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social investment for social impact

Charities' use of the internet

CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

A STATE OF THE ART REVIEW written for Nominet Trust by Dr Eleanor Burt and Professor John Taylor

Foreword

There are many organisations and publications that aim to support third sector organisations to use the internet in working toward their charitable objectives. These resources build upon arguments about developing sustainable business practices within a shrinking funding landscape; increasing organisational reach and demonstrating impact in imaginative and powerful ways, or improving and extending the way in which charities can communicate with donors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders - each of these arguments is well placed and there is evidence to demonstrate successful use of digital technologies to achieve these objectives.

This review places these opportunities within a wider context of how charities can begin to develop new practices that use internet-based technologies. It sets out a number of examples of successful approaches as well as exploring what it takes to start, or develop, uses of the internet that support charities in working towards their own organisational mission. Importantly, it also highlights how new charitable organisations and new relationships between charities have evolved to make the best use of the internet, in so doing, aiming to create greater social value and impact.

Dan Sutch
Head of Development Research
Nominet Trust - November 2011

About the series

Nominet Trust State of the Art Reviews are undertaken by leading academics to collate and analyse the latest research at the intersection of the internet and society. Drawing on national and international work, these reviews aim to share the latest research to inform the work of the Trust, those applying to the Trust for support and our wider partner organisations.

We value your comments and suggestions for how to act on the recommendations in these Reviews, and how we can build the series, so that it is more useful to us all as we work towards a safer, more accessible internet, used for social good.

We look forward to your comments and suggestions at:

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Contents

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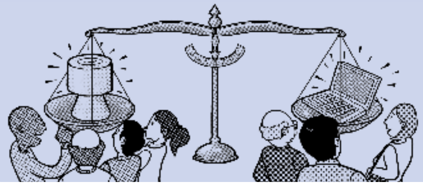
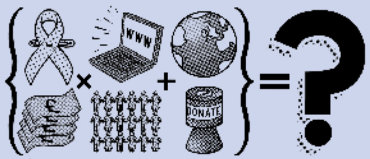
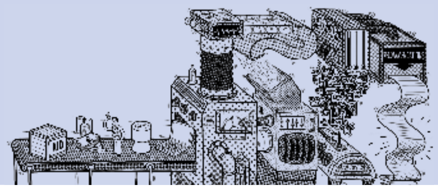
for Nominet Trust







Designed by **Ben Carruthers**

Illustrated by **Sam Bevington**

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Acknowledgements

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We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who made this research possible by generously giving of their time and insights. We are especially grateful for the cooperation and support of our case study participants and to Nominet Trust for the opportunity to undertake the Review. Thank you.

Dr. Eleanor Burt and Professor John Taylor

Executive summary

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The findings set out in this Review are based on research sponsored by Nominet Trust and independently designed and delivered by Dr Eleanor Burt and Professor John Taylor.

Overarching research questions

The Review addresses four overarching research questions:

- how are third sector organisations using internet-based technologies to support key activities?
- what organisational and management opportunities are internet-based technologies opening up for third sector organisations?
- what issues and challenges are associated with their use of internet-based technologies?
- how can third sector organisations' engagement with internet-based technologies be optimised?

Sources of information and data

The findings set out in the Review are based on:

- reviews of literature and other documentary sources;
- interviews with an 'Expert Panel' comprising third sector representatives able to provide an informed overview of charities' engagement with the internet;
- in-depth case studies of six charities regarded by the Expert Panellists as leading edge in their engagement with internet-based technologies;

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- web-based summary reviews of a further five charities regarded by the Expert Panellists as leading edge in their engagement with internet-based technologies;
- a Focus Group comprising members of the Expert Panel and case study participants.

Key findings

Findings from the Review are set out below under a series of thematic sub-headings that reflect key insights generated from the research.

Connecting the 'virtual' and the 'real': realising support relationships
We have included illustrative examples of 'virtual', modern, and 'traditional' organisations, in this Review. In different ways and to varying extents – and though not all are substantively 'virtual' organisations – See the Difference, YouthNet, (Section 2.0) Sparked, Kiva, Charity: water, and RedR UK (Section 3.0) are creatures of the internet era, innovating and offering services that support the traditional organisations that represent the great mass of the third sector. This synergistic inter-connectedness between the virtual and the 'physical' is one of the most striking outcomes of this work. Thus, whilst the great majority of organisations in this sector will continue with a business presence beyond the internet, they can be supported further by organisations such as those we have brought forward here. We take the view that this 'support economy' model (Section 1.0) will be an increasingly important aspect of the third sector, as 'traditional' organisations come to require new ways of finding agility and of presenting themselves on the internet in ways that resonate with the attitudes and expectations of modern donors and volunteers.

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The information revolution in the third sector: enhancing agility, reach, responsibility, and influence
Across all of our case study organisations, both modern and traditional, we have seen unprecedented levels of data capture and interrogation that are shaping their high level strategizing as well as their day-to-day operational decisions and performance. These organisations are 'pulling in' data from web metrics, databases, and other sources. Some

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of them – the Family Holiday Association (Section 2.0), See the Difference (Section 2.0), and YouthNet (Section 2.0) amongst them – are recognising the value of sharing their data with the aim of supporting performance improvements at the level of the individual organisations themselves or their collaborative partnerships. The RNID[A] (Section 2.0) is using a raft of performance metrics to inform its strategic positioning, and is also looking at how best to develop quality dialogue through social networking forums to better understand what hearing loss means to existing and potential users of its services, and how it can better serve their needs. This wealth of data capture is also supporting new levels of 'nimbleness', such as we have seen with BHF Retailing (Section 2.0) and St John Ambulance Lancashire (SJAL) (Section 2.0).

Trusting third sector organisations: generating a new 'value relationship'
There has been a growing sense within the third sector of the need to raise the profile of information governance, as well as addressing deficiencies in reporting regimes and transparency. Here, too, we see both the newer virtual and modern organisations – such as See the Difference (Section 2.0), Kiva (Section 3.0), and Charity: water (Section 3.0) – and traditional third sector organisations – such as RNID (Section 2.0) and CHF International (Section 3.0) – harnessing the internet to advance these inter-related aims of trust-building, transparency, and accountability. For these organisations the online environment enables new and clearer levels of transparency, and with this the potential to develop sustained trust-relationships between donors and third sector organisations. Here, therefore, is evidence of the support economy being realised, as third sector bodies seek new ways of relating to donors and other stakeholders, thereby advancing a new value proposition between them (Section 4.0).

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Changing management thinking in the third sector
Coming through forcefully amongst organisations such as See the Difference (Section 2.0), Kiva (Section 3.0), and Charity: water (Section 3.0) is a sense of an emergent re-positioning of the relationship between third sector organisations and those who donate and fundraise on their behalf, with donors no longer seen as 'owned by' a particular organisation, but more as 'clients' to be 'incentivised' and 'rewarded' for their support in the course of a shorter-term, project-specific involvement with an organisation (Sections

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Since conducting this research RNID has changed its name to Action on Hearing Loss. Their new website is www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

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1.0 and 4.0). This same 'mindshift' also applies to relationships with volunteers, as recognised by Sparked in its micro-volunteering innovation. The perception that there is benefit for organisations that are able to embrace a more 'hands-off' and less controlling approach to management in the online environment extends to matters of content and 'brand' management also. The context for this point is social networking, with numerous of our case study and vignette organisations becoming more and more concerned to get out their message on social networking sites.

We have seen new forms of 'support relationships' being embraced to deliver new and expanded opportunities for income generation

No third sector organisation is an island: new modes of networking in funding, service provision and support

In many of the organisations that we have looked at we have seen new forms of 'support relationships' (Sections 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0) being embraced to deliver new and expanded opportunities for income generation, to raise the profile and reach of organisations for volunteer recruitment and frontline service delivery. YouthNet, for example, is able to offer services to young people on a scale that would be impossible without online capability. RNID is using Google's Adwords venture to increase traffic to its website. The Family Holiday Association is developing relationships with other agencies, underpinned by its capabilities to capture and interrogate a wealth of data that would be difficult to capture without the use of online survey tools. BHF Retailing is a further example of the way that third sector organisations are expanding the reach and scope of their activities in its collaboration with Fairsharemusic, as well as in its use of eBay as an outlet for high-value stock.

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Where are the change makers in the third sector?

There was a strong perception among those with whom we spoke in the course of our research that the presence of visionary, 'net savvy' leadership was a crucial factor in enabling organisations to explore the opportunities afforded by the online environment. Indeed this perception – together with evidence that supports it – was found ubiquitously across the case study organisations (Section 2.0). In these organisations and others within our research (Section 3.0), expertise and vision has been introduced via those with high level experience from sectors that include media and retail. There was a perception, too, that the 'top team' needs to be comfortable in loosening control, an element of which is allowing staff to experiment in pushing the boundaries of online engagement (Section 4.0).

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Information assurance: the elephant in the room

Information assurance, including data security, was a largely unspoken area throughout the research; 'the elephant in the room'. A view that came very strongly from both our expert group and our Focus Group is that insufficient attention is paid to these assurance issues. We have seen an emerging and growing embrace of 'cloud' computing on the part of third sector organisations. We are seeing new collaborative arrangements that will involve data sharing, including sharing of data of a personal nature. Against this backcloth, our experts laid great stress on the concern that the majority of third sector organisations may be sitting on the cusp of 'the perfect storm' in respect of data security. Thus, various elements that include the intensity of data being captured, the extent to which it is of a 'personal' nature, the ways in which it is being moved and stored, and the extent to which it is shared across organisational boundaries are coming together in ways that make it increasingly vulnerable.

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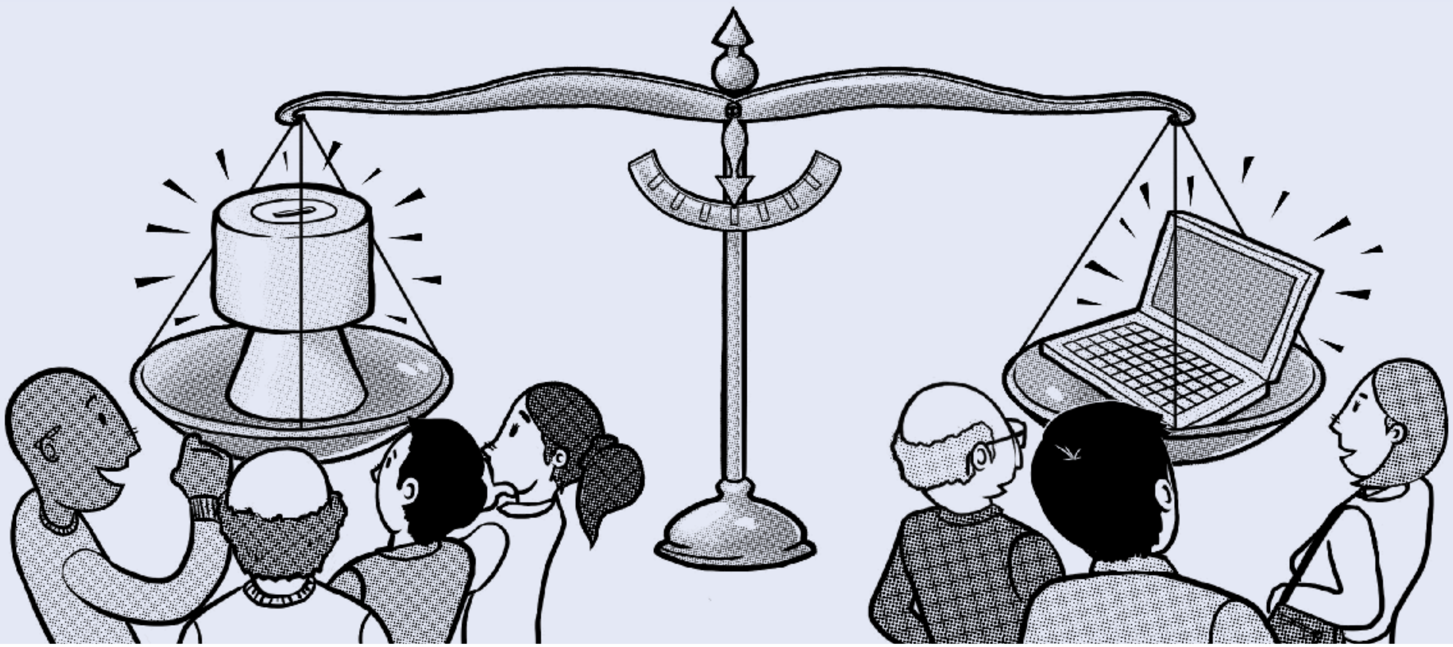
The third sector and the online environment: an overview

This section sets out the context in which third sector organisations are using the internet and highlights the issues facing them in adopting and developing new uses of digital technology.



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The aim in this section of our Review of third sector use of the internet is twofold. First we set out a brief discussion of the context of ideas, so as to help interpret and explain the impulsion to change that we have seen within the third sector as we have conducted this work. Secondly, we include a discussion of the issues facing the third sector in particular in this context, and especially the thoughts of the Expert Panel that we assembled at the commencement of this work. Thus this first section of this Review is written as an explanatory prelude to the empirical sections that follow. In the first of those later sections we set out a series of six full case studies, each of which helps us to illustrate key features of change being undertaken by these organisations. We augment these full case studies by including a series of 'vignettes' or shorter studies of other organisations, so as to offer a more complete set of data from which to draw conclusions. Our empirical case work has been supplemented both by the initial Expert Panel and by a Focus Group meeting that took place after the main data gathering phases of the work, whilst at the same time adding to that empirical work.

Our empirical approach to this work is set out more completely in Annex 2.0.

We offer our conclusions and recommendations in the subsequent parts of this Review.

The background context: waves of change

One way of characterising the broad environment within which organisations from private, public and third sectors operate is through the lenses of Schumpeterian and long wave economic theorising, notably that of the early 20th century Russian economist Nikolai Kondratiev[1]. Drawing on Kondratiev, Schumpeter referred to waves of technological change as 'gales of creative destruction', with profound implications, therefore, for all aspects of society upon which these gales blew, whether business, bureaucracy, charity or individual. From this broad perspective on 'techno-economic paradigms' we see, from the late 1980s onwards, what have been termed the second and third '**information** Kondratievs'. First, from the late 1980s through to c. 2005, we witnessed the 'digital revolution' as computers and telecommunications converged to

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enable new flows of information around new electronic networks, driving unprecedented scale and transaction cost economies, as well as the emergence of the first generation World Wide Web and mobile telecommunications. From c. 2005 to the present time we are seeing a paradigmatic shift in the World Wide Web – from search and fetch information provision and early e-commerce to massive expansion in social networking, or Web 2.0 – in addition to further growth in its commercialisation, together with massive expansion in mobile to internet communications. As these waves of change have occurred, so have expectations amongst organisations and consumers about the availability of information to support strategic development and consumer activity. As these expectations have occurred, so governments have sought both to provide more of their own services electronically, including online, and to commit to supporting privatised 'telcos' in the provision of high bandwidth telecommunications provision. And, as search engines and social network providers have increasingly found ways of 'monetising' their services, so we have seen new and inventive ways of turning information provision in the form of 'web metrics' and 'trend data' into business opportunities being grasped by organisations to enhance their services.

