DiGITAL YOuTH WORK

–a Finnish perspective

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VERKE

Helsinki

Ministry of Education
and Culture

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Foreword

SOCIETY HAS BECOME profoundly digitalised, and technology is present in every area of young people's lives. Every young person is somehow connected to digital cultures, whether they use digital media actively or passively. The process of technologisation has also irreversibly changed the civic skills that are required of young people in the future, as well as the ways young people manage their social relationships. What follows is that the digitalisation of youth work is an absolute requirement to keep up with the times.

Finnish youth work boldly began to experiment with the possibilities offered by online platforms at a very early stage. The use of online technology or smartphones in youth work does not inherently guarantee that the work is meaningful or up-to-date – especially if the methods of using social media are not constantly updated based on the changes in young people's use of media. Youth work must also continually adopt new ways of using digital tools and technology to support meeting the objectives of youth work.

Simply put, digital youth work means applying digital media and technology to youth work. Ideally, the use of digital media and technology supports the organisation's own objectives and operations of youth work. According to the understanding gained over the years in Verke, the objectives of digital youth work can be roughly divided into two bundles: 1) Making youth work up-to-date and appealing to young people by utilising digital technology in youth work services and 2) Enhancing young people's technology related skills.

There are numerous excellent examples of digital youth work being done in municipalities, parishes and non-governmental organisations all around Finland. Based on Verke's surveys, however, it seems that implementing digital youth work is in the

hands of few enthusiastic individuals, and the full potential of digital media and technology is still not realised widely in youth work. Strategic development and establishing objectives in digital youth work are also relatively rare.

We hope that this publication will help to understand what digitality in youth work could mean, and the reasons why digital youth work should be implemented. We have attempted to gather perspectives in this publication that would shed light on as diverse approaches to digital youth work as possible. This publication endeavors to balance between practical descriptions of operations and discussion of a more conceptual level. This reflects in its part the strongly rooted idea of learning by doing in Finnish youth work and, on the other hand, the needs for developing strategic work and understanding the larger context of implementing new operative methods. Some of the texts have been published before, in Finnish, in Verke's materials or blog, while some were specifically written for this publication. If you need additional information on a subject, or you feel that you would like to collaborate with the writers, we hope that you do not hesitate to contact them!

Finland is a small language area, and because Finnish digital youth work has been written about mostly in Finnish thus far, it has sometimes been a challenge to explain to an international audience what is done in Finland, and why. The purpose of this publication is to provide a more extensive readership with an overview of the status of Finnish digital youth work. Because digital youth work has been developed from various starting points and in different directions in respective national contexts, the parties involved in youth work in different countries have lots to learn from each other. We wish that this publication will function as an impetus for developing digital youth work in international co-operation, and help for its part to initiate and vitalise discussions between youth work professionals and organisations in Finland and abroad.

We wish to thank the writers of the articles within and the Ministry of Education and Culture, whose contribution enabled producing this publication. ●

In Helsinki, September 2017
Juha Kiviniemi and Suvi Tuominen

Part 1:

DEFINING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

WITH TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES having changed the way in which young people use the web, youth work that utilizes digital technology has reached a turning point. It is therefore no longer appropriate to distinguish digital youth work from face-to-face activities, or treat it as a separate method or branch in youth work. In fact, digital youth work should not be defined solely as youth work done online, but should cover all forms and methods of youth work. Digital youth work cannot indeed even exist without traditional forms of youth work.

The term digital youth work first emerged in the Finnish youth work lexicon in the summer of 2012, when youth work organisations throughout Europe, invited by Verke, met in Finland to discuss the impact of digitalisation on youth work and its practices. Already then, the central idea was that the goal of digital youth work must be to comprehensively strengthen the agency of young people in a technologised and digitalised world (Davies 2012; Taylor 2012). This idea is still easy to endorse.

