Digital Divide in Hong Kong: Challenges and Opportunities

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2001/4/29

Introduction: The issue of digital divide is one of the many polarities in Hong Kong that will be widening in the coming future. This digital divide takes many forms: Access, Literacy, Age, Content, Language, Interactivity, Global-Local, and Ethics.

Digital Divide Factors	Suggested Actions
1. **Access Divide:** Information technology has a characteristic that demands continually updating of both hardware and software. Presently less than half of the population in Hong Kong are *wired*. Students are benefited from the wiring of schools and social service centres. However, in the evenings and during holidays, most school premises will be closed and students' access to the Internet would be limited. Technical support in schools and social centres are also limited.	1. Provide support to schools to open their Internet services during odd hours. 2. Train and use students for simple technical supports of school facility.
2. **Literacy Divide:** Information literacy is more than writing icq, email, web-site, and word-processor. It is the intelligent manipulation of information that includes the processes of searching, evaluation, production, and expression of information.	Provide media education for students and citizens on the use of search engines, research basics, networking, creation of ideas and expressive forms.
3. **Age Divide:** Unlike the situation in the West, the young people in Hong Kong are more proficient in digital technology than the older folks. This means that our present adult workforce is facing the crisis of obsolesce in the digital era.	Employ our youngsters as short-term tutors for their neighbours and older folks for information literacy.
4. **Content Divide:** Currently the content generation for science and technology, news and economy, on the digital platform is outweighing those found for the arts and the humanities. If cultural literacy becomes a primary element in future education and workforce, we need to increase the contribution of the arts and humanities on the Web.	Provide funding for the development of digital information and literacy on the arts, humanities, culture, creativity, and critical thinking.
5. **Language Divide:** The Web is biased toward English than Chinese as content ratio. If the population in the World consists of 1/4 Chinese, we need to generate more Chinese digital contents in the Web. Conversely, most locally-produced web-sites are in Chinese, unintelligible to foreigners. This will limit the exposure of Hong Kong.	Provide incentives for Chinese content generation. Encourage cooperation across borders. Encourage bilingual web-sites.

6. Interactive Divide: Currently most information on the Web are flat and only digitizing what were already printed. There are limited use of the unique characteristics of the information media such as interactivity, dynamic information, networking, community and forum building, and participation.	Initiate awards and funding for development of outstanding education software that are entertaining and interactive.
7. Local-Global Divide: Most web-sites and information available to Hong Kong are foreign-generated. Even the most sought after web-sites are of overseas origin. Locally developed digital information is very limited, particularly after the dot.com collapse. Unequal flow of information and cultural imbalance may constitute another kind of imperialism. Hong Kong is lacking behind Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore in this area.	Initiate active and systematic way to develop local information on the digital platforms.
8. Ethics Divide: With the flooding of information on the Web and other platforms, the ethics of digital media is not widely taught. Flaming, libel, child-pornography, false-information, perversion and other misconduct on the Web are common.	The folks in Hong Kong must be educated in information and media ethics to foster a healthy and balanced digital development.

Envisioning

The citizens in Hong Kong are quite technology-adoptive. They tend to acquire media and technology faster than in other countries. However, at the present rate, Hong Kong is lacking behind in digital development compared with Scandinavian countries and the United States. Even in Asian standards, Hong Kong is particularly weak in software and content development, in media literacy and application designs. May the Legislature be instrumental in ushering Hong Kong to face the opportunities and challenges of the digital era.