As these waves of change have occurred, so have expectations amongst organisations and consumers about the availability of information to support strategic development and consumer activity

Given this backdrop in this period of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, it is not surprising that, in the business sector especially, we have witnessed the realisation of unprecedented scale and scope economies as well as massively enhanced speed of connectivity in increasingly complex forms of electronic networks[2]. However, we should note that while the expansion of these technologies throughout the developed economies has been both rapid and near-ubiquitous, progress in developing economies has been considerably slower and more patchy by comparison[3].

Accompanying and giving further momentum to these developments are the changing expectations and 'assumptive worlds' of citizens, consumers, employers, and employees[4] as the technologies shape their experiences of everyday life and work. Key shifts here include more 'personalised' experiences whereby websites 'recognise' registered and returning visitors and automatically present products or information of relevance to them; the growth of social networking sites that are enabling those who use them to connect with 'like-minded' others on an unprecedented scale; and the expansion of highly

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mobile 'on-the-go' computing made possible by developments in handheld devices and cloud computing.

Within the UK, successive governments have committed to the development of 'digital Britain', supported by high bandwidth telecommunications and digital media convergence[5]. At the heart of this has been a particular commitment to harness technological capabilities and affordances in pursuit of scale economies and citizen-centricity in government and public services delivery, not dissimilar to the organisational and service innovations and performance enhancements achieved by online commercial businesses such as Amazon. More recently, the expansion of social networking, tweets, wikis, RSS feeds, SMS, and 'on-the-go' access using internet-enabled mobile telephony and tablet computers, for example, has brought new opportunities for governmental and other organisations to connect and engage with customers and citizens in democratic and other public spaces. Importantly, too, as the present UK Government seeks public sector economies and enhanced effectiveness under the banner of the 'Big Society', new opportunities for multi-agency partnerships, involving public, private, and voluntary sector organisations are emerging. Crucial to the performance of these collaborative partnerships will be the ability of all the partners to harness technological affordances effectively, and to agree common standards with respect to data and information management as well as agreement on information assurance measures so as to enable data sharing and technological interoperability.

Finally, and following from the above, we draw attention to ideas that point us towards an explanation of the emergence of some of the collaborations (or 'support relationships', as we prefer) that we have found in this work and that we report upon further in Section 4.0. In their book 'The Support Economy' Zuboff and Maxmin[6] argue – as did many of our interviewees, though in different language – that a new "breed of people" has emerged in western societies: highly educated, widely travelled knowledge workers who are forging a new 'enterprise logic' with the organisations with which they interact as consumers or workers (or indeed as donors and volunteers). Far from the mass consumption model of previous generations, these consumers, it is argued, look to create 'relationship value' with organisations, value that is personal to them, value that can be

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sustained or reduced by the specific encounters that they make. The imperative for organisations deriving from this shift is that they adapt to satisfy these new conditions of consumption. These authors argue that this adaptation need not take the form of standard approaches to organisational change but that it may come in new forms of supportive relationships. We argue at Section 4.0 that we are beginning to see the emergence within the third sector of such new support relationships, based upon the intuitions of visionary founders and leaders in the sector about the nature of the new consumer (whether donor, volunteer or client).

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The third sector in this technological wave

Set within this background is a continuing and growing imperative for third sector organisations to harness and optimise the opportunities afforded by this new technological paradigm centred upon the internet. For those able to use these technologies effectively, opportunities emerge to transform their internal organisational arrangements in ways that make better use of increasingly scarce resources while simultaneously improving the experiences of service users, members, volunteers, and other stakeholders. Thus, for example, Samaritans is able to reconfigure its telecommunications network infrastructure to create new organisational forms of volunteer support in an era of reduced volunteering. Supporters of the RSPB can purchase items from the charity's website, without having to travel to an RSPB shop. Business mentors with the Prince's Trust can engage in online dialogue with their mentees as they commute to work. A worker with Citizens Advice who is visiting a housebound person in their own home can be 'pulling in' relevant information that will help them advise the person about financial and other entitlements, as they speak. And, more profoundly, a charity recognising that it is not exploiting the internet as much as it might and that it needs to create stronger 'relationship value' with its donors and volunteers will approach an organisation such as one of our case studies (See the Difference) or one of the support organisations found in our vignettes, so as to create that new value from which the charity will prosper.

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Alongside these beneficial affordances of the internet era are other more problematic ones, involving assurance issues such as information privacy and security, and identity management. These issues apply throughout all sectors of the UK economy including the third sector. To illustrate, how does charity X ensure that 10 year-old Mary from Scotland – who is looking for friends in its chatroom for disabled children – is not 'talking' with an impersonator pretending to be 'nine year-old Ester from Zimbabwe'. who is actually 50 year-old Mark from Newcastle? How do you ensure that Emily's case file – which is a product of 'data-mashups' involving multiple agencies all of which have variable levels of access to confidential information held in the file – is properly secure? And is a charity bidding to win a government contract able to convince the government department that its own security systems are sufficiently robust as to resist a cyber-attack that could prejudice both the charity and government? As government departments and private sector businesses grapple with a range of data security issues[7], of particular note here is the growing trend on the part of criminals to focus attacks on 'soft' targets, the types of organisations that would not normally be thought of as prime targets[8]. Used in combination with the massive processing power hosting cloud computing, even the most robust organisations must remain increasingly vigilant[9]. Other significant challenges for organisations seeking to develop online capabilities embrace issues such as legacy systems; achieving interoperability across organisational boundaries; managing the substantial costs that can be involved initially and on an on-going basis; and securing organisational commitment to online engagement, particularly executive level leadership. If charities are to engage effectively with online technologies, understanding the opportunities afforded as well as managing the very significant challenges is of critical importance. We return to these issues in Sections 4.0 and 5.0 of this Review.

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The third sector and the online environment: the expert view

While the majority of third sector organisations are thought to have some form of engagement with online technologies, the judgement of our both Expert Panel and our Focus Group (Annex 1.0) was that most are engaging at a relatively basic level, with only 'a handful' of organisations operating at 'the leading edge' in delivering online enabled

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strategic and operational innovations. These findings are broadly in line with the observation that third sector organisations tend to be slower to engage with information and communication technologies (ICTs) than private or public sector organisations[10]. In the longer-term, however, our experts took the view that as citizens (who are also the employees, volunteers, service users, and other stakeholders of third sector organisations) come increasingly to embrace the online environment, there will be growing imperatives to adapt and change in pursuit of new information-intensive relationships.

Our Expert Panel and Focus Group regarded the existence of a visionary and 'net savvy' senior team to be of pivotal importance in positioning their organisation at the leading edge of online engagement. Relatedly, a management style that was comfortable with a degree of experimentation, loosening of control and accepting the consequent risks, was also regarded as important. "Access to easily understandable, relevant, up-to-date information" (interviewee, 2011) was also thought to be an important driving factor leading organisations towards online engagement. These perceptions are broadly supported by the observation that leaders of 'nonprofit' organisations in the USA would benefit from greater awareness of the opportunities afforded by ICTs together with an understanding of how to harness ICTs in the achievement of the charitable mission[11]. There was a perception, too, within the Expert Panel and the Focus Group that grant-awarding bodies, service purchasers, and other funders, could offer a 'strategic lead' to third sector organisations by encouraging ICT costs to be built into funding bids. More broadly, the practice within the third sector to be at pains to convey how little funding is 'diverted' towards administrative functions (for marketing and fundraising purposes), is also problematic in relation to short and long-term investment. Frontline services cannot be delivered without appropriate back-office support, off- and online, and the legitimacy of properly and appropriately investing in the administrative function needs to be strongly communicated to Government, donors and potential donors, and other stakeholders.

Members of the Expert Panel and the Focus Group identified a number of benefits for third sector organisations associated with online engagement both currently and over the next five years or more. These included:

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- the delivery of enhanced relationship-building, underpinned by new data management capabilities;
- the 'personalisation' of service providing;
- more effective use of social networking sites;
- the ability to 'crowd-source' volunteers; in other words enlisting them in high volume numbers in support of particular projects.

These points above are supported by the observation made in respect of North-American third sector organisations that "One of the most promising mission-related uses of the technology lies in the potential for organizations to build relationships and communicate with clients and other external stakeholders through electronic networks."[12]

Other benefits identified by the Expert Panel and Focus Group included:

- enhanced opportunities for 'on-the-go' computing, with increasing ease of interoperability across integrated devices and software;
- the adoption of software aimed at supporting collaborative working;
- using cloud and other forms of Software as a Service (SaaS) to achieve cost reductions in the longer term, for example through reducing the need for in-house ICT expertise;
- engaging with 'smart donating' initiatives and collaborations, for example enabling donors to add a donation as they pay a restaurant bill, book a holiday or purchase petrol;
- much more intensive forms of data management supporting strategic goals, including providing better services and more transparent operations.

These points above are supported by the observation made in respect of North-American third sector organisations that "One of the most promising mission-related uses of the technology lies in the potential for organizations to build relationships and communicate with clients and other external stakeholders through electronic networks"

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The online environment was also perceived by the Expert Panel and the Focus Group to generate a number of current and on-going issues and challenges for third sector organisations, with some of the potential benefits identified above also regarded as having potentially adverse implications. Among the current and potential issues identified were:

- lack of strategic 'top team' leadership on ICT issues at both sectoral and organisational levels, together with lack of awareness and understanding that these technologies are one element in a broader process of change that must also take account of the value-base of these organisations;

- the braking effect of legacy systems on interoperability and thereby on collaborations;

- uneven bandwidth throughout organisational networks as well as more widely;

- uncertainties surrounding net neutrality;

- substantial costs associated with ICT investments and sustainable computing (These were seen as problematic for all organisations, but especially so for the smaller ones. This is exacerbated by the imperatives felt within the third sector towards maximising short-term investments at the expense of longer-term research and development, change and innovation);

- reliance on 'net savvy' volunteers (This could leave organisations vulnerable if the volunteers moved on);

- keeping pace with growing public expectations particularly for improved forms of access and for more transparent operations (The Expert Panel and the Focus Group identified transparency and accountability as issues that are of growing significance and questioned whether third sector organisations are developing the data management capabilities that will be essential to their delivery);

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- developing relationship-management for donors, volunteers and consumers (Concern was expressed that relationship-management software was aimed predominantly at donors and other supporters, with insufficient emphasis given to service users. Also questioned was whether the ease with which personal data is captured – combined with an increasingly automated relationship-management process – might alienate those donors and supporters who are not seeking a long-term relationship with an organisation, but who may find themselves 'aggressively' targeted for on-going donative and other support);

- the need to give greater attention to information assurance issues, including data security.

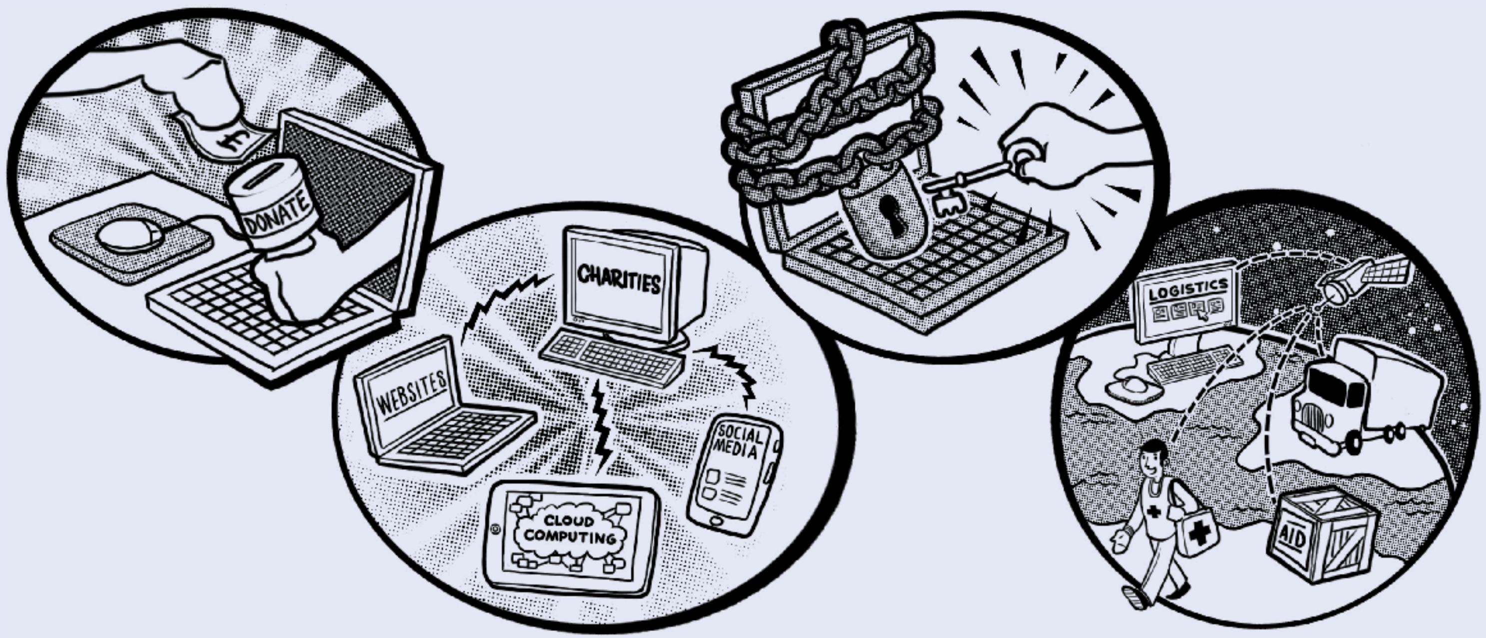
This last point was one that exercised our Expert Panel and Focus Group greatly. Third sector organisations, they argued, capture considerable personal data in respect of their donors and other supporters, sometimes well in excess of that captured by commercial businesses[13]. Many of them also deliver services requiring the highest levels of confidentiality and trust between the service provider and the service recipient, with these services increasingly delivered through collaborative arrangements with other organisations. This makes data security of critical importance for third sector organisations[14], particularly so as their service users and other stakeholders may have little or no understanding of what 'personal' data is being captured or how it is being used[15]. As third sector organisations migrate their data management to a cloud provider or to other forms of SaaS the issue becomes more complex still. Growing requirements for 'on-the-go' computing also serve to heighten the importance of data security and privacy issues for the third sector.

In the next section of this Review we have drawn together descriptions of our six case studies, and later of our shorter 'vignettes' of other organisations. Many of these points above derived from our Expert Panel and Focus Group resonate strongly in these case descriptions. So too, do the ideas about the new environment and third sector adaptation to it that we set out at the beginning of this particular section.

This makes data security of critical importance for third sector organisations, particularly so as their service users and other stakeholders may have little or no understanding of what 'personal' data is being captured or how it is being used

Third sector organisations leading the way online: organisational innovations

This section provides a detailed view of six organisations that are innovating online, highlighting how different types of third sector organisation are responding to the potential of using the internet towards their charitable objectives.



