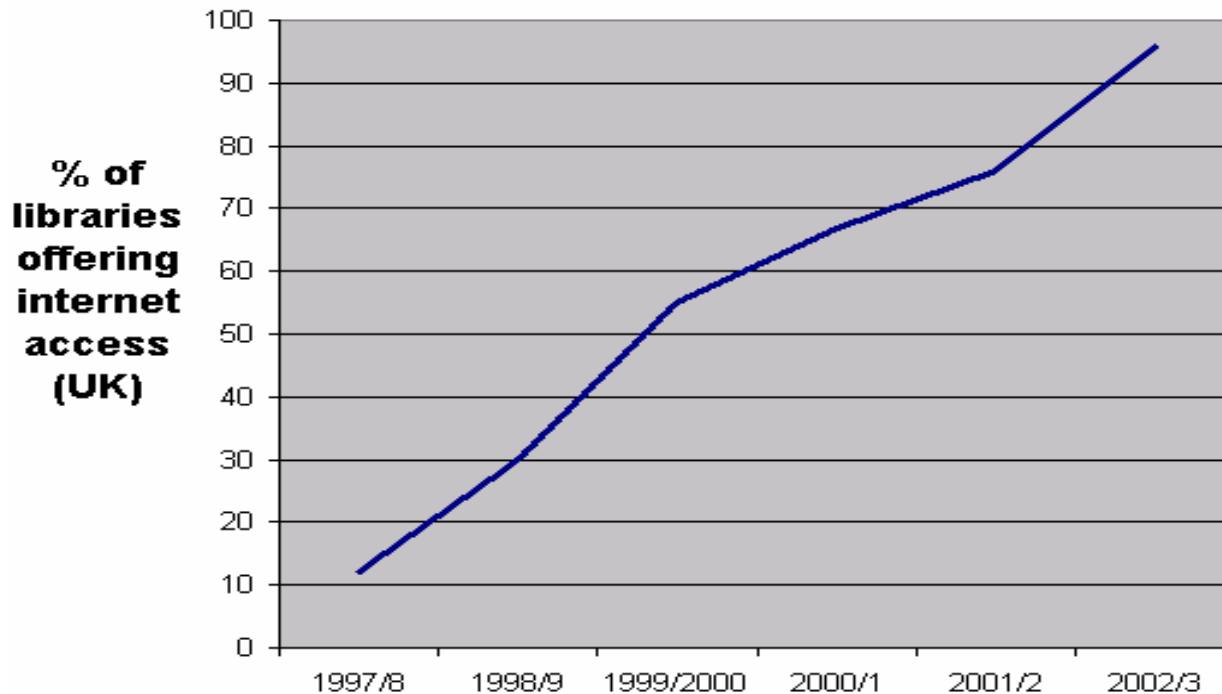
- Progress on symptoms vs progress on life experience
  - Weak and strong concepts (Viet-Wilson, 1998)
- Definition may hide root causes (Lister, 2000) and focus on specific issues
  - School exclusions
  - Homelessness
  - ...
  - Non- use of ICTs
- Policy driven by fears of ‘middle England’/’hard working families’ or by needs of the poorest?



# ICT response

## Physical access

- Libraries (all 3,000 connected by 2004)



Source: Library and information services ,  
Annual Library Statistics  
2004

- UK on-line centres in community centres (6000 +) (Ufl)
- Internet cafés



# Limitations of the ICT response

- Limitations of physical access
  - Cost of privately owned facilities
  - Privacy
  - Not belonging (Selwyn, 2003)
- Technology rather than people focussed
- Wide claims for benefits of access



# What people must bring to ICTs

- Skills and confidence
- A sense of tasks to be achieved
  - Employment
  - E-mail
  - Shopping
  - Information
- Fear or caution (Livingstone, 2004)
- Social networks





# The Government's Agenda

- Modernising government
  - All services e-enabled
  - Major back office savings
  - Easier access to services

BUT

- Using government services never surfaces in interviews
- In 2000 the Government's priority groups for joined-up e-service delivery were students, motorists, parents and homeowners (Hellawell, 2001)



# Government action plan 2 April 05

- 1) Digital Challenge prize for local authorities giving universal online access to services
- 2) Creation of a scheme to rent laptops and PCs to students under national scheme
- 3) Combat online dangers through work with hi-tech industry and police and establish national net safety centre
- 4) Expand UK Online centres that help adult learners get to grips with the web
- 5) Encourage creation of content for broadband services through government and public bodies
- 6) Make sure central government embraces ways of using net to deliver services
- 7) Ofcom to see how to encourage broadband take-up in poorer homes

(Cabinet Office, 2005)



# The costs of getting it wrong – a case study

- Payment of pensions through banks instead of post offices
- Whose lifestyle does this fit?
- Effects on the post office network
- Fee charging ATMs
- Social and personal costs to offset financial savings



# ICT and Social Exclusion

- Symptom
- Signifier or
- Cause



# Next steps

- More interviews to fill gaps
  - More interviewees with basic literacy problems
  - Mental health
  - Older people
- Action research on a new curriculum to focus on the activities people wish to undertake.
- The disciplinary effects of ICTs



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