

LESSONS LEARNED: THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY PANEL

The Teens & Technology Consortium

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In the 1990s there was a considerable discussion about the “Digital Divide”. As a consequence, a transatlantic collaboration has been coordinated and supported by the Jacobs Foundation of Switzerland, and the Russell Sage Foundation in the United States. Both of these philanthropies have programs to encourage research about social disadvantage among youth. Therefore, an International Consortium of North-American and European researchers has been installed in 1998 that was concerned with a variety of conceptual and theoretical questions: What is the Digital Divide? How do we conceptualize “disadvantage,” and how does this affect what uses of IT and kinds of programs are developed? Is there such a thing as “technological literacy” or are technological knowledge and skills in flux? In what ways can engagement with new media lessen social and educational disadvantages for young people? What kinds of pedagogical ideas inform those who teach with or about IT? Are there design principles for IT use that can be articulated?

This presentation reports about research done by members of the Teens& Technology Consortium with regard to these questions. Thereby, the focus is on sociological, psychological and educational analyses of the Digital Divide on both sides of the atlantic. Moreover, a short view for future activities of the Consortium will be given and discussed.