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In this section we bring together the short 'biographical' accounts of each of our six exemplary case studies. In each of these case studies we have selectively highlighted one or more features of the work that showcase key aspects of their online and information management engagement more widely. Thus, these accounts should be read as illustrative of the ways in which these organisations are innovating online and in respect of their information management. We have organised these case studies in three ways:

- First we look at two 'virtual' charities, See the Difference and YouthNet. These are charities that operate exclusively or almost exclusively online, having a relatively small physical presence by comparison.

- Secondly, we look at 'longstanding, traditional bricks and mortar' charities and the online and data management capabilities that they are developing. These 'traditional' charities – St John's Ambulance and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) – are long-established organisations, with a very considerable spatially distributed physical presence.

- Thirdly, we present two further case studies – the Family Holiday Association and the British Heart Foundation – each of which is 'younger' than those in the second group and thereby *a priori* might be less institutionalised and more amenable to change management and the adoption of new technologies.

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Virtual charities

YouthNet

Delivering frontline services through online organisational networking
Founded in 1995 and with an annual income today in excess of £5 million per annum[16], YouthNet has been a quintessentially 'virtual' organisation from the outset, delivering its substantive frontline services exclusively through online channels. It is in essence the charitable embodiment of the 'network society'[17], delivering comprehensive information, advice, and other support services to the young people who use its services, through its complex network of 600 partner organisations. Serving young people between the ages of 16 and 25 located throughout the UK, YouthNet's ubiquitous presence together with the reach, scope, and immediacy of the services provided through its diverse network of public, voluntary, and private sector partners would be difficult, perhaps impossible to achieve, using traditional 'bricks and mortar' arrangements. "Partnership, like online engagement, is integral to YouthNet, and one of its aims" (interviewee, 2011).

YouthNet has been a quintessentially 'virtual' organisation from the outset, delivering its substantive frontline services exclusively through online channels. It is in essence the charitable embodiment of the 'network society'

YouthNet was born from the vision of its founder and chairman, Martyn Lewis, CBE, who, at the time of founding YouthNet, was a journalist of considerable standing, having presented every mainstream national news programme on both BBC and ITV. Having published a book aimed at providing young people with information of relevance to them, YouthNet's founding father quickly realised that for information to be at its most relevant – and actually used – it needed to be published online, as books went out of date too quickly and were in any case not the best way to communicate with young people. Initially providing only a database of relevant services, YouthNet's first application for charitable status was refused by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on the basis that the Commissioners of the day could not see the need for an online charity.

Organisational profile
Currently supported by a team of around 45 professional staff and in the region of 300 active volunteers (a small number of whom are internationally-based), YouthNet was the

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first charity in the UK to deliver its services on a fully online basis. Today, through its considerable network of partner organisations, it is able to ensure that young people have access to appropriate confidential practical and emotional support and information, on a 24/7 basis. Its ability to harness the online environment means that the charity is able to reach and deliver services to young people who, having grown up with digital media to the extent that they now take these for granted, now spend much of their time connecting and communicating in the online world that has become their 'natural' environment. As well as enhancing the charity's visibility and accessibility amongst these communities of young 'digital natives'[18], YouthNet's virtuality (in combination with its strategy of delivering services through a network of collaborating organisations) has meant that it has been able to grow its provision and to expand the number of service users while keeping its cost-base lower than would have been possible otherwise.

TheSite.org (**www.thesite.org**) and Lifetracks (**www.lifetracks.com**)[19] are the web-based channels through which information, advice, and other forms of support relevant to young people are delivered by YouthNet through its network of partner organisations. The Do-it website (**www.do-it.org.uk**), which provides information about volunteering as well as a database of volunteering opportunities, is also aimed at young people, while the database of volunteering opportunities is available to the wider public as well through its syndication to 36 other organisational websites. The symbiotic partnerships that YouthNet has strategically developed means that through this 'virtual hub' organisation, young people going onto TheSite and Lifetracks have access to the specialist expertise and substantial experience that are the province of its partner organisations. These span the widest possible range of themes of relevance to young people, covering subjects that range from how to prepare for school assessments, to how to apply for a job, through to topics that include relationships, mental health, and, indeed, any issue of relevance to young people. Thus, YouthNet's partners have depth of knowledge and expertise across a wide range of substantive themes, and in some cases may also have particular expertise in working with, and supporting, young people. What they will not have to the same extent as YouthNet, and therefore what our focal organisation brings to the symbiotic partnership, is YouthNet's capability to harness the online environment in ways that enable these organisations to reach young people and to deliver services to them in

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ways that are suitably accessible and convenient, as well as maintaining the highest levels of privacy and security. YouthNet's other substantive contribution to these partnership arrangements is the charity's accumulated experience and expertise in building trusting relationships in the online setting with young people who may be situated in extremely vulnerable and emotionally charged situations. Building trust, like creating a partnership, is also a key aim of YouthNet and integral to its relationships with partner organisations, as well as the young people who use its services.

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A range of relevant expertise is available to YouthNet from its employees, its volunteers, and its trustees. YouthNet's Technical team includes software programmers, systems specialists, project managers, and IT support staff. As well as developing and maintaining YouthNet's online infrastructure, the Technical team also provides support to the charity's partner organisations. An Operations team comprising journalists, online community experts, and project managers has responsibility for managing the websites as well as partnership arrangements and management, with some of the online web-content requirements outsourced if necessary. Like the Technical team, the Operations team also provides support to YouthNet's network of delivery partners, as part of the formal scheme in place with YouthNet's partners to support them in these and other ways. A Development and Marketing team is responsible for fundraising and data provision. Trained in the London office, but working virtually, YouthNet's volunteers undertake tasks such as moderating chat forums and creating videos.

Online capability and information management

YouthNet's newly re-designed website, which went live this year, is part of a wider overhaul of the charity's ICT infrastructure and delivery channels that will also involve server virtualisation and services to young people delivered through social network media. The charity's aim is to deliver enhanced reliability, and cost reductions, together with other improvements in overall performance. The new website uses the WordPress blogging platform, hosting this on one of its servers. Also sitting on the new website are YouthNet's three substantive online services TheSite, Lifetracks, and Do-it.

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Through TheSite and Lifetracks, young people have access to specialist information, impartial advice, and support "about everything and anything" (interviewee, 2011) of relevance to them. In the region of 208,000 young people visited TheSite during the month of October 2010, alone. TheSite hosts YouthNet's bespoke 'askTheSite' service which, supported by 50 Peer Advisors trained and accredited through the Open College Network, accepts questions from young people on an anonymous basis, responding to them in confidence, one-to-one. An average 800 questions are asked and answered each month through this service, while requests for information, advice, or help are made to TheSite every 20 seconds. Hosting articles, podcasts, and videos, as well as forums and chats moderated by young people trained in this role, TheSite has a 41,000 strong online community. A targeted marketing and communications campaign reinforced by a search engine optimisation strategy has led to a 26% growth in TheSite's average monthly visitors in recent months, recording an overall expansion from 485,000 to 610,000 during the course of 2009-10.

Established in 2009 and focussing on educational and employment related matters, Lifetracks already hosts in the order of 20,000 unique users each month. Using online consultation, YouthNet was able to involve young people in key aspects of its design, including its content and functionality. Among the features and services that Lifetracks supports are interactive 'to do' lists, 'next steps' lists, and 'achievements' logs that young people can use to plan and help them manage key life events, such as preparing for job interviews or their first day at work; and an 'interactive payslip' through which young people are able to learn to read and understand their own payslip information. This website also hosts a bespoke, confidential question and answer service. 'Need an Answer' provides young people with personal, one-to-one, tailored support on educational and employment matters from online advisors and mentors. Through Lifetracks young people can also search for employment opportunities, linking directly to JobCentrePlus from the website.

Developed in partnership with the Volunteer Centre network, Do-it hosts searchable volunteering opportunities with voluntary, private, and public sector organisations, together with advice to prospective volunteers on how volunteering opportunities

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appropriate for them are best identified. By October 2010, generating more than 50,000 registrations every month, the website had registered almost 700,000 volunteers. By the end of December 2010, almost 2 million volunteering applications had been made through the website, with YouthNet's delivery-partner organisations posting around 61,000 of the more than 1.5 million volunteering opportunities available in c. 28,000 organisations throughout the UK. Syndicated to partner organisations, Do-it can be integrated within their websites, with its content fully or partially tailored to the partner organisation's own website. A series of on-going new generation software developments designed and delivered by YouthNet and aimed at organisations and their employees who manage volunteers, enables these organisations to post, track, and manage volunteering opportunities and to recruit and manage volunteers, with growing effectiveness.

The often anonymous and confidential nature of YouthNet's services makes their evaluation challenging. However, a number of tools and research methods are used to capture and analyse anonymised, aggregated data such as postcode, demographic information, and the types of question asked by the young people using the charity's services. The charity also captures data relating to its web-traffic, usage, and navigation patterns, such as number of visitors, pages visited, duration of visit, IP addresses, browser configurations, and where visitors were prior to accessing the website. With safeguarding data privacy and security to the forefront, information and data captured through the YouthNet websites, including the syndicated Do-it, is directly retrieved and stored by YouthNet and cannot be directly captured or analysed by its partner organisations. Using anonymised, aggregated data profiles, YouthNet provides performance feedback to the relevant partner organisations, enabling them to see where they are performing well as well as providing them with the opportunity to reflect on how performance improvements might be delivered.

Also in the interests of user privacy and data security objectives, the staff and volunteers of YouthNet's partner organisations deliver services through TheSite and Lifetracks websites, keying-in a username and password registered with YouthNet. The different levels of access for the staff and volunteers of its partner organisations are set by

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YouthNet, as appropriate. Furthermore, for security reasons, all data is stored by YouthNet and cannot be downloaded by partner organisations. YouthNet's partners are expected to adopt YouthNet's safeguarding policies and procedures when delivering services to YouthNet's service users. YouthNet's safeguarding policy "covers all aspects of safeguarding including YouthNet's approach and procedures, the legal and professional framework, confidentiality and privacy, data protection, behavioural guidelines, reporting guidelines and HR procedures" (Annual Report, 2010, p.14).

User privacy and data security objectives are at the forefront of YouthNet's guidance to service users when they are advised how to clear their cookie and browser histories after using the TheSite and Lifetracks websites. Furthermore, to ensure the privacy of young people using the confidential Need an Answer service, users are provided with a unique ID number, which if lost, is not re-issued by YouthNet, in which circumstances the question must be re-submitted and a new password issued. Also with a view to protecting the privacy of the young people using YouthNet's services, responses to questions are not automatically forwarded to users, and must be actively requested by the user using the unique ID number allocated.

In summary, YouthNet embodies and epitomises key characteristics and benefits attributed to the 'network society' in the scale, scope, immediacy, as well as the ubiquity of its collaborative service delivery arrangements. Many of its activities resonate too with ideas surrounding the 'support economy'. It is responding to the new generation of consumers; it is engaging in new support relationships so as to strengthen its mission and it is also offering a 'value relationship' to its personal and trustworthy advice services.

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See the Difference

Connecting donors and charitable projects on the Web

With a physical base in London, See the Difference is best described, nonetheless, as one of an emerging new wave of 'virtual' charities aiming to deliver frontline services substantively, and in some cases exclusively, through the online environment. It is also

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a prime example of 'new enterprise logic'[20], harnessing the integrated support relationships that the online environment enables in ways that are difficult, if not impossible, using traditional approaches to organising and organisational change. Embracing the underlying logic presented by the web, See the Difference is supporting the desire of the modern volunteer or donor for transparency and high trust relationships with their charities of choice. Aiming to encourage and facilitate individual and corporate charitable giving, it also makes fundraising easier and more cost-effective for charities. Its website (**www.seethedifference.org**) is the 'hub' through which donors, as well as projects for which charities are seeking funding, are innovatively brought together. Here, "Donors can have a relationship with one or more charities, as the website is bringing a range of charities into one space. But charities have to accept that this is a break from the traditional model of having 'their own loyal donors' as donors can move around charities freely" (interviewee, April 2011).

Organisational profile

Established in 2008, See the Difference's overarching mission is to 'habitualise' giving on the part of the younger generation and to do this from a position of research-based understanding of their needs, interests, and motivations.

The charity has a small professional staff team of c. 8.5 full-time equivalent posts carrying forward the vision of its co-founders. The charity is supported by approximately 700 volunteers, all of whom have committed to provide their expertise to the mission and vision. Organisationally See the Difference sits on the web, pursuing the underlying rationale of its founders that the online environment can enable qualitatively different relationships between donors and charities than those that currently remain the norm. Three inter-related aims inspired the charity's development. Firstly, there is the declared aim of enabling donors literally to see and follow the impact of their donations in some detail. The second aim is to provide a platform that makes fundraising more efficient and cost-effective for charities, with close to 100% of donated income reaching them. Thirdly, the aim is to make the fundraising and donation process simple to use, exciting, and rewarding for donors, with the aim of encouraging a new generation of donors for whom giving is perceived as a socially important activity and one that becomes habitual. Sitting

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inside these main aims See the Difference also seeks to promote volunteering activity, especially amongst the next generation of volunteers (ie those under 45); educate and support charities in the use of information and communication media and technologies, (in particular offering support making films of their work); and commissions and publishes research into charitable giving (See the Difference Directors Report and Accounts, April 2010).

See the Difference is currently supported largely in-kind through high level pro bono technical expertise. The charity also receives gifts, sponsorship, grants, and loans. In the manner of JustGiving, and covering the processing costs accruing to Virgin Money Giving and running costs attaching to See the Difference, the organisation also charges a fee to charities amounting to 5% of the combined donation and gift aid. Prior to publicly launching the test website in the summer of 2010 and reflecting early support to explore and test the idea, See the Difference took forward the initial development phase with seedcorn funding of c. £156,800. Thus, it is an example of a relatively small charity as conventionally understood, but one which is gathering strength through its collaborative working within a network of individuals who bring expertise in business planning, retailing, marketing, and legal expertise, as well as digital media, so as to connect and engage donors and charities in a wholly new way.

Media capabilities, the internet and information management

Charities working with See the Difference are provided with an introductory briefing, available either online or at the charity's London office. Each subscribing charity is invited to produce a filmed representation of specific projects in which they are engaged. Once completed these films are loaded onto See the Difference's website and are available for viewing by anyone visiting the site. Crucially, the subscribing charities are offered training in film-making techniques, while funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation means that they are also supported in their film-making by an in-house producer and member of the See the Difference professional staff team, who will typically have a film or online background. Exploiting the 'new enterprise logic' of the web and its viral social networks particularly, See the Difference is also enabling charities using its services to 'crowdsource' further relevant expertise behind their film-making, marketing, and

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dissemination. An illustrative example is found at: **www.seethedifference.org/charities/recycle/recycle-bike-shipment-to-namibia**.

