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Social Networks, Communication and the Internet

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The internet has changed our lives within just a few decades: we watch TV, pay our bills and fill in our tax forms, book appointments and hotel rooms, look for recipes, communicate, form networks and share our everyday lives on the internet. It would actually be easier to list what we cannot do on the internet rather than list what we do or could do on it. For example, sociologist Christine Hine (2015) has noted that the internet is embedded in our daily lives, cultures, social interactions and economies to the extent that it should no longer be considered a curiosity. The call for papers in *Ethnologia Fennica* 2015, volume 42, asked writers to discuss how internet-related communication and social networks are studied and discussed in contemporary ethnological research.

Social networking websites and applications have become an important part of social interaction, and a space for it to take place, especially in the 2010s because such websites and applications make it possible to communicate with a large number of people. Social networks are also used in ways that their creators could not foresee when the websites and applications were first created. In her article 'Facebook, Ritual and Community – Memorializing in Social Media', Anna Haverinen discusses how commemoration and bereavement rituals are practiced on Facebook social networking sites. Just as people are nowadays used to communicating and sharing their personal events, opinions and all kinds of emotions ranging from love to hate on social media, social media is also used now for people to mourn and remember their recently departed loved ones. As researchers of social media have argued, the internet has brought death back into everyday life. In her article, Haverinen demonstrates how Facebook is used for mourning purposes. She focuses on mourning rituals and studies how they build and maintain existential or spontaneous communitas at a time of loss.

She also discusses how the use of Facebook for mourning purposes has changed both Facebook and other social media sites as well as mourning itself. At the moment, not all people consider mourning on Facebook to be appropriate or honourable, especially considering the fact that many people view sites such as Facebook as arenas for fun and play. Facebook has, however, been one of the first social media websites to acknowledge the importance of mourning by offering people the option to, for example, memorialise or delete a profile or create specific memorial groups. Haverinen points out that the aforementioned developments speak volumes about how death and mourning are being valued and expressed in contemporary society and what people consider to be socially and culturally appropriate ways to communicate grief and honour the memory of a loved one. She stresses the importance of documenting how social media is being used for mourning precisely because social media itself is changing so rapidly and leaves no trace of how the websites were previously used.

Jukka Jouhki discusses in his article 'The Grinders' both the online and offline lives of Internet poker players. In our culture, gambling is seen as a personal and social problem, even though problem gambling affects only 1–3 per cent of those who gamble, as Jouhki points out. In his article, he studies the meaning of gambling in a wider social context and asks, how do active online poker players negotiate the meaning of the game and its position in their social surroundings? He is

especially interested in how they perceive of the meanings of money and work in the context of poker because traditional conceptions of wage labour, a 'decent' profession and a regular salary are still important indicators of a person's value and status. The article demonstrates that attitudes about gambling have become more tolerant in recent years – gambling is seen as a profession and a game of skill – but poker players' identities are still influenced by traditional definitions of gambling that label it as a social problem and waste of time.

He also asks how games focusing on risk and money reflect the wider configurations of value and morals and new forms of being social.

Ann-Charlotte Palmgren and Riitta Hänninen in their articles study blogging, which has become quite popular in recent decades. There is a general perception in society that blogs and their popularity are based on the fact that they democratise media: anyone can start a blog and say what they think and feel. Blogs are also popularly viewed as spaces in which people can be themselves, free of constraints. Palmgren and Hänninen demonstrate in their articles that this is actually not the case. Palmgren studies in her article 'To Blog Oneself Free, to Lock Oneself Up' how girls who blog about eating disorders construct a space of their own, while they at the same time operate within given frameworks set by the moderators of an online community. She problematizes the blog as a free space by pointing out the fact that the moderators present several rules that, for example, state that members are not allowed to publish 'thinspiration material', including advice on how to stay thin and how to conceal eating disorders. The bloggers try to bypass these rules by using various orthographic and typographic means, for example by spelling the word 'fat' as f.a.t so that the search engines do not recognise it. Palmgren also shows that the sense of community among a blog's readers and commentators is very important. The blogs have helped create a sense of community of eating disordered girls on the one hand, i.e. the blog is a room that makes new formulations of girls' culture and new forms of communication possible, while on the other hand the community has specific anticipations and norms regarding eating disorders and how to blog about and illustrate them.

Hänninen studies questions surrounding the commercialisation and professionalization of lifestyle blogs. It has been part of core content of lifestyle blogs to write about products that the bloggers have bought and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the products. In recent years, this has been regulated and treated as a form of advertising. Hänninen points out that the regulations are often vague or difficult to enforce on social media. The main focus of lifestyle blogs is on the blogger's own persona, with her individual ideas and thoughts and even the most mundane incidents of her everyday life being a matter of public interest. From a commercial point of view, lifestyle blogs represent peer marketing because they communicate information about new up and coming products and trends to readers and thus turn them from blog readers into avid consumers. Recent legislation has provided much welcomed guidelines and clarity to the blogosphere, where the commercialisation of lifestyle blogging proceeds rapidly and lifestyle bloggers feel that they are being scrutinised and controlled in a way that does not apply to, for example, traditional women's magazines.