However, the concept of digital youth work was not firmly established until a few years later. This was partly because online and web-based youth work had gained a strong foothold in the professional terminology of youth work. On the other hand, only certain approaches to realising the potential of the digital media and technology had become established in youth work. Compared to many other countries, Finnish digital youth work has been characterised by work via online services, particularly the social media, while using a variety of chat tools to reach out to the young. In fact, many Finnish youth workers have found it difficult to grasp what 'digital media' might mean outside the social media. There was a demand for the concept of digital youth work in parallel with online and web-based youth work to describe the diversity of digitalisation in youth work. (Lauha et. al 2017.)

Digital youth work has also been introduced as a concept in many international arenas. The term smart youth work is used in some countries to refer to same kind of idea. The EU expert group on digitalisation and youth has summarised the definition of digital youth work as follows (EU expert group 2017):

- Digital youth work means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work.
- Digital youth work is not a youth work method – digital youth work can be included in any youth work setting (open youth work, youth information and counselling, youth clubs, detached youth work...).
- Digital youth work has the same goals as youth work in general, and using digital media and technology in youth work should always support these goals.
- Digital youth work can happen in face-to-face situations as well as in on-line environments – or in a mixture of these two. Digital media and tech-nology can be used either as a tool, an activity or a content in youth work.

As can be inferred from the definition presented above, digitality should not be considered to have value as such, but digital media and technology should be adopted into youth work practise only on the terms of youth work. How does digitality support performing youth work and meeting its objectives? We should aspire to a future where there is no distinction between youth work that utilises digital technology and other youth work; a future where digital media is as natural a part of youth work as it is in the daily lives of young people (Lauha et al. 2017).

Digital youth work keeps up with the times and changes accordingly. It grows, adapts and adopts various trends and thoughts, which is why many descriptions of the practices and definitions of digital youth work become obsolete – some faster, others not so fast. This reflects the fact that the digital youth work field is energetic and dynamic.

Defining digital youth work and its importance

Emma Kuusi, Ministry of Education and Culture

THE NEW YOUTH ACT ENTERED into force in Finland at the beginning of 2017. The purpose of the Act is to promote the social inclusion of young people and provide them with opportunities for exerting an influence and improving their skills and capabilities to function in society; support the growth, independence and sense of community of young people and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and adoption of skills necessary for this purpose; support young people's free-time pursuits and engagement in civic society; promote non-discrimination and equality among young people and the realisation of their rights; and improve young people's growth and living conditions. Underlying these objectives are the principles of solidarity, multiculturalism and internationalism, sustainable development, healthy lifestyles, respect for life and the environment and cross-sectoral cooperation.

Under the new Youth Act, municipalities are responsible for youth work. Municipalities are required to create the necessary preconditions for youth work and activities by providing services and premises for young people and supporting their civic engagement. Young people will always need safe premises and support for informal social and independent activities. Youth centre activities are a traditional form of youth work that is available in almost all Finnish municipalities. However, not all young people visit youth centres, or they visit them very infrequently. Instead, they spend their time outside of school in places such as streets, shopping centres, cafés, public transport — and the digital world. Youth workers in both municipalities and non-governmental organisations have traditionally worked with young people out in the field, in diverse operating environments, which has always required the constant development of working methods and partnerships.

The same goes for digital youth work. Digitality relates to the operating environment, but it can also be seen as the content and instrument of activity. It is in a state of constant change due to the development of technology. As a form of youth work, digital youth work requires youth workers to have the kind of competence that they might not possess, and which they feel to be deficient. Even with digital youth work being increasingly taken into account in training in the field of youth work, there is a significant and ongoing need for further training and support. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, which is responsible under the Youth Act for the overall administration, coordination and development of youth work and youth policy as well as the creation of favourable conditions for the pursuit of the policy in the central government, also requires up-to-date information and an understanding of digital youth work in order to carry out its duties pursuant to the Youth Act.

This above-mentioned is why the Ministry of Education and Culture provides funding to the national operator Verke. In addition to producing and compiling information on digital youth work, Verke promotes public awareness and the quality of digital youth work by providing training and support services to youth work practitioners. It is likely that, at some stage, digitality will become such a natural and inseparable aspect of all youth work that a separate Verke function is no longer necessary. However, we do not feel that this point has been reached yet.