Potential donors who visit the See the Difference website are able to search for charitable projects to which they would like to donate, or for which they would like to fundraise. Donors can search for projects by browsing the website or by using keyword searches such as 'environment', 'animals', 'disability'. The prospective donor is also able to search the site for 'most donated to', 'new projects', or they can search by 'geographic location', for example. Once they have identified a project or projects that are of interest, potential donors can watch the short film that has been made by the charity which tells them about the project and how donated funds will be used. Each film is accompanied by a 'feedback promise', advising potential and actual donors how and when they will receive reports about the funded project. Donors and potential donors can also see when a project has reached its funding target, as well as how much funding is still required at any point in time.

Donors wishing to fundraise on behalf of projects can do so in various ways, including setting up their own fundraising page on the website, sending e-cards, or inviting friends to donate to projects in place of giving a traditional birthday or Christmas gift. A 'Spread The Word' button located on each page enables donors easily to spread information about the charity that they are sponsoring, through Facebook and Twitter as well as the major social bookmarking channels. Perceiving that younger donors are looking for new forms of connectivity and commitment with the charitable sector, See the Difference aims to be in the virtual spaces of these younger, 'net-savvy' people through these social media. Relatedly, and with its aim of habitualising giving on the part of younger donors, the charity is exploring whether a 'philanthropic online identity' can be generated through these media. The charity is also seeking to exploit the 'logic of the web' to incentivise giving, developing awards, schemes, and events that make giving a rewarding experience in the viral environment.

Donations, including Gift Aid elements, are automated and automatically processed through Virgin Money Giving (**uk.virginmoneygiving.com**), reaching charities within a few

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days of collection and receipt. Indeed, all aspects of the business process, from registering particular client charities and encouraging regular project reporting by them; to providing access to prospective donors searching for projects; to donating and fundraising; to spreading the word; to processing donations, is done in the online environment. Hosting most of its key business processes and other activities in the cloud means that See the Difference is able to reduce the need for, as well as the cost of managing, physical assets. It also means that the organisation has considerable flexibility. "So, for example, when Stephen Fry tweets for us and we need extra capacity we just click the online dashboard and increase our processing power for the day" (interviewee, 2011).

Finally, See the Difference aims to add further value to client charities by offering information to them about the impact of their web presence on the See the Difference site. Currently, aggregated, anonymised data are regularly shared with the registered charities. The types of information available in this way include relatively standard data such as age, education, and location of visitors as well as their navigation route around the website, how long they stayed on the website, and the outcome of their visits. See the Difference also routinely shares with its registered charities data relating to their own specific projects, for example site traffic volume and conversion rates. Charities are also offered benchmarking information and advice aimed at assisting them to develop more tailored and effective relationships with donors and potential donors. Additionally, See the Difference offers its client charities data from surveys conducted on public attitudes to giving. For single charities such data are hard to gather especially as many are still quite primitive in their understanding and use of such data. Collectivising these data across the whole group of subscribing charities gives further value added to the role being played by See the Difference.

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Traditional charities

St John Ambulance Lancashire

Enhancing performance through online volunteer management
Its origins stretching back to the 19th century, the present day St John Ambulance Foundation (SJAF) is an example of an old and well established organisation re-positioning itself as a modernised, agile service provider. A movement of international scope, in England its services are delivered through eight autonomous regional divisions, and one islands division. Each division is comprised of a number of area units, each of which comprises a number of local units known as adult, LINKS, cadet, and badger units. Thus, located within the North West region, St John Ambulance Lancashire (SJAL) – the subject of this case study – comprises 47 local units, of which 18 are adult units, 2 are LINKS units (higher education units), and 15 are cadet units (10-18 year-olds), while the remainder are badger units (5-10 year-olds). While the area units are autonomous and largely 'self-contained', should an event arise that requires a level of volunteer resource beyond the level available within an area, area 'HQs' are able to call in additional volunteer resources from neighbouring areas. Similarly, if an incident arises that requires urgent response, it can be quicker to deploy volunteers from another area unit whose boundaries make its volunteers geographically closer to the emergency incident, than volunteers located within the unit area in which the emergency has arisen. Within 'self-contained' area units there also needs to be a high degree of flexibility to deploy volunteers to support scheduled events and other activities, and to re-deploy them at speed in the event of an emergency within the area unit's geographical boundaries. Offering major incident support in times of national emergency, as well as UK-wide services that include organ transportation, the SJAF also aims to optimise national coordination across its area boundaries within England; with its sister organisations in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales; and with the many other organisations, public, private, and voluntary sector, with which it works collaboratively in the delivery of services. Viewed holistically, this is a highly complex national-local infrastructure, delivering services that are mainly 'time-critical' in nature, but which even when they are of routine

St John Ambulance Foundation (SJAF) is an example of an old and well established organisation re-positioning itself as a modernised, agile service provider

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or pre-scheduled nature, are immensely challenging in the demands they place on effective volunteer deployment. The development and roll-out of an integrated, online Duty Information Planning system (DIP), of which an SMS text messaging capability is a key component, is bringing significant new 'nimbleness' in volunteer deployment capability to the participating area units, of which SJAL is one.

Organisational profile

The present St John Ambulance Foundation (SJAF) has its origins in three 19th century charitable foundations, two of which merged in the mid-20th century, to become the SJAF that exists today. Thus, the SJAF is an organisation that has already shown itself capable of managing deep transformation of the sort that can now be brought about in the 21st century, this time by embedding and harnessing online capability.

The SJAF is highly dependent on some 45,000 volunteers (more than 50% of which are under 25 years-old) and the 4 million hours of time that they donate annually to deliver services on a 24/7/365 basis. The SJAL has upwards of 1,000 volunteers, of which just over half are under 18 years-old, contributing in excess of 51,500 hours of time in 2009. With many of the volunteers having full-time jobs, managing volunteers and donated time on this scale is a considerable task. The range of services provided by SJAL (and SJAF) add a further level of complexity to be overcome. Thus, among the services that volunteers provide are (emergency) first aid at everything from local sports days to major sporting events such as the Olympics; hospital patient transport; routine specimen transportation undertaken within strict time constraints; emergency organ transportation; providing minor injury units situated in town centres; and providing support to major incidents such as the Cumbria shootings. The task is made more complex still as volunteers will be trained and qualified to deliver different levels of medical support, with some able to administer basic first aid, while others will be authorised to use automatic external defibrillators and medical gases, or trauma equipment, for example. Moreover, some volunteers will be trained to a level of driving for 'blue light' transportation in the case of an emergency, whilst others will not be trained to that level. In the case of the London bombings on the 7th July, 2005, SJAF had more than 120 staff and volunteers at the scene within hours, supported by 37 of its ambulances, 20 of its mobile treatment

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centres, and other specialist vehicles. Staff and volunteers remained at the scene for 5 days, delivering support to the rescue teams and other workers, on a 24 hour basis. The SJAF's longer-term vision is to improve its national emergency preparedness, by further enhancing its ability to coordinate its spatially distributed volunteer and other resources at national level.

Online capability and information management

Supported by an IT sub-committee, the chair of which has business systems experience, SJAF's ICT engagement is delivered by a staff team of ICT professionals based in the charity's London headquarters. SJAF's telephony arrangements reflect the organisation's complex operational infrastructure, and its sense of being a nationally coordinated movement on the one hand whilst remaining locally independent and relevant on the other. Thus, the London office and the area HQs each have their own telephone numbers. However, there is also a national number. When the national number is dialled it 'recognises' the geographical location of the caller, and automatically routes the call to the appropriate regional office. With the objective of enhancing its national emergency disaster response capability, the longer term vision is to operate an even more highly integrated service delivered through a central point of coordination, located in one of the area HQs.

Developed in-house, the DIP software system is also reflective of a charity that is aiming to optimise its ability to perform effectively at national and local levels, without compromising either its capability to operate as a highly effective national movement or its 'localness'. As a locally relevant service, both the movement as a whole and the individual area units gain from the strong community presence that will help to ensure growing and healthy volunteer numbers. The perception of the charity as a major national service provider on the one hand and as a provider of high quality, locally tailored services on the other is also beneficial in partnership working and in securing service delivery contracts and other forms of income generation. DIP integrates key centrally supported human resource management functions, together with scheduled information about event planning and emergency incident rapid response activities, which are fed into the system at both national and local levels. The level of online

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capability that is available through the DIP system is a significant development over the 'pen and paper' system that preceded it.

In the case of scheduled events in the Lancashire area such as a church fete, customers have the option of online web-based or telephone booking. A preliminary booking is followed by a planning meeting, which may be by telephone or, if necessary, it may take place on the event site. A quotation is then emailed to the customer. If the 'accept' button is activated, the DIP system automatically updates the booking information and 'alerts' SJAL. From this point forward, information is automatically collected and sent to the SJAL area HQ, its operations centre. Volunteers are also automatically contacted through the SMS texting system which is embedded within DIP, with those located in the area closest to the event contacted first, and with messages automatically forwarded to the next nearest unit if insufficient volunteers are available in the first area, and so on. On receiving the text message volunteers are invited to send a reply of 'YES' if they have availability to attend the event. The system is able to define the number of volunteers required for a particular event, to group volunteers according to their response, and to place excess affirmative responses in a 'reserve' group. As well as providing a level of convenience and flexibility that is welcomed by volunteers, the DIP system is enabling both SJAF nationally and SJAL locally to provide significantly enhanced levels of responsiveness in respect of both routine day-to-day services delivery and emergency deployment, including Category A or 'immediately life-threatening' calls.

Using DIP in combination with the SMS text messaging system, backed-up by emails, pager, and telephone calls, in the event of an emergency SJAL can immediately see which staff and volunteers are available, who they are, whether they are qualified to deliver first aid or if they have additional specialist training and experience, where they are, what they are doing, and whether they are available for deployment or re-deployment, and depending on the information generated, staff and volunteers can be 'called up'. When emergency situations arise locally, the system automatically 'flashes' an alert to the relevant operations centre, with volunteer availability also being visible to neighbouring regions in some instances. SMS text alerts cascade out automatically through a region's nearest units in the first instance, and then throughout the nearest

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neighbouring regional units as the situation requires. With an average of 3,000 messages delivered per month in SJAL's area, the immediacy of the texting system makes it particularly valuable in emergency situations.

While on a direct comparison texting is more costly than a telephone call, embedded as it is within DIP the SMS texting system is delivering considerable cost and mission-based benefits in the form of a significantly reduced administrative burden, higher volunteer response rates, and enhanced response times in emergency situations. As seen above, DIP and the SMS text tessaging component, are also enhancing the charity's agility as a national movement that must demonstrate the highest levels of coordination in the delivery of routine and emergency services, whilst remaining substantively local as well.

While on a direct comparison, texting is more costly than a telephone call, it is delivering considerable cost and mission-based benefits in the form of a significantly reduced administrative burden, higher volunteer response rates, and enhanced response times in emergency situations

In conclusion, this is an organisation that is harnessing and continuing to develop the opportunities afforded by online technologies so as to manage its volunteer and staff resources flexibly and responsively. Moreover, it is doing so in situations that can be complex, fluid, and fast-moving, and in which having volunteers and staff with appropriate skills and expertise, properly and timeously deployed, is of critical importance for this organisation and those requiring its services.

RNID

Enhancing reach, service provision, and performance evaluation through social media networks and web-personalisation

Celebrating its centenary year and with an annual income in the region of £47 million in 2009-10 (Annual Report and Accounts, 2010), the RNID is a well-established UK charity. Despite being of an age and size that tends to have an inhibiting effect on deep organisational change, RNID is beginning to embrace social networking media in ways that are enabling the charity to bring through innovations in the way that it delivers services, as well as in its relationships with its communities of (prospective) service users, members, and supporters. Harnessing the online environment in ways that extend the reach and profile of the charity, the RNID is also exploiting the opportunities presented by

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online technologies for sophisticated data capture and performance evaluation, with a view to enhancing the delivery of its frontline services and its strategic positioning. As it grows in its understanding of online 'culture', and the dynamics of social networking communities in particular, the charity is also developing the maturity and confidence to manage its brand in an online setting in which, from time to time, the best-performing third sector organisations can find themselves facing public criticism. Thus, it is learning that in the face of such criticism the same viral qualities that provide outward reach to its critics also accord the same opportunities to the RNID, allowing the charity to respond openly to its critics in the public sphere and to engage them in constructive dialogue within that social space. It is learning, too, that in these social spaces and viral networks its communities of service users, members, and supporters will also intervene on its behalf as they, too, respond to critics in open and discursive ways.

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Organisational profile

Currently supported by staff and volunteers numbering in the region of 1,000 and 900 respectively, and seeking to grow its volunteer community significantly in the short term, the RNID provides a range of services related to deafness and hearing impairment available to both individuals and organisations. Other core activities that the charity delivers include research, advocacy, and the representation of the interests of people with hearing issues in the public policy sphere.

With a small professional ICT team bringing expertise in key areas that include digital marketing, web-management and development, information systems management and development, and social media, the charity is strategically positioning around online engagement, with web and social media capabilities sitting at the core of this. While its ICT team are charged with the day-to-day management of the charity's hardware and software infrastructures together with the development of longer-term capabilities and innovations, where particular ICT projects demand specific expertise not held in-house these are outsourced to specialist organisations as and when required.

Responsibility for generating web-content is devolved to the wider community of RNID staff as, through their engagement with the charity's service users, members, and

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supporters, they are best placed to deliver topical, relevant and informed content. With a view to facilitating and embedding the engagement of staff in the generation of media content as well as encouraging and supporting their use of online engagement more generally, the charity has appointed 'Digital Champions', locating these 'enablers' within regional offices and relevant departments throughout the RNID's organisational network.

The charity has appointed 'Digital Champions', locating these 'enablers' within regional offices and relevant departments throughout the RNID's organisational network

Facilitating the charity's engagement with digital media, including its ability to harness the viral social networking environment positively and confidently from a position of direct engagement, or indeed to stand-back from this as its supporters engage on its behalf, is a chief executive, executive staff, and trustees who are themselves at ease with this environment and the particular challenges that it raises. Sensitive to the opportunities that social media bring to raise awareness of the RNID and what it does, the charity's senior staff and trustees are aware that "in the social media environment organisations cannot fully control the message" (interviewee, 2011) and must therefore adjust their expectations and approach to suit this mode of communication.

Online capability and information management

The RNID is engaging with and harnessing technologies that range from 'assistive' technologies (for example that connect hearing and speech impaired service users over the telephone and through a 'web-cam talk by text' facility); to online income generation tools (involving 'smart donation' apps and online shopping on the RNID's website); to service provision (in the form, for example, of its free online hearing check which is open to the public); to the social networking technologies that are our main focus here.