Hänninen's analysis shows that it is actually not the legislators who control the commercialisation of lifestyle blogs but the blog readers themselves. Bloggers are, for example, required to give a comprehensive account of the origins of the products they are writing about in their blogs. Bloggers

also find the 'policing' of their readers intrusive because it enters into their private lives, disrupting the boundaries they have themselves established for protection. Hänninen also argues that being an independent, hard-working entrepreneur is one of the core ideals of the blogosphere in Finland. Many of the established professional and semi-professional bloggers had already been blogging independently for years before any guidelines were available to constrain their authorship. They find that many of the guidelines have been established without inside knowledge and expertise on the nature of the medium, thus rendering them impractical and even intrusive; many experienced bloggers expressed the wish that they could have participated in the process of drafting the guidelines.

Blogs are an example of how an old practice of writing a diary has changed and taken on the form of interactive blogging on the internet. New digital technologies have also changed both the publishing and the reading of books. In her review article, Anna Kajander presents her ongoing PhD study in which she studies how readers have experienced the digitally-related changes affecting book culture. Especially after the launch of portable reading devices, such as Amazon Kindle in 2007 or the Apple iPad in 2010, and with the advent of wireless internet connections, the digital bookstores and library services are accessible practically anytime and anywhere. Instead of becoming an instant success among the wider reading public, the use of portable reading devices have in fact raised questions and concerns about the new reading practices. Kajander points out that this is not the first time in history that critics have argued that reading as a practice is in a state of crisis. Before the advent of digital technologies, critics had already identified comics, newspapers, television and radio as potential threats to book culture.

In reality, instead of harming book culture, digital technologies have made both books and reading-related activities as well as the printing of books more variable than ever before. Kajander argues that all of these changes call for more ethnological attention. E-books offer a research subject that offers a concrete starting point for scrutinising new digital innovations, traditional print-related objects and new habits of book culture, such as the sharing of reading experiences. One of the interesting aspects of digital book culture from an ethnological perspective is the place of traditional books in the current situation. Print books used to be the one and only possible way to share and own literary content, but now that they are not the only type of book format, new kinds of meanings have been associated with them. For example, paper books can be important artefacts in ways other than just as pieces of literature. Kajander argues that E-books and new reading practices offer an interesting research field for ethnologists because the methods and research traditions of ethnology are specialised in understanding the viewpoints of everyday life and changes in cultural processes.

The review article 'Internet Ethnography: The Past, the Present and the Future' by Anna Haverinen discusses the nature of internet ethnography, where it takes place and how it is possible to conduct ethnographic research on the Web. As she ironically points out, ethnographers have in a way returned to the armchair to do their research. They do not need to travel to distant locations anymore as the cultures and the people they study are nowadays online and are therefore as close as the nearest computer or smartphone. The study of culture has not, however, become easier: fieldwork conducted on the internet still requires that the researcher learn about the culture under study via observation, participation and interviews, by learning the local language and by taking notes and photographs. One of the issues that makes internet ethnography significantly different

from non-internet ethnographies is the fact that the online world is accessible only if an internet connection is available. Websites, applications and their contents may also disappear without warning or with only a brief notice.

The placeness of the field is an abstraction, Haverinen points out, and at the same a very important question in current ethnographic research. The placeness of ethnography has gone through significant changes since internet technologies have become increasingly more ubiquitous. George E. Marcus's (1995) idea about multi-sited fieldwork describes extremely well the field of internet research: the cultures and people under study exist both online and offline. Ethnologist Laura Hirvi, who conducted her research on Sikhs in Finland and in Northern California in both online and offline settings, has noted that her research field was constituted by 'people and their practices, material objects and social sites' (2012, 25).

PhD, docent Outi Fingerroos was appointed professor of ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä in August 2014. Fingerroos's background, her career as a researcher and her ideas about ethnology are presented in the last section of the journal. *Ethnologia Fennica* also honours the memories of Ants Viires (1918–2015), a leading figure in Estonian ethnological research, and Asko Vilkuna (1929–2014), the first professor of ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä, whose obituaries are included in the current issue.

In addition, the journal contains presentations on and evaluations of recent ethnological dissertations as well as reviews of new literature pertaining to ethnology and related fields. The journal concludes with Päivi Roivainen's review of the 12th SIEF Congress in Zagreb, Croatia, in June 2015 and Anna Rauhala's review of the 33rd Nordic Ethnology and Folklore Conference that took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, in August 2015.

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