In addition to supporting Verke, the Ministry of Education and Culture also provides funding to municipal and NGO projects aimed at initiating and developing digital youth work activities. The funding supports innovative activities from the perspective of youth work methods as well as the geographic region. The aim is to promote the utilisation of digital media in youth work and develop the content of digital youth work. The projects often attract young people who have not previously been effectively reached by more traditional forms of youth work.

Digitality enables new ways of supporting young people in accordance with the objectives of the recently implemented Youth Act: it makes it possible to reach more young people, it lowers young people's threshold of participating and exerting influence and it provides easy-to-use channels for young people's free-time pursuits and interaction. This challenges youth work to develop its operating methods further. ●

The pillars of digital youth work

Tomi KiilakoskI, Finnish Youth Research Network

PROFESSOR DANA FUSCO (2012) DESCRIBES the greatest challenge in youth work as follows: "The necessity to define who we are, what we do and why we do it is never before more critical." According to Fusco, youth work must more conscientiously strive to articulate its practices as well as its nature and objectives.

All characterisations of the challenges highlight a certain problem. Whenever it is stated that a given point of development or problem exists, it is implied that the issue has not been previously dealt with as well as it should be. Based on my personal experience, I would sum it up by saying that, in youth work, it is easiest to talk about what we do. We play pool at youth centres, we provide guidance and counselling to young people online, we organise anti-substance abuse events and so on. It is slightly more difficult to talk about how we do what we do: what is the style we use in providing guidance and counselling, or what are the principles and premises for the events we organise. It is quite difficult to shed light on the underlying objectives of our activities and describe what kind of process is created by engaging in these activities. Even more difficult is the question of what kind of society we want to build through these activities. Nevertheless, youth work, like all other activities supporting young people and their growth, contributes to creating a certain shared social reality and influences the potential shape of our future society.

The challenge highlighted by Fusco can be seen as applying to digital youth work for two reasons: On the one hand, digital youth work is easier to link to existing youth services when there is an established shared view of what digital youth work is and what it aims to achieve. On the other hand, examining youth work only from the inside is beginning to be a thing of the past. In future, multidisciplinary services will increase

in significance from the perspective of young people as well as the communities they grow up in. Multidisciplinary work is easier when it is understood what the activities aim to achieve.

Defining youth work should, in some way, respond to the aforementioned challenges: explain the instruments and arenas; describe the learning environment of the activities; illustrate the methods of providing guidance and counselling; express objectives; and paint a picture of the ideal community and society that is built through the activities. This is not an easy task. It is also a task that may be made more difficult by the juxtaposition of creative and practical activities and activities focused on bureaucracy and theoretical discussion.

I have been involved in a five-year research and development project where we have reflected the nature, methods, goals and ways of working of youth work, initially with youth workers from Kokkola and later also Hämeenlinna, Kouvola, Oulu and Tornio. Over the years, we have described the nature of youth work in various ways. Engaging in this task has required us to define the relevant concepts. Concepts are tools that allow us to work on things. It has also required self-criticism: a profession that is unable to critically evaluate its own activities and thinks that everything done under the umbrella of youth work is automatically important would be blind to its own shortcomings. Above all, engaging in this task has required us to think about what youth work is ultimately about.

Our answer to the question of the nature of youth work is based on three perspectives. Firstly, we see youth work as being about education. We have resisted using trendy characterisations of youth work as, for instance, non-formal learning. By referring to youth work as education we have highlighted the fact that youth work clearly does not support just any kind of learning. Youth work has foundational values and direction. Ultimately, it is about supporting young people in living good lives — helping them have the ability to realise the opportunities they have as unique individuals. That is what education is really about. Seeing education as pushing something on young people is to confuse education with schooling.