The charity's engagement with social media is a recent innovation, having been implemented within the last few years. Initially aimed at raising the profile of the charity amongst the public generally, the longer term aim is to target and engage people who may be unaware of the organisation and its relevance for them. A further key aim in the longer term is to generate deeper, more informative dialogue within the RNID's online communities that will enable the charity to achieve a better understanding of how people think about hearing and deafness and the impact of hearing loss on their own and others' lives. Ultimately, this information will assist the charity in developing relevant

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and effective services, as well as in its representative advocacy of hearing impaired communities in the public-policy sphere. Also with the objective of delivering enhanced services, the launch of a new website later this year will enable content to be personalised, thereby increasing its accessibility and relevance to the charity's regular users as well as more occasional and unique visitors. Using a Content Management System, the website will 'recognise' that someone has an interest in 'tinnitus', for example, and as they move through the website information about 'tinnitus' will be automatically highlighted and drawn to their attention. The website will also 'recognise' and 'greet' registered repeat visitors. With a view to strengthening both the social functionality and voice of its online community and also lending a more personalised feel to the website, a further key aim is to have more of the web-content generated by the charity's service users, members and other supporters.

As it has begun to harness the online environment in new ways, an underpinning aim of RNID has been the capture of information and data so as to enhance its informed performance evaluation and development. The online environment is information and data rich, and the charity is increasingly able to capture, mine, and analyse these outputs with previously unprecedented levels of sophistication, aggregation, and drill-down, bringing transparency to 'site traffic patterns', 'visitor usage patterns', and to shop transaction patterns and performance, for example. Through this data analysis, it is able both to differentiate its service user communities and to segment its visitor profiles in ways that will enable better targeted services, relationship-building, and communication. The level of transparency that this 'x-ray'[21] vision enables will also inform the RNID's performance management and strategy more broadly.

Summing up, RNID is a very long established organisation which is showing itself to be culturally adaptable to the 'internet age'. This is an organisation that is approaching the online environment strategically, with the understanding that the internet, and social networking sites particularly, offer powerful new opportunities both to expand its 'brand' reach and to learn more about the hearing-related needs of the communities of people it seeks to serve and represent.

RNID is a very long established organisation which is showing itself to be culturally adaptable to the 'internet age'

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Family Holiday Association

Networking strategies and the enhancement of charitable mission

The Family Holiday Association (FHA) started 36 years ago as a charity administering the provision of a small number of holidays for those families deemed most likely to benefit. It now continues to provide such holidays, though many more of them, through a strategy of expansion that includes corporate partnering for fundraising on the internet, together with an online holiday application and computerised grant administration process. Viewed holistically, this internet-led expansion has produced increased flows of income, more holiday provision and a higher public profile, all of which contribute to FHA becoming an organisation able to gather additional resources at little cost through University research partnering, and a developing campaigning profile through its evidence-based approach to the continuation of its own services, including the formation of a parliamentary interest group. Thus FHA's use of the internet for forms of fundraising has both invigorated and deepened its charitable mission. So, too, has its still developing database for managing holiday applications and their subsequent administration. Without the online holiday application system and the grant administration database, FHA could not deliver holidays on the scale that it does, or manage the significant number of applications that it receives. FHA remains a small organisation, as conventionally understood, but its activities as a networked organisation using new and old media and widening its partnership activities have enlarged its scope whilst keeping its fixed costs low.

Thus FHA's use of the internet for forms of fundraising has both invigorated and deepened its charitable mission

Organisational profile

Established in 1975 by founders who had themselves benefitted from philanthropic provision of a family holiday, the FHA has grown from serving 12 families per annum to providing funds that enabled 2,000 families to experience a holiday in 2010. FHA's core mission is "to promote the quality of family life for those parents and children who experience disadvantage as a result of poverty through the provision of, and by promoting access to, holidays and other recreational activities". A further and crucial aspect of its mission has become more explicit, following from the increasing information intensity of the organisation: "to place the evidenced benefits for family holiday provision

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onto the statutory agenda in the UK through a programme of research, consolidation and expansion of access to holidays for those most in need".

The FHA does not act as a Travel Agent in the direct sense. However, it has become the TUI Travel plc[22] nominated charity, from whom it gains substantial financial support through 'in-holiday' collections on behalf of the charity, and advantageous holiday access and holiday rates. With a view to anchoring and managing the partnership with TUI effectively, FHA employs a full-time secondee from TUI who is also their liaison with the travel company. FHA's part in the holiday process is to evaluate applications for financial support made by 'welfare agents'; for example, doctors, teachers, social care workers, church Ministers. The welfare agent identifies the family need prima facie, makes the referral, and supports the family through the assessment process. Having approved an agent's application on behalf of a family, especially that the family meets its funding criteria, the FHA provides what it deems to be an appropriate level and form of financial support which may include the provision of vouchers for a specific holiday. The referral agent continues to work with the family throughout the holiday and is required by FHA to report back in detail on the holiday experience. Authentication of referral agents is handled in four ways:

- by supporting repeat applications from known agents;
- by requiring documentary evidence of identity with additional checks undertaken in some instances also, where deemed necessary;
- by the assignment of an agent ID and password for submitting applications online;
- by requiring the banking details of the agents' organisation, rather than the agent themselves, to make the necessary transactions.

The referring agent becomes in effect a 'co-worker' of the FHA. The agent handles the application, made either online or on paper, provides family support throughout, handles the grant or voucher, books the holiday and, crucially, together with the holidaying family,

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provides detailed feedback to FHA on the holiday experience. FHA requires the feedback to be submitted within four weeks of return from holiday, with future holidays in jeopardy if this requirement is not fulfilled.

It is from this detailed feedback that FHA has become a hugely data intensive organisation from which it seeks, as an essential part of its mission, to provide a strong evidence base for its holiday work and for its public policy-shaping activities.

Whilst its service has expanded in scale, the charity itself remains relatively small. Run by a team of approximately nine full-time equivalent and two part-time staff, its annual income is a little over £1 million. This team's key areas of expertise encompass finance and accounting, fundraising, the administration of applications and grants, and research and policy-shaping. Its growth as an organisation lies in its network relationships both on- and offline. Its online partnering widens its fundraising scope (as we show on page 45) as well as enhancing its public presence more generally. Its online capability has also been of pivotal significance in enabling FHA to expand the volume of holidays processed and delivered to 2,000 families. Of particular importance for the team of three full-time staff managing this service is the capability to generate bulk mailings from the database with regard to application decisions and awards, and vouchers and cheque payments; and to manage complex group bookings sometimes involving dozens of families holidaying together. With the online holiday application and administration system open to all referral agents for the first time this year, it is anticipated that the 35% to 40% of referral agents who currently use the online system will increase sharply.

Its information management activities have enabled new partnerships with the University sector (centred upon Nottingham University) and new political engagement in the form of a parliamentary interest group in Social Tourism. These relationships combine to show FHA pursuing the evidence base from which its intent to influence public policy is made clear. It has managed its cost base by engaging with external ICT support service providers both for its day-to-day system maintenance and for its operations online.

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Information Management

Since its inception FHA has gathered data on the recipients of its holidays and on levels of satisfaction with them. In their database (supported by the use of online survey tools through which it is able to gather information and data from welfare agents and other stakeholders), FHA is increasingly capturing information and data at the level of the individual family, as well as generating trend data based on aggregated data analysis. The information captured in the database enables correlations to be examined in relation to 'family type' (eg, size of family, marital status, geographical location); the issues affecting the family; information about the holidays taken; and the impact that the holiday has had on the family. In recent years, and since the employment of key individuals, FHA, in keeping with so much of its approach to its work, has sought to broaden the use of its data with a view to influencing aspects of public policy in addition to narrower gauge evaluation of its own work. In particular FHA is concerned that it makes strong contributions to emergent debates about the economic and social value of tourism. The 'Social Tourism' concept that sits at the core of the European Commission's Calypso initiative[23] is shaping FHA thinking about its own holiday work and about how it best engages with policymakers. FHA acknowledges the complexity of demonstrating social and economic value but uses part of its budget to support the research needed to do so. In essence the Social Tourism concept is built upon the idea that social and economic mobility are aided by enabling people to holiday, whilst at the same time helping (from industry and employment perspectives) to combat the problem of seasonality in holidaying behaviour. Employment issues are crucial for public policy makers, as is the promotion of specific holiday destinations. Research projects currently underway at FHA that operate under the Social Tourism rubric include longitudinal studies of family holiday experiences and their effects, as both subjectively and objectively defined.

A further aspect of information management for evidence-based policy and decision making is FHA's encouragement of other related organisations that data can be shared to their mutual advantage. For example, sharing data with the Youth Hostels Association and the Royal College of Psychiatrists may yield stronger evidence than is currently available on the impact (both positive and negative) of holiday breaks. Such data sharing activity remains an aspiration at this stage.

A further aspect of information management for evidence-based policy and decision making is FHA's encouragement of other related organisations that data can be shared to their mutual advantage

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FHA online

Leadership based upon direct experience elsewhere, together with support from the top of the organisation, has been crucial in bringing FHA into the online environment. Following from that expertise arriving at FHA, the CEO and Executive Team have identified the strategic advantages available to them of having a strong online presence, and FHA has moved on from an organisation with a rudimentary website five years ago to one that is now fully functioning and fully maintained. The Executive Team quickly perceived that FHA could operate more efficiently and effectively by exploiting new media in a range of ways. Included in this thinking is that FHA does not need to develop its own online capability in-house. Currently, the FHA's ICT support and development requirements are outsourced, with one company retained to handle their server maintenance and another responsible for the design and hosting of the FHA website. FHA has also benefitted from ad hoc support from a social entrepreneur who has provided business expertise in the design of their online engagement.

FHA has developed a portfolio of online income generation channels, enabling it to reach out to its largely UK-located donor base. The following online funding opportunities are now available.

- A link on the website enabling direct donation.

- A fund raising application, 'Give as you Live' (enabled through Everyclick – **www.everyclick.com**)
  (Visitors to the FHA website are invited to download the 'app' and to purchase from any of 1,200 stores, including some of the UK's high street giants such as Tesco and John Lewis. Purchasing done in this way yields income to FHA from the partner store without extra cost to the purchaser.)

- Similar online partnership advantages offered on the FHA website, though without a downloaded app, to the gift, travel and flowers industries as well as enabling a link to Amazon.
  (Using the site in any of these ways delivers income to FHA. Thus, for example, clicking

Leadership based upon direct experience elsewhere, together with support from the top of the organisation, has been crucial in bringing FHA into the online environment

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on the Amazon link takes the FHA supporter straight into the Amazon site to do business as usual whilst delivering a financial benefit to FHA for their purchases and without incurring further cost to themselves.)

- FHA is registered with Justgiving.com, enabling supporters to use Justgiving.com to set up their own webpage so that they can fundraise for FHA.
(Donors go onto Justgiving.com, set up a webpage, and fundraise on behalf of FHA. FHA sees this as being an easier way of asking for donations than by email, telephone or face-to-face. Similarly FHA is registered with VirginMoney.com, which delivers online BACS transfers into FHA's bank account. These organisations also organise the gift aid element of donations.)

- FHA hosts the 'World's Biggest Pub Quiz' online on its own website.
(It is anticipated that this will enable FHA to capture data about those participating in the quiz, data that can be used for follow ups and encouragement of further donations.)

- FHA supporters are also able to donate through the 'Simonseeks' Facebook page.
(Visitors can hit the 'like' button on the Facebook page, and Simonseeks pledges a donation to FHA on reaching a specified number of 'likes'.)

- FHA supporters have been invited to 'tweet' hotel reviews, with 101 Holidays pledging a donation to FHA for every review posted.

The charity's online holiday application system processes all but one or two aspects of the process. Thus, while referral agents receive holiday offers by post from FHA, other key stages, ranging from the submission of an application for a holiday, to the matching of the family to a holiday type, to the identification of appropriate funding, are supported from existing data. If the holiday is with a Haven Holiday Park the referral agent books the holiday with Haven, and Haven then notifies the FHA, at which point FHA enters the information into the database. If the holiday involves an FHA caravan the referral agent

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calls FHA to make the booking, and FHA enters the booking onto a spreadsheet. Six weeks prior to families going on holiday the team bulk-enters and administers their cheque payments through the database. On receipt of the feedback form, which is posted back to FHA after the holiday, staff enter the information onto the database.

Founded in the pre-internet era as an organisation dedicated to philanthropic work for those in need of sustaining family holidays, FHA has retained its mission but moved on strongly in the ways it seeks to do so. It engages with fundraising and financial simplifications offered on the internet; it seeks to strengthen the evidence base that will demonstrate the high social and economic value of its core activity; it is engaging with public policy initiatives and parliamentarians so as to shape approaches to holidaying that are commensurate with its mission; and, as an organisation it is widened and strengthened through its engagement with a wide network of organisations and supportive individuals in both the on- and offline world.

Dedicated to philanthropic work for those in need of sustaining family holidays, FHA has retained its mission but moved on strongly in the ways it seeks to do so

British Heart Foundation

Modernising retailing in the British Heart Foundation

The retailing division of the British Heart Foundation (BHF) produces one of the most important income streams to this large-scale charity, accounting, in the most recently published accounts, for more than 20% of the Foundation's 'net incoming resources' (c. £22m). During the past two years in particular Retail has engaged in a substantial modernisation process which includes new electronic point of sale (EPOS) technology throughout its branch network, as well as engaging in a variety of new media activities aimed at strengthening its brand reach and its overall performance.

Organisational profile

Founded in 1961 by medical professionals concerned with the rapid increase in cardiovascular illness in the UK, the BHF has come to provide services that range from prevention of heart disease, support for those with the disease, the conduct of related research and public campaigning. BHF is one of the UK's biggest charities and, as such,

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it has been sensitive to the value of embedding management and business principles such as project and performance management, an open communication culture, and organisational innovation. The BHF's intranet is used comprehensively to keep in touch with BHF's staff and volunteers, with feedback encouraged.

A discrete division within the BHF and led by retail professionals with top management experience in some of the UK's major retailers, Retail is integral to the charity's income generation capabilities, generating more than £22 million of the £96.9 million of net incoming resources raised by the BHF in 2009-10. The turnover and profitability of Retail have risen dramatically, with a 23% increase in turnover shown in the 2009-10 accounts (£116m) and a 40% increase in profits (at £22m)[24].

Operating more than 678 shops, including 116 specialist furniture and electrical stores, the BHF's retail division is the largest retailer of second-hand furniture and electrical goods in the UK. The online environment is increasingly crucial, however, both as providing new retail outlets and in supporting performance enhancing operating practices and data management. With a view to enhancing its effectiveness and exploiting opportunities for innovation, the charity recently brought its traditional and digital communications teams together within a new multimedia department, aiming to develop effective online community engagement and to develop digital communications capabilities throughout the organisation. The Retail division of BHF is the new department's biggest 'customer'.

With a view to enhancing its effectiveness and exploiting opportunities for innovation, the charity recently brought its traditional and digital communications teams together within a new multimedia department

In addition to its underpinning role in generating income, Retail is seen by BHF as a key way of keeping in touch with the local communities that the charity serves and from which it draws crucial support in the form of voluntary giving. It is a testament to Retail's success in volunteer management that many of its 19,000 volunteers are long-serving.

Online capability and information management

As with high street retail more generally, the online environment is becoming increasingly significant for the BHF. Its website received more than 3.5 million visits in 2009-10; its social media communities have in excess of 20,000 supporters; while its video content

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recorded in the region of 175,000 viewings on YouTube. The aim of all of this social media activity is to retain and raise 'brand awareness' of the charity as a whole and to draw people to income generating activity, including retail. BHF is also beginning to derive additional information resources from its monitoring of web based activity, for example footfall, browsing behaviour, the number of potential shoppers who do not complete purchases, and subsequent follow up. Social networking communities such as Twitter and Facebook are also becoming a key source of information for the retail division, for example offering insights into current and emerging trends in attitudes and tastes.

The aim of all of this social media activity is to retain and raise 'brand awareness' of the charity as a whole and to draw people to income generating activity

The online environment both compliments and expands the scope of the BHF's traditional high street retailing in four main ways:

- The Retail division has developed online partnerships which contribute also to income earning activity; (For example, it has a partnership with Fairsharemusic.com (a charity whose mission is to circumvent illegal music downloads), whereby different rates of return to BHF have been agreed for downloads from this site. There is no extra cost to the customer of buying in this way. BHF's strength on the web has encouraged Fairsharemusic into this partnership. In essence, the more a customer downloads from the site the more money accrues to BHF.)

- BHF now has a store on eBay which offers 'high value' items selected from its stock in the shops;

- As well as capturing stock-related data, the online environment is also enhancing the customer-related data capture that underpins effective customer relationship management;
  (This includes working with key search words so as to maximise search engine hits.)

- BHF's online presence offers a first point of contact for the recruitment of volunteers to the shop outlets.

The online environment is also enhancing the customer-related data capture that underpins effective customer relationship management

The transition from a manual stock control and till system to Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS)

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in 2010 has marked a major step forward for the Retail division. The recent installation of new and more sophisticated EPOS software, fully integrated with the charity's wider information management systems, is enabling further performance enhancements in the Retail division underpinned by more informed strategic decision-making. These performance enhancements are exemplified by the following changes.

- Bookings for uplifting stock collections of furniture and electrical goods donated by the public can be made online;

- Sales data that was previously uploaded to the head office overnight is now received in real-time;

- Whereas the previous EPOS system provided limited data in the form of PLU coding[25] together with payment analytics (such as whether a payment was by cash or card), the new system enables analysis by categories of stock; it identifies what types of stock are performing well in which shops; what stock is underperforming; and the system captures general retail trends;

- The availability of these types of information means that the retail division is able to move stock around its shops and its online ventures according to the data about what items are selling and in which places, as well as what is selling best in the online world;

- The effective management of a 19,000 strong and growing volunteer workforce, as the Retail division is now able to capture information about the profiles of its volunteers, including their gender, age, length of service, relevant experience, training and qualifications.

Sales data that was previously uploaded to the head office overnight is now received in real-time

Third sector organisations leading the way online: additional sources of inspiration

This section presents five brief examples of charities' novel uses of the internet, showcasing specific innovations within the third sector.

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In the vignettes set out below we have selectively highlighted only one or two specific features of the work of each of the charities that showcase aspects of their online engagement. Thus, as with the case studies (Section 3.0), these should be taken to be illustrative accounts of the ways in which they are innovating online, rather than as comprehensive overviews of the organisations. For a more holistic and comprehensive appreciation of each of the charities including their missions, aims, activities, and innovative approaches, readers of this Review are advised to visit the charities' websites.

With one exception[26], the vignettes are based solely on reviews of each charity's web content.

Vignette one: Charity: water

Reporting clarity, transparency, and donor accountability
Charity: water was established in the USA in 2006, with the aim of bringing clean and safe drinking water to people in the developing nations. It is currently funding water projects in 17 countries, working through approximately 20 partner organisations. These have the local knowledge and technical expertise to engineer new hydration projects and repair existing ones, as well as educate and empower the indigenous communities that will benefit from the projects.

A founding principle of the charity has been that 100% of donations received from the general public is spent directly on water projects, with the charity's operational costs being separately funded by private donors, angel investors, foundations, corporate and other sponsors. Another core founding principle, for which the Charity: water website (**www.charitywater.org**) is a key channel, is delivering transparency and accountability to donors. Detailed project reports are provided by delivery partners and by Charity: water's small team of staff on the ground, and the performance data is made available on the Charity: water website along with aggregated performance data and financial accounts. It is not only the level of web-based transparency that is impressive here, but the quality of reporting and the graphics, as well as the ease of navigation through the website.

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Vignette two: CHF International

Evidence gathering, project reporting, and relationship-building
Established almost 60 years ago, CHF International (**www.chfinternational.org**) delivers programmes in more than 25 countries, to in excess of 20 million people. Working in partnership with low- and moderate-income communities, private and public sector organisations, and other bodies, the charity's mission is to enable communities to improve the social, economic, and environmental conditions in which they live and work, so that they are both self-sufficient and resilient. Reporting revenue and support worth in excess of £246 million in 2009 (CHF International, 2009), it is a major charity in the field of international development, with project expertise spanning economic development, infrastructure, emergency response, and democracy and governance, amongst others.

Awarded Charity Navigator's highest ranking for transparency, accountability, and efficiency in 2009, and certified by Guidestar as a 'Partner in Trust', CHF International is currently liaising closely with an external developer to deliver its second custom-built online system for real-time worldwide programme monitoring and reporting. A key imperative lending momentum to CHF's 'next generation' reporting system has been the charity's increasing awareness, shaped by the movement into the organisation of employees with private sector backgrounds, that its activities must be underpinned by a more business-like approach. Championed by senior staff (whose vision is of a dynamic system with the flexibility to respond to the rapidly changing conditions in which programmes are delivered, enabling sophisticated and intensive data capture and analysis) the system is seen as pivotal in positioning the charity as an agile, nimble, adaptive organisation, as it moves forward. CHF International's digital media team is also looking at how to generate and sustain high quality dialogue with supporters and potential donors through social media networks. Social media platforms are seen as valuable channels with which to re-connect and build long-term relationships with people and communities that have been helped by CHF International. Being able to connect in this way is enabling the charity to gather evidence of the longer-term impacts of its programmes. CHF International is also looking at how enabling people to 'tell their own stories' through social media platforms may assist its fundraising effort.

Social media platforms are seen as valuable channels with which to re-connect and build long-term relationships with people and communities that have been helped by CHF International

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Vignette three: Kiva

Micro-financing, transparency, and trust-building
Established in the USA in 2005 with the aim of alleviating poverty, Kiva is harnessing the internet to develop and connect a network of individual lenders and lending teams, microfinance institutions, and entrepreneurs throughout the world. In the five or so years since it was founded, lenders have funded loans to the value of $207 million, to in excess of 537 entrepreneurs. Working through microfinance institutions who are approved Kiva Field Partners the repayment rate on loans is 98.70%[27].

On Kiva's website (**www.kiva.org**) potential lenders can identify loan requests for business projects of interest to them, grouping them according to country/region, industry/sector, popularity with other lenders, amount already loaned, amount still required, and repayment term, for example. Potential and existing lenders can access a short profile informing them about the business project and the entrepreneur behind it, together with information about the repayment term and the microfinance institution administering the loan, and associated repayments and reporting. They can also see who is lending to a particular project. The Kiva website also provides information for lenders explaining what is meant by microfinance, issues of 'risk and due diligence', exchange rates, and how the Kiva process works. Lenders transfer funds to Kiva for disbursement to the administering microfinance institution. On repayment of the loan, lenders can elect to reinvest the funds as a further loan, or the funds can be retained by the lender.

In the five or so years since Kiva was founded, lenders have funded loans to the value of $207 million, to in excess of 537 entrepreneurs

Vignette four: RedR UK

Technical support
Established in 1982 as a small volunteer-based charity, RedR UK (**http://www.redr.org.uk**) is now a professionally-staffed organisation of international scope. In 2009-10, the charity provided training to almost 4,000 aid workers and supported humanitarian initiatives in more than 70 countries throughout the world. Inspired to play its part in delivering

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"a world in which sufficient competent and committed personnel are available and responding to human needs"[28] in 1998 RedR UK developed its online Technical Support Service (TSS).

RedR's TSS experts are a community of around 150 people with relevant knowledge and expertise, including humanitarian aid and development workers, private sector professionals, and academics. Through the TSS, RedR aims to answer all emergency enquiries within 24-48 hours of receiving a request, on topics ranging from water, sanitation, public health and shelter, to logistics, security, and communications. Managed by a dedicated Coordinator with extensive technical and field experience, the service is freely available to anyone with online access. Requests for advice are passed to the relevant experts, where they are researched and discussed prior to advice being offered. As well as emailing responses directly to those seeking advice, responses are also provided on the RedR website so that they are available to others on an open access basis. "TSS responses typically include multiple approaches to solving a given 'problem', based on real world field experience"[29] (RedR UK, p.2. n.d.). From selection of experts to provision of advice, the service is quality assured by RedR. Follow-up support is also available if required, including field-based assessment and advice where this is necessary.

Vignette five: Sparked

Micro-Volunteering

Established in the USA in 2008, and conceived and delivered by its two co-founders and a small team of highly qualified professionals, Sparked (**www.sparked.com**) is an online 'hub' of international scope that matches private individual and corporate volunteers with volunteering 'challenges' set by voluntary organisations. Designed and delivered under the auspices of for-profit company, The Extraordinaries, the matching service is currently offered free of charge to individual volunteers and voluntary organisations.

Sparked is an online 'hub' that matches private individual and corporate volunteers with volunteering 'challenges' set by voluntary organisations

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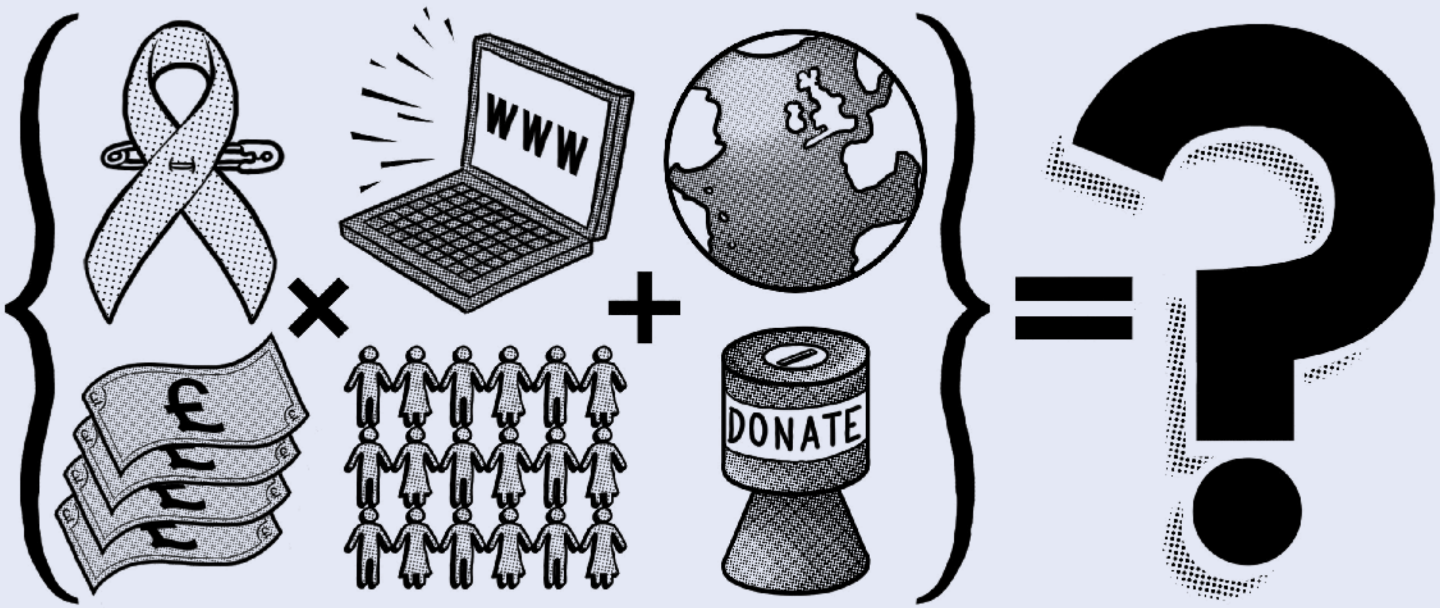
Encapsulating the concept of 'micro-volunteering', defining features of the service include 'crowd-sourcing' as a way of optimising capability in the form of ideas, information, skills, and expertise, and peer review as a means of quality control. The idea behind 'micro-volunteering'[30] is that volunteering becomes something that can be fitted into busy lifestyles, perhaps involving a few minutes of time on a one-off basis on the commute to work, rather than several hours a week on a long-term basis. Both the matching of volunteers to projects and the micro-volunteering can take place online.

Defining features of the service include 'crowd-sourcing' as a way of optimising capability in the form of ideas, information, skills, and expertise, and peer review as a means of quality control

Analysis and findings

This section presents key themes that have emerged from this research highlighting the opportunities for third sector organisations to use the internet effectively.



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This section of the Review draws collectively on our findings from the documentary sources that we have reviewed, the Expert Panel interviews, the case studies, the web-based reviews that are the basis of the vignettes, and the Focus Group that comprised members of the Expert Panel and representatives from the case study organisations. Our key findings are set out below under a series of thematic sub-headings that reflect our insights from the research.

The synergistic inter-connectedness between the 'virtual' and the 'real' is one of the most striking outcomes of this work

1. Connecting the 'virtual' and the 'real': realising support relationships

We have included illustrative examples of 'virtual', modern, and 'traditional' organisations, in this Review. In different ways, to varying extents and though not all are substantively 'virtual' organisations, See the Difference, YouthNet, Sparked, Kiva, Charity: water, and RedR UK are creatures of the internet era, innovating and offering services that 'ride the wave' of the latest Kondratiev wave and, in so-doing, support the traditional organisations that represent the great mass of the third sector (Section1.0). This synergistic inter-connectedness between the 'virtual' and the 'real' is one of the most striking outcomes of this work. Thus, whilst the great majority of organisations in this sector will continue with a business presence beyond the internet, organisations such as those we have brought forward here are enabling and supporting those whose substantive business takes them beyond the net. A substantively 'virtual' organisation, See the Difference (Section 2.0) provides a 'meeting point' for potential donors and charitable projects, for example, and also provides a platform both for those donors to actively fundraise on behalf of their chosen project, as well as for the provision of high level digital and content expertise to enable organisations to showcase their projects on the See the Difference website. Another example emerging from this Review is that of RedR UK (Section 3.0), a 'traditional' organisation that is embracing the internet in an aspect of its work to provide a key 'support relationship' through which frontline aid and development workers (including the employees and volunteers of other third sector organisations) are able to obtain guidance and advice from RedR UK 'approved' experts, in respect of practical problems that have arisen unexpectedly in the field. These include time-critical emergency situations and those requiring creative and improvised

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responses. Through its Technical Support Service (TSS) RedR UK is able to bring together a community of people with relevant knowledge and expertise (including humanitarian aid and development workers, private sector professionals, and academics), to answer emergency enquiries on areas ranging from water, sanitation, public health and shelter, to logistics, security, and communications, within 24-48 hours of receiving a request.