Secondly, we have highlighted the fact that youth work is not about events at single points of time. This means that talking about encounters with young people "here and now", as important as it sometimes is, can be misleading. The duration of activities varies between different forms of youth work. Interactions with some young people last several years. Others are only met in passing encounters. Clearly, the goals and outcomes of the activities must be quite different as well. It is necessary to focus on the processes of youth work, the chain of encounters that takes place across different forms of activity. We also emphasise the importance of focusing on the process when describing youth work, rather than focusing on goals or learning outcomes.

Thirdly, we have highlighted that the educational process of youth work produces favourable outcomes, but it may be difficult to predict what will happen and what the

outcomes will be. Youth work is boosted by a belief that engaging in activities with young people will produce favourable learning outcomes. These outcomes arise from a process that is carried out with high-quality youth work, with the youth worker successfully providing support to young people and enabling their activities.

Together, these three perspectives produce the following definition: "youth work refers to goal-oriented educational activity that builds processes that make it possible to achieve the goals of youth work" (Kiilakoski, Kinnunen & Djupsund 2015). Using this definition, we can present the following questions with regard to digital youth work: What is the digital youth work process like? What happens in the process? How long does it take? Does the work primarily take place at the individual, group or community level? What are the goals of the activity? What outcomes will the activity produce for young people and in their relationships with peers, adults, services and society? — And an even more complex question: is digital youth work a process of its own (with the aim of, for example, helping young people function as a group in a technological world) or is it merely a part of some other process (with the aim of, for example, communicating information about events online)?

Processes are not shaped in a vacuum, and youth work is no exception to this rule. They are influenced by the existing history, traditions and beliefs of youth work — the entire youth work ethos. It is good to be conscious of these when planning activities. The aim of youth work, the ethos, the framework that guides the process, can be examined with the help of the pillars proposed by the Swedish researcher Torbjörn Forkby. According to Forkby, youth work in Sweden has been guided by five perspectives through its history. (Forkby & Kiilakoski 2014.) I see the pillars as useful in evaluating whether youth work is comprehensive enough and whether one of the pillars is absent or overemphasised at the expense of the other pillars.

THE DEMOCRACY PILLAR points to the role of youth work in giving young people a stronger capacity to act as citizens. This is achieved by creating various learning environments in youth work for practicing democratic decision-making. It is also necessary to influence environments outside of youth work.

THE PEDAGOGY PILLAR refers to the fact that youth work activities should strengthen the growth of young people and support their abilities. This means that youth work is not simply about organising fun activities or providing entertainment. This separates youth work from other leisure time services.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH PILLAR reflects the extent to which youth work has focused on supporting healthy lifestyles. Youth work should promote the health of young people, protect them and fight the phenomena that threaten to compromise their health.

THE CULTURAL PILLAR points to the need for youth work to take the aesthetic needs of young people into consideration and help them find ways of expressing themselves. Youth work should be keenly aware of the cultural phenomena in the lives of young people and support the forms of activity that are typical of young people.

THE SOCIAL POLICY PILLAR emphasises the need for youth work to prevent social problems. Various targeted measures can be aimed at young people who require support.

What does digital youth work look like through the lens of these five pillars? At least the public health pillar appears to be strong. Youth workers consider one of their responsibilities to be protecting young people from the negative phenomena associated with the Internet and digital culture. Targeted chats and support measures indicate that the social policy pillar is also strong. Channels for young people to create initiatives are an example of the democratic pillar in action. Non-governmental organisations, in particular, have a wide range of websites and functions that support the growth of young people.

There are examples of how the various pillars are evident in digital youth work. Nevertheless, it appears that digital youth work in its current form does not fully utilise all five of the pillars. Safety-related skills are emphasised at the expense of other areas, such as self-expression, peer activities and democratic participation (Tuominen et al. 2016). The question is, would youth work be more complete if all five pillars were strongly present?

Digital youth work inevitably involves learning about new devices, thinking about new usage environments and becoming acquainted with various technical systems. This means that issues at the instrument level require more attention than they do in other forms of youth work. However, in education, the essential questions are educational, not technological. For this reason, the focus should increasingly be on thinking about the process of digital youth work, setting goals and evaluating their achievement. The emphasis should be on the process, and the process must create joy, learning and opportunities for influence in the lives of young people. To engage in activities without goals is drifting; to have goals without activities is mere dreaming. ●

Brief history of Finnish digital youth work

Suvi Tuominen, Verke

YOUTH WORKERS HAVE sharp instincts. Youth work has swiftly and boldly addressed new cultural phenomena and trends in youth culture, and digitalisation is no exception to this. Finnish youth work has often harnessed the features and phenomena associated with new media or technologies, very soon after their emergence. For example, game consoles have been used in youth centres since the 1980's. Once data networks were introduced in Finland in the late 1980's and the 1990's, youth work institutions began constructing their websites for sharing information. Since the early 2000's, young people have been offered the possibility to get in contact with youth workers in online communities and social media services. The rapid development in the last few years, especially in mobile technology, has been noticed also in youth work, as novel online tools and social media services have become popular among young people as well as adults.

Digital technology in youth work – early stages

Digital media and technology have arguably been included in youth work as long as digital media has existed. One justification for using digital devices in youth centres has been from the very beginning to ensure young people equal access to digital devices, as not everyone has the opportunity to use these devices at home and build up their digital competence. Shiny new devices have naturally also attracted young people to youth centres. For instance, the first gaming consoles and computers found their way into youth centres in the 80's, when they were still relatively rare in household use. Modern youth centres regularly have tablets, digital cameras, and other digital technology in addition to the consoles.

Guidance and advice done over telephone networks began when Nuorisotietopankki (the Youth Information Bank) was founded in 1988. It was a Videotex-based national messaging and information service for young people. They could access devices connected to the Videotex information service at youth centres, for example. France and its youth information services were pioneers in Videotex at the time. (Hirvonen 2003; Vesikansa 1991.)

Bulletin board systems (BBS) were also used, to some extent, in youth work at the turn of the 1980s–1990s. These were computers connected to the landline telephone network, usually featuring a variety of forums and file areas, serving as sites for exchanging information and ideas, and providing recreation in much the same way as the Internet does now. For instance, the parishes of Tampere offered young technology enthusiasts electric services via the "Manse Heaven" BBS (Kosonen 2011).

The parishes of Tampere were already active in digital youth work back then: Bittileiri ("Byte Camp"), arranged by the parishes of Tampere, was one of the first organised digital youth work activities in the early 90's. Participants of the camp brought their own computers, and in addition to gaming, they learnt how to handle computers together. Bittileiri is still organised a few times a year. (Kosonen 2011.) Many municipalities, NGO's and parishes have developed various ways of including gaming in their youth work over the years, for example, game development clubs, LANs and e-Sport activities.

As browser-based internet became more common in the mid-90's, many municipal youth information and councelling services began to maintain their own websites. Information sites for young people included, for example, City of Helsinki's Kompassi Youth Information Centre, and Helppimesta ry. At first, the sites were only used for one-way communication, but as technology developed further, the sites were updated with Q&A services and other interactive elements.

By the end of the 90's, many youth centres had computers connected to the internet, where young people could read their e-mail, for example. Youth centres also arranged media workshops related to digital photography, for instance, and youth media editorial boards were founded to publish young people's texts online. The participatory ethos of media education has been an integral part of digital youth work for decades. Critical media literacy, production skills, coding and other important media skills are still being addressed in youth clubs and also as part of open youth work.

Youth work in social media

By the beginning of the 2000's, online technology had developed to the point where real-time chats began to be more common. They especially attracted young people, and youth workers were quick to follow. EOPH (now known as EHYT) was one of the first youth work organisations to bring their youth activities to social media. Young people queued for the Hubu bus in the online environment Hotelli Kultakala (Hotel Goldfish,

now known as Habbo), where EOPH arranged group discussion about certain themes. Hubu was inspired by a real-life bus that toured Finland at various events to perform preventive drug education with children and young people (Aspegren 2012; Elämä on Parasta Huumetta ry 2010).