In our case study of See the Difference we refer to its 'fit' with ideas about the so-called 'support economy'. Those ideas include within them the emergence of a new 'enterprise logic' wherein organisations seek expertise in the form of support relationships in ways that enable them best to secure their mission rather than seeking to build that expertise internally. This model seems to fit the third sector well, and we take the view that this 'support economy' (exemplified by See the Difference and these other organisations from this study) will be an increasingly important aspect of the third sector, as organisations that major in the many substantive fields of the sector come to require new ways of finding agility as they engage in their mission and of presenting themselves on the internet in ways that resonate with the values and attitudes of modern donors and volunteers.

Those ideas include within them the emergence of a new 'enterprise logic' wherein organisations seek expertise in the form of support relationships in ways that enable them best to secure their mission rather than seeking to build that expertise internally

2. The information revolution in the third sector: enhancing agility, reach, responsibility, and influence

Across all of our case study organisations, both modern and traditional, we have also been struck by the unprecedented levels of data capture and interrogation in which they are engaging, and that are shaping their high level strategizing as well as their day-to-day operational decisions and performance. The Family Holiday Association (Section 2.0) is an especially good example of how a small organisation, exploiting its capacity for rich data capture and analysis, is able to "extend its profile and reach out into donor communities far beyond what it could otherwise achieve", and similarly, too, to have a stronger voice within relevant public policy spheres. All of the case study organisations, though, are 'pulling in' data, whether from web metrics, EPOS systems, databases, social networking sites, or other sources. Some of them – the Family Holiday Association

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(Section 2.0), See the Difference (Section 2.0), and YouthNet (Section 2.0) amongst them – are also recognising the value of sharing their data aggregations in the form of profiling, trends, and other compilations that can support performance improvements at the level of the individual organisations themselves or their collaborative partnerships. The RNID (Section 2.0) is using a raft of web and other performance metrics to inform its strategic positioning, but it is looking too at how best to develop quality dialogue through social networking forums that will enable this organisation better to understand what hearing loss means to existing and potential users of its services and how it can better serve their needs. It is also using data capture in ways that are enabling it to 'personalise' its web-based services and relationships in ways that will make these more relevant and accessible to those using the information and other services hosted on its website. We have seen, for example, that RNID's new website will 'recognise' that someone has an interest in 'tinnitus' and, as they move through the website, information about 'tinnitus' will be automatically highlighted and drawn to their attention. This wealth of data capture is also supporting new levels of 'nimbleness' such as we have seen with BHF Retailing (Section 2.0) and St John Ambulance Lancashire (SJAL) (Section 2.0). Through strong, real-time data capture and interrogation BHF Retailing (Section 2.0) has become more strategic and agile in the way that it processes, positions, and moves stock through its high street shops and on the web.

The St John Ambulance Foundation (SJAF) is a highly complex national-local movement. Delivering services in England through a number of highly autonomous regional divisions and their local area units, effective volunteer deployment is a complex, but critically important task. Whether of 'time-critical' or routine nature, the services delivered are immensely challenging in the demands these, too, place on effective volunteer deployment. Moreover, among the services that volunteers provide are (emergency) first aid at everything from local sports days to major sporting events; hospital patient transport; routine specimen transportation undertaken within strict time constraints; emergency organ transportation; providing minor injury units situated in town centres; and providing support to major incidents. The task of deploying volunteers effectively is made more complex still as volunteers are qualified to deliver different levels of medical support, with some able to administer basic first aid, while others are authorised to use

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trauma equipment, for example. The development and roll-out of an integrated, online Duty Information Planning system (DIP), of which an SMS text messaging capability is a key component, is bringing significant new 'nimbleness' in volunteer deployment capability to the participating divisional units, of which SJAL is one. Harnessing data stored within DIP as well as information captured in the course of 'real time' communications with its volunteers, St John Ambulance Lancashire is managing its volunteers with new levels of agility and responsiveness, both within divisional boundaries as well as across them as part of the national St John Ambulance Foundation movement. Thus, using DIP in combination with the SMS text messaging system, backed-up by emails, pager, and telephone calls, in the event of an emergency SJAL can immediately see which staff and volunteers are available, who they are, whether they are qualified to deliver first aid or if they have additional specialist training and experience, where they are, what they are doing, and whether they are available for deployment or re-deployment. Depending on the information generated, staff and volunteers can be 'called up'.

Throughout these organisations we are seeing a wealth of information and data being generated, captured, and interrogated in complex and purposeful ways, much of it made possible by internet-technologies.

We are seeing a wealth of information and data being generated, captured, and interrogated in complex and purposeful ways, much of it made possible by internet-technologies

3. Trusting third sector organisations: generating a new 'value relationship'

Third sector organisations have remained comparatively well trusted by users of their services, by donors, and by other stakeholders, despite a number of high profile 'scandals' that have surfaced from time to time[31]. Nonetheless, there has been a growing sense within the third sector, and more widely, of the need to raise the profile of information governance as well as addressing deficiencies in reporting regimes and transparency. Here, too, we see both the newer virtual and modern organisations such as See the Difference (Section 2.0), Kiva (Section 3.0), and Charity: water (Section 3.0), and the traditional third sector organisations such as RNID (Section 2.0) and CHF International (Section 3.0) harnessing the

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internet to advance these inter-related aims of trust-building, transparency, and accountability. For these organisations the online environment enables new and clearer levels of transparency, and with this the potential to develop sustained trust-relationships between donors and third sector organisations. Here, therefore, is evidence of the support economy being realised within the sector, as third sector bodies seek new ways of relating to donors and other stakeholders, thereby advancing a new value proposition between them. This theme is further substantiated in the evidence set out below.

In the case of See the Difference (Section 2.0), potential donors can watch a short film on its website that has been made by one of the charities, showcasing a project for which it requires funding. The film informs potential donors about the project and how donated funds will be used. Each film is accompanied by a 'feedback promise', advising potential and actual donors how and when they will receive reports about the funded project. Donors and potential donors can also see when a project has reached its funding target, as well as how much funding is still required at any point in time. Data privacy, security, and trust are also at the forefront of YouthNet's information assurance policies and practice. Information and data captured through the YouthNet websites are directly retrieved and stored by YouthNet (Section 2.0) and cannot be directly captured or analysed by its partner organisations. Furthermore, YouthNet's partners are expected to adopt its safeguarding policies and procedures when delivering services to YouthNet's service users. User privacy and data security objectives are also at the forefront of YouthNet's advice to service users in relation to how to clear their cookie and browser histories after using TheSite and Lifetracks websites. Also to ensure the privacy of young people using the confidential 'Need an Answer' service, users are provided with a unique ID number. If lost, the ID number is not re-issued by YouthNet, and the service user must re-submit the question and receive a new ID number to access the response. Offering a further layer of security for the young people using its services, responses to questions are not automatically forwarded to users, and must be actively requested by the user using the unique ID number allocated.

The RNID is also seeking to use the online environment, and social media sites together with the viral qualities of the internet particularly, to generate openness and trust-building

The online environment enables new and clearer levels of transparency, and with this the potential to develop sustained trust-relationships between donors and third sector organisations

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among its supporters and critics alike. Thus, it is using these online social spaces to respond openly to its critics in the public sphere and to engage them in constructive dialogue within that social space. The ability to have informative dialogue of the sort that will enable the charity to achieve a better understanding of how people think about hearing and deafness and the impact of hearing loss on their own and others' lives is also an opportunity to strengthen trust amongst its service users, supporters, and other stakeholders.

Among the vignettes (Section 3.0), CHF International is in the process of developing a new custom-built, online system, that will enable real-time monitoring and reporting of its international programmes and projects for donors. Using geospatial identifying coordinates supplied on receipt of a donation to one of the projects on the Charity: water website, donors are able to access information about 'their' sponsored project. The Charity: water website also presents information and reports on projects so that visitors to its website and potential donors are also able to see the nature of the projects, the funding garnered behind projects, as well as the delivered projects. Not only this, but the information and data are reported in visually imaginative ways, and with clarity unusual in third sector reporting. Kiva is also leading the way in delivering transparent, clear, and imaginatively presented information and reporting to those 'lenders' and potential 'lenders' who make funding available to the entrepreneurs showcased on its website. Amongst the information provided by Kiva is a short profile of the entrepreneur that captures the essence of that person's family and economic circumstances, their character and personality, and their business ambitions together with the 'dream' that drives them. There is information about the in-country micro-finance institutions that are Kiva's 'field partners', administering the loans and providing advice and other support to the entrepreneurs. Lenders are also able to view the loan repayment schedules and progress in repaying loans. Amongst other information provided by Kiva is an explanation of the nature of micro-finance and how it works, while in a 'Risk and Due Diligence' webpage the organisation explains what risks are involved and how they are managed so as to minimise them, including where the responsibilities lie in respect of Kiva's role and those of the entrepreneurs, the field partners, and the lenders.

The information and data are reported in visually imaginative ways, and with clarity unusual in third sector reporting

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4. Changing management thinking in the third sector

Coming through forcefully amongst organisations such as See the Difference (Section 2.0), Kiva (Section 3.0), and Charity: water (Section 3.0) is a sense of an emergent re-positioning of the relationship between third sector organisations and those who donate and fundraise on their behalf, with donors no longer seen as 'owned by' and 'loyal to' a particular organisation, but more as 'clients' to be 'woo-ed', 'incentivised' and 'rewarded' for their support in the course of a shorter-term, project-specific involvement with an organisation, again resonating with ideas from the 'support economy'. In these circumstances, donating, fundraising, and lending need to be made 'fun to do' as well as 'easy and convenient', and the 'clients' need to feel that their efforts have been personally acknowledged and rewarded, whether in the form of a personalised 'thank you' email or a progress report showing the completed drinking well that their fundraising helped bring to fruition. This same 'mindshift' also applies to relationships with volunteers and other supporters, as recognised by Sparked in its micro-volunteering innovation. While long-term relationships may emerge in respect of donors, volunteers, and other supporters, in the short-term there are also considerable gains to be had for third sector organisations that are comfortable with the 'looser' more, flexible arrangements exemplified and enabled by organisations such as See the Difference, Kiva, Charity: water and Sparked.

The perception that there is benefit for organisations that are able to embrace a more 'hands-off' and less controlling approach to managing in the online environment extends to matters of content and 'brand' management also. The context for this point is social networking, with numerous of our case study and vignette organisations becoming more and more concerned to get out their message on Twitter and Facebook etc. Such 'viral' exposure raises challenging issues for third sector organisations in how to ensure consistency of message and brand when confronted by criticism that will inevitably appear on these social media sites. However, as we have shown in the RNID case study, supporters as well as critics can also speak freely and independently in positive ways and these comments too can go viral in the social media environment.

Such 'viral' exposure raises challenging issues for third sector organisations in how to ensure consistency of message and brand

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5. No third sector organisation is an island: new modes of networking in funding, service providing and support

New forms of 'support relationships' are being embraced to deliver new and expanded opportunities for income generation

In many of the organisations that we have looked at we have seen new forms of 'support relationships' being embraced to deliver new and expanded opportunities for income generation, to raise the profile and reach of organisations, for volunteer recruitment, and frontline service delivery. YouthNet, for example, through its 600 delivery partners, is able to offer services to young people on a scale that would be impossible without online capability. RNID is using Google's Adwords venture to increase traffic to its website. We have seen how the Family Holiday Association is partnering with the travel company TUI and Nottingham University, and is seeking to develop relationships with other agencies, underpinned by this organisation's capabilities to capture and interrogate a wealth of data. This data would be difficult to capture without the use of online survey tools such as Zoomerang through which it is able to gather information and data from welfare agents and other stakeholders. We have seen, too, how this organisation is using service-providers such as JustGiving, Everyclick, Simonseeks and others offering forms of 'smart donating', and in the process raising its public profile and expanding its donor-base. BHF Retailing is a further illustrative example of the way that third sector organisations are expanding the reach and scope of their activities in its collaboration with Fairsharemusic as well as in its use of eBay as an outlet for high-value stock. The examples that we have brought forward of the 'support economy' in point 1 of this part of our Review, involving organisations such as See the Difference and Kiva, are also illustrative of these new modes of networking that are in evidence in the third sector.

6. Where are the change makers in the third sector?

There was a strong perception among those with whom spoke in the course of our research that the presence of visionary, 'net savvy', imaginative leadership was a crucial factor in enabling organisations to explore and experiment with the opportunities afforded by the online environment. Indeed this perception together with evidence that supports it, was found ubiquitously across the case study organisations. Thus, we heard

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this in relation to the virtual organisations such as See the Difference (Section 2.0) and YouthNet (Section 2.0), as well as the traditional organisations, such as RNID (Section 2.0) and British Heart Foundation (Section 2.0). In these organisations and others within our research, expertise and vision has been introduced via those with high level, senior experience from other sectors that include media and retail. Also, and as has come through at point 4 of this section of the Review, was the view that the 'top team' needs to be comfortable in loosening control, an element of which is allowing staff to experiment (with risk of failure) in pushing the boundaries of online engagement.

The 'top team' needs to be comfortable in loosening control... allowing staff to experiment (with risk of failure) in pushing the boundaries of online engagement

More broadly, as the online world becomes more and more embedded in the lives and work of citizens, in their roles as consumers, 'prosumers', employees, volunteers, and so forth, this too was felt by those with whom we spoke, to be bringing through a growing and irreversible groundswell towards change from which the third sector will find difficult to stand aside in the longer-term.

7. Information assurance: the elephant in the room

Information assurance, including data security and privacy and identity management, was a largely unspoken area throughout the research; 'the elephant in the room'. Whilst, as we have seen at point 2 of this part of our review, the third sector is becoming increasingly data intensive, a view that came very strongly from both our Expert Panel and our Focus Group is that, nonetheless, insufficient attention is paid to these assurance issues[32]. Clearly, and as we report in some of our case studies, there are areas of work where such matters become 'hard-wired' into the practices of the organisation. Thus for example, there was strong awareness of identity related issues on the part of the Family Holiday Association (Section 2.0), particularly in respect of their agents, and YouthNet (Section 2.0) majors on privacy matters as they represent the sine qua non of their mission. From those of our cases that exist on the web (our virtual organisations) we have heard that managing data security is so utterly intrinsic to their form and nature as to be "embedded in their DNA". However, we have seen at point 2 above the burgeoning of information and data capture on a grand scale. We have seen an emerging and

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growing embracing of cloud computing on the part of third sector organisations. We are seeing new collaborative arrangements that will involve data sharing, including sharing of data of a personal nature. We are hearing reports of high profile commercial businesses that are far from immune from malicious cyber-attacks. Against this backcloth – despite the leadership of the Charities Security Forum in particular and reinforced by bodies that include the Charity Technology Trust, LASA, and IT4 Communities – our experts laid great stress on the concern that the majority of third sector organisations may be sitting on the cusp of 'the perfect storm' in respect of data security. Thus, various elements that include the intensity of data being captured, the extent to which it is of a 'personal' nature, the ways in which it is being moved and stored, and the extent to which it is shared across organisational boundaries are coming together in ways that make it increasingly vulnerable to malicious theft or leaks and difficult to protect.