A handful of other actors in the youth work sector, mainly non-governmental organisations, also found their way onto social media. By the mid-2000's, Finnish young people spent most of their online time in IRC-Galleria (IRC Gallery) and Habbo, so youth work activities were also focused in these services. Because of direct interaction with the service administrators, it was easy for organisations to gain visibility via these services and, at best, hundreds of participants joined group chats held by youth work organisations. IRC-Galleria enabled not only group chats but also other forms of digital youth work, including polls, video streaming, and private chats.

Netari, an online youth work project initially intended only for the Helsinki metropolitan area municipalities, but which soon expanded to cover the whole nation, was founded in 2004. During its busiest times, Netari had youth workers on duty from over 30 municipalities. Netari is an online youth centre where young people can spend time, play games or even have confidential discussions with youth workers. Over the years, Netari has been present in services such as Habbo, IRC-Galleria, Aapeli, Facebook and ask.fm. Nowadays, Netari is still active and coordinated by Save the Children.

While interactive and dialogical online youth work focused on social media services, in the 2000's the websites of youth work organisations focused on providing information and giving young people a platform on which to air their opinions. Notable examples include Nuortennetti (administrated by The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare), Jiipeenetti (administrated by the Centre for Boys and Girls), and the municipal youth media boards and media workshops for young people (Ruotsalainen 2003; Tuominen & Talja 2011). Similar services have sprung up as the years have passed.

The youth work organisations active in online environments set up a network of practitioners working with online services aimed for young people in 2007 (Nusuvefo). The purpose of the network is to enhance online youth work and increase cooperation between parties that are active online. The founding members were the City of Helsinki (Netari), EOPH (EHYT), The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare and Save the Children. The network remains active with almost 40 member organisations. Organisations must adhere to the ethical principles of online work set by Nusuvefo in their work in order to join the network. The purpose of the shared principles is to guarantee a high-quality and standardised level of service for young people.

In addition to youth workers, also other people working with young people found their way onto the social media towards the end of the decade, including health care, social work and student counselling experts. The best-known example must be the Finnish online police officer Fobba, who started working in IRC-Galleria in 2008. In other words, online youth work became multi-professional. This was well realised, for

example, in the national online youth centre Netari, where young people could speak about their issues with youth workers or nurses. Professionals from various disciplines still work together, for instance, in the Byström chat, maintained by the City of Oulu.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the youth work of parishes began to focus on their online presence by the end of the first decade of the 2000's. Implemented in 2009–2012, the project Hengellinen elämä verkossa (Spiritual life online) played a key role in developing the digital activities of the church. The underlying idea was that the Church should meet people and hold discussions with them in places where they are already present and active. The web was viewed as an operating environment which seeks to explore the same forms of spiritual life as a congregation meeting face to face in church (National Church Council 2007). Training and guidance were offered to church employees in support of the online work and to enable its development. Over the years, parishes have continued to invest in the training of employees in online work, which is reflected in the range of services and activities offered to young people online. (Hintsala & Ketola 2012.)

From Facebook to mobile

Facebook became popular among young people rapidly in 2008–2009. Facebook provided youth workers with an easy way to reach young people and hold one-to-one discussions with them. Facebook required users to identify themselves by their own names, enabling the easier combination – than via other services – of face-to-face youth work and online work, which also inspired municipal youth workers to experiment with online activities on a broader basis. Before Facebook, municipal online youth work was mainly limited to a few youth workers per municipality participating in the national Netari operations.

Facebook was embraced so widely in youth work that the development of other online youth work activities practically ground to a halt for a while (Lundqvist 2014). However, the golden period of Facebook only lasted for a few years. Young people began to abandon Facebook in favour of more private peer-to-peer communication platforms. Smartphones and their applications became more common in the early 2010's, attracting young people. Youth work followed slowly: 18 % of municipal youth workers had access to a smartphone provided by an employer in 2013 (Hyry 2013). However, two years after this, approximately 62 % of municipal youth workers had access to smartphones (Linkosalo 2015), and 86 % in 2017 (Hernesniemi 2017). Mobile devices have also enabled using digital technology in face-to-face situations, removing the final distinguishing elements between online youth work and other youth work.