Reflections

This section provides a final summary from the authors, reflecting upon the research presented within this Review.

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Our findings emerge from the study of a group of organisations recommended to us from an Expert Panel, as well as from our own awareness of the third sector, as exemplary or leading edge organisations. As such it is unsurprising that we can see them as testament to the latest 'information Kondratiev' that we discuss in Section 1 of this Review, intensifying their use of new social media and other internet-related activities and deriving new information resources that shape their activities. We have seen some of these organisations too as 'creatures of the web' where the web has become the sine qua non of their activities as they proffer new ways of working with third sector organisations. Our experts also took the view (that we would support from our previous work on new technology adoption in this sector) that the great bulk of the sector is not adopting new technology, and the internet in particular, to best effect. The logic of long wave economic theory is that the forces of these new technologically-supported 'ways of doing' will engulf most if not all organisations in the course of time, including those of the third sector. However, as we have shown here, internet use and new technology adoption generally will enable survival in an environment becoming more discerning and more competitive in terms of donating and volunteering, and adoption is therefore in the best interests of organisations in this sector.

As we have shown here, internet use and new technology adoption generally will enable survival in an environment becoming more discerning and more competitive in terms of donating and volunteering, and adoption is therefore in the best interests of organisations in this sector

As we have reflected further on our findings we have been struck by the extent to which these leading edge third sector organisations that we have included as case studies and vignettes exemplify core principles of the 'network society'[33] as well as the ideas associated with the 'support economy'[34] and its 'new enterprise logic'. We have been particularly struck by synergies emerging between the virtual, modern and the traditional organisations as YouthNet, See the Difference, Charity: water, Kiva, and Sparked, for example, generate opportunities for new, more transparent, and more flexible 'value relationships' between service users, donors, volunteers, and the third sector organisations that are engaging with these 'support' organisations. We have seen, too, how a traditional organisation, RedR UK, is also harnessing the internet in the mode of the 'support economy' as it delivers an expert information and advice service to those personnel operating at the frontline of international aid and development. We have been struck, also, by the voracious appetite for information and data characterising the organisations included in this Review, and the adeptness with which they are beginning

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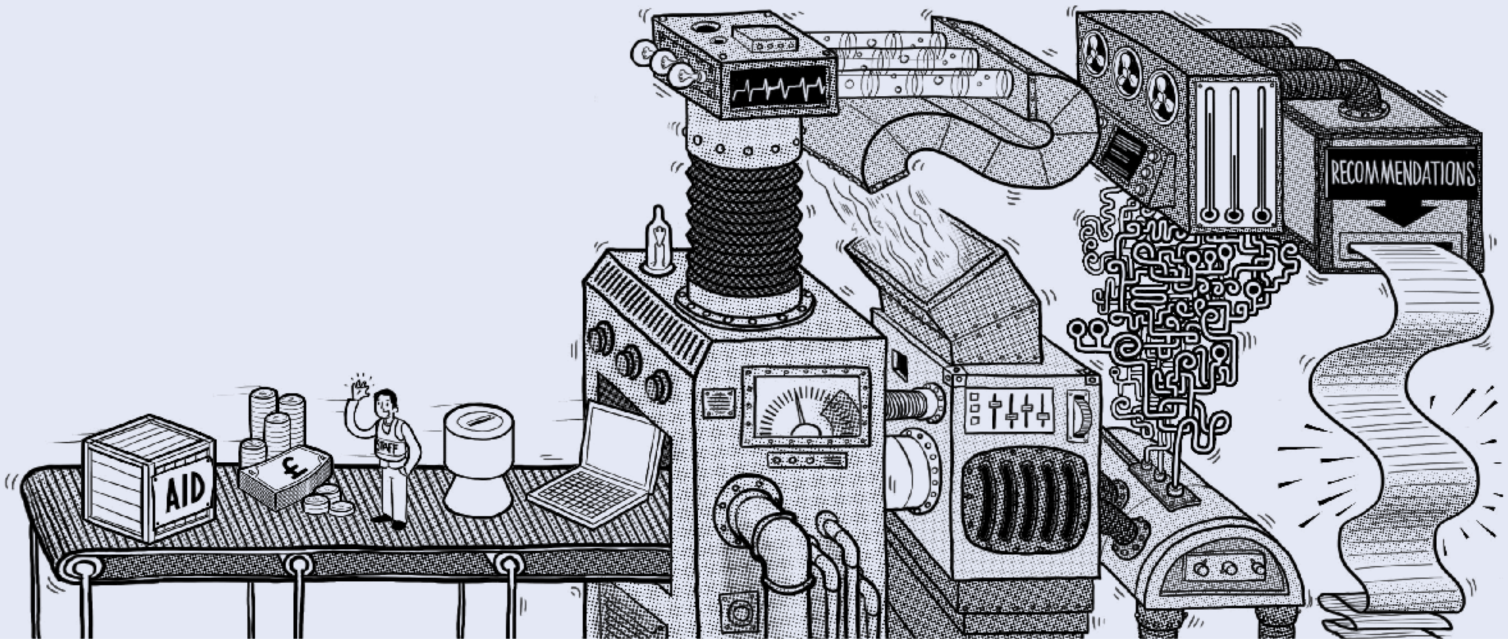
to capture and interrogate them. Through their 'support relationships', their harnessing of data, and their use, too, of the cloud, we have seen organisations such as the Family Holiday Association becoming 'bigger' whilst remaining small, expanding their reach so that they are able to serve new users, raising their profile amongst donors and 'lenders' so as to expand their funding base, and strengthening their legitimacy and voice with public policy makers. We have seen, too, how BHF Retailing and St John Ambulance Foundation and its Lancashire division are garnering and exploiting information and data in ways that are making these organisations more agile strategically and in their day-to-day operations. We have heard of the importance of visionary, creative leadership in these third sector organisations that understands the value of experiment and that is comfortable with the risks that derive from this acceptance. We have seen how third sector organisations such as the RNID are beginning to exploit the opportunities afforded by social networking media better to understand their service users, supporters, and their critics also, by engaging them in dialogue and online consultations. This, together with the new reporting transparencies that we are seeing in a number of the organisations included in this Review – See the Difference, Charity: water, Kiva, and CHF International stand out here – affords new opportunities for trust-building in a Sector for which trust is a resource of the deepest importance. Finally, we have seen that in the intensely information and data rich worlds which these third sector organisations are growing and capturing, their vulnerabilities in matters of information assurance – and data security in particular – are also increasing, and with this the trust that is held so dear is also placed at risk.

New reporting transparencies... affords new opportunities for trust-building in a Sector for which trust is a resource of the deepest importance

Recommendations

Notes

This section presents clear recommendations for third sector organisations looking to use the internet towards their charitable objectives and highlights where further research is needed.



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There are many recommendations that could be made on the basis of the findings brought forward in this Review. Drawing on the evidence gathered in the course of this Review, and focussing on how the internet can be used to support third sector organisations, we make the recommendations that follow. These recommendations are aimed at those who take leadership roles within the sector, including those who fund strategic and organisational development and research.

Recommendation 1
Charitable organisations seeking support to develop their online capabilities should display:

- clear strategic vision;
- strong leadership from the 'top team';
- understanding of the significant resourcing and effort that is required to bring about and sustain online capability and associated organisational change and performance enhancements, and a strategy for delivery;
- clear understanding of the anticipated informational and communications outcomes that they are seeking to deliver;
- understanding of relevant data security issues, together with a strategy for managing them;

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Recommendation 2
This piece of work has been necessarily quite abbreviated and we would therefore recommend areas that could usefully be explored further. We recommend further research in the following areas:

- information assurance and data security;
- how information and data capture and management is being intensified for strategic and operational purposes;
- how organisational scale and scope economies and agility are being improved;
- organisational relationships associated with the 'support economy'.

Recommendation 3
As noted above, the great bulk of the sector is not adopting new technology, and the internet in particular, to best effect. Given the rich examples of adoption and innovation that we have brought forward in this Review, we recommend activities are undertaken by lead organisations in the sector that:

- support the hosting of events such as research-based knowledge exchange symposia, seminars, and workshops, aimed primarily at the 'leaders' of third sector organisations, from which learning can take place.

Appendix 1 - Research aims and methods

Notes

In keeping with the overarching aim of Nominet Trust in commissioning this work (Section 1.1), the specific aims of this Review are to provide a landscape overview of how, in what contexts and under what conditions, and with what aims, third sector organisations are using the internet to advance or achieve their charitable objectives. To this end, the Review presents:

- an overview of relevant research and thinking;
- illustrative examples of leading projects and practices; both full case study reports and a series of 'vignettes' undertaken for this work;
- an analysis of the findings from this work;
- an overview of key opportunities and challenges to be addressed in the short to medium term.

Overarching research questions

The research questions that the Review addresses include the following.

- How are third sector organisations using internet-based technologies to support key activities (eg fundraising; volunteering; service provision; peer-to-peer support)?
- What organisational and management opportunities are internet-based technologies opening up for third sector organisations (eg organisational change; data sharing and mash-ups; improvements in information governance and management)?
- What issues and challenges are associated with their use of internet-based technologies (eg identity; privacy, information sharing; information security; information governance; training and development; sustainability)?

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– How can third sector organisations' engagement with internet-based technologies be optimised?

The expression 'state of the art', used in the title and elsewhere in this Review is intended to convey two meanings. First, we use the term to mean a capturing of the situation faced by third sector organisations in respect of their use of internet-based technologies. Thus, mainly through the use of Expert Panels, we have sought to understand, distil and convey where third sector organisations are in general with their use of these technologies. Secondly, we use the same term as meaning 'exemplary'. Our case studies and vignettes emerged from discussions with leading experts in the field and were chosen because they capture a range of innovative and successful ways in which these technologies are being deployed. From this we would hope that others will gain both insight and inspiration.

Research Methods

The research took place between 11th March and 8th May 2011.

The empirical research comprised four main stages. Stages 1 and 2, involving literature reviews and background interviews respectively, provided the overarching 'landscape' view of the use of internet-based technologies by third sector organisations. The background interviews were also used to identify potential case study organisations. Stage 3, involving third sector organisations identified as leading edge in their engagement with internet-based technologies, was also used to map the current and developing "landscape". Primarily, though, this stage was used to examine how, why, and in what ways these organisations are engaging with internet-based technologies. It also explored the challenges that have arisen, and how the organisations have optimised their use of the technologies. In Stage 4 a Focus Group was used as a means of confirming and further enriching the researchers' findings and analysis.

The literature review engaged with academic publications, practice-based publications, and public policy documents. These literatures assisted in identifying key trends and

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developments in the social, political, economic, technological, and legal/regulatory contexts that are influential in shaping charities' engagement with internet-based technologies.

The literature reviews were supplemented by a series of in-depth interviews with 'expert commentators' who were able to provide considered and critical analyses of landscape trends and developments, and the challenges and opportunities that these generate for charities in respect of technological engagement. The expert commentators were selected, in part, for their ability to provide an overview that embraced the range of sizes and types of organisations that inhabit the third sector.

The literature reviews and the background interviews were used to identify six charities regarded as leading edge in their engagement with internet-based technologies. These organisations were invited to participate in the research in the form of case studies.

Each case study involved in-depth interviews with relevant personnel, identified on a 'snowballing' basis. The interviews were supplemented by a review of publicly available in-house documents and websites. Confidential information, where this was made available to the Research Team, was to assist their understanding, and has not been placed in the public domain.

Adopting a holistic and strategic focus, the case study interviews involved members of the senior management teams.

Interviewees were invited to review the draft case studies for factual accuracy and points of clarification, with responsibility for interpretation and analysis resting with the Research Team in the interests of academic independence.

On completion of the case studies, interviewees from these organisations together with the expert commentators were invited to participate in a half-day Focus Group. This provided an opportunity to invite reflection and considered comment on the findings from the study. The Focus Group was also used as a sounding board with which to verify and validate the research findings.

Appendix 2 - Expert Panel

Notes

The Expert Panel comprised:

- Richard Craig, Charity Technology Trust
- Martyn Croft, Socitm Third Sector Forum, Charities Security Forum, Charity ICT Consortium Members Group and the Salvation Army
- Sally O’Connell, Shelter
- Anne Stafford, iT4Communities
- Terry Stokes, Lasa
- Karl Wilding, National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Appendix 3 - Focus Group

Notes

The Focus Group comprised:

- Richard Craig, Charity Technology Trust
- Martyn Croft, Socitm Third Sector Forum, Charities Security Forum, Charity Consortium ICT Members Group, and the Salvation Army
- Sally O'Connell, Shelter
- Claire Easterman, YouthNet
- Anne Stafford, iT4Communities
- Aba Maison, Lasa
- Dominic Vallely, See the Difference.
- Karl Wilding, National Council for Voluntary Organisations

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The term 'digital native' was coined by Marc Prensky, in his work Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, published in 2001.

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24
The figures for 2010-11 show further, significant improvements in turnover and profits.

25
Identification numbers affixed to produce and other products in grocery stores and supermarkets to make check-out and inventory control easier, faster, and more accurate.

26
CHF International also involved a small number of interviews with key staff.

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This view is supported by evidence from the Charity IT Survey 2011 which found that organisations conducting annual security reviews are in a clear minority.

33
Castells, M., op.cit.

34
Zuboff, S. and Maxmin, J., op.cit

About Nominet Trust

Notes

The internet enables us all to think radically differently, to stimulate new forms of collaboration and to mobilise new communities of interest to take action for social good. It offers us phenomenal opportunities to inspire the creativity and compassion of millions of users in addressing social needs.

At Nominet Trust, we harness new possibilities presented by the internet to seek out, galvanise and nurture the untapped potential of grass-roots social action that empowers people to change the world and their own lives in beneficial ways.

As a UK-based social investor and catalyst, we intend to bring together, to thoughtfully invest in and to support people who use the internet to make society better.

Nominet Trust supports internet-based projects that contribute to a safe, accessible online world, which offers opportunities to improve lives and communities.

All of our social investments are informed by research into current thinking and best practice. These investments are, in turn, evaluated to identify good practice. This good practice also feeds into further research on how to advance the internet as a tool to mobilise positive social change, which subsequently informs new investments.

To find out more about our work or how you can apply for funding, please visit:

www.nominettrust.org.uk

Notes

About our work

As a UK-based social investor, Nominet Trust supports internet-based projects that contribute to a safe, accessible online world, which offers opportunities to improve lives and communities.

As such, we offer support and funding for organisations and projects working to:

Increase access to the internet – providing people with the motivation, skills and tools to get online and stay online.

Improve online safety – educating people about the potential risks faced from being online and demonstrating how they can avoid coming to any harm.

Use the internet for social action – promoting the positive impact of the internet on lives and communities and using it in imaginative ways to address specific social problems.

Do you need support for your idea?
If you have an idea for a new initiative or would like support for an existing internet project then please get in touch.

We are particularly interested in initiatives that develop tools or models that can be replicated or scaled-up to benefit others.

To find out more about how you can apply for funding, visit us at:

www.nominettrust.org.uk

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nominet trust

social investment for social impact

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