Young people embrace new mobile applications and services continuously, so youth work must also be attentive and adapt to the use of new applications. Some applications are more fitting for informing, some for communication, some for channelling creativity, and others in making young people's voice heard. Youth work must be flexible

Digital youth work activities during the last three months (n=576)

Activity	Value
Posted an advertisement on social media	
Publicly shared information relevant to young people on social media	
Discussed digital themes with young people	
Used online or messaging services to give one-to-one counselling to young people	
Provided young people access to equipment and tools for consuming and producing digital media	
Provided young people opportunities to take part in advertisement of events or services	
Encouraged young people to produce their own content	
Produced online video material aimed at young people	
Mediated problematic situations related to young people's interaction on social media	
Made use of digital technology in group-building activities	
Hosted or enabled an event relating to youth digital cultures (*LAN-party, collecting Pokémons etc.*)	
Provided young people a platform to publish their opinions and productions	
Enabled young people to perform as peer-counsellors in clubs	
Supported youth e-participation	
Organised a goal-oriented activity on digital gaming	
Provided online access for participating in an event or activity	
Provided opportunity to do technical crafts (*maker culture*)	
Organised an activity or a club that promoted young people's digital literacy and skills	
Wrote a blog post aimed at young people	
Organised a guided activity online	
Provided an opportunity to learn coding	
None of the above	

Survey for municipal youth workers (Hernesniemi 2017).

enough to find suitable applications to meet the goals and needs in different activities. For instance, adventure education can utilize applications and games that use location data. The Pokemon GO hype in 2016 paved the way for a wider use of mobile games in youth work.

The views and experiences of municipal youth workers about digital youth work were surveyed in a questionnaire conducted by Verke in 2017 (Hernesniemi 2017). The results in the table above show that most practices of digital youth work are related to informing and guidance in online environments. For example, keeping blogs or producing media content together with young people is not yet very common in Finnish youth work. Similarly, combining activities in face-to-face and digital environments

(e.g. streaming events, arranging LAN parties and other digital gaming activities, embracing maker culture, organising small group activities) is realised, but only to a small extent. However, the range of different activities is impressive. A large number of youth workers has utilised digital media and technology in more ways than one. It must be taken into account that the attached list does not even nearly cover all the activities of digital youth work, so in reality, the range of activities is even more extensive.

What about the future?

As the brief description of history indicates, compared to many other countries, Finnish digital youth work has tended to emphasise low-threshold online help services, built especially on social media platforms. Many youth workers do not yet wholly understand what digital media includes besides social media (Verke 2015). In near future, we hope to see more innovative methods of digital youth work, where face-to-face work with young people is supported by online elements. In addition, maker culture approaches, digital craftsmanship and other methods of encouraging creative use of technology are not yet common enough in Finnish youth work. We are, in fact, behind some other countries in this aspect.

For the youth work field, the most interesting and significant technological developments are related to mobile technology, the internet of things, virtual reality and augmented reality. The concept of "online" is expanding and constantly being redefined. In the society of the future, the physical and the virtual world, the web and augmented reality are even more closely knit together. Understanding large developmental trends in technology is vital for the innovations of (digital) youth work. We should not stick to the past too closely, but we should think more openly: what kind of youth work services do young people need and want in the future? ●

Parts of this text have been published, in Finnish, in the article Lauha, H., Tuominen, S., Merikivi, J. and P. Timonen (2017). Minne menet, digitaalinen nuorisotyö? in Hoikkala, T. & J. Kuivakangas (Eds.) Kenen nuorisotyö? Yhteisöpedagogiikan kentät ja mahdollisuudet. Humak & Nuorisotutkimusverkosto.

Part 2:

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT goals of media and technology education in youth work is to encourage young people to be interested in media and technology related phenomena. Youth work should by default provide young people with sufficient resources to function in society, and digital skills are crucial in all contemporary communities.

Technological competence will be required in almost every profession in the future, as most people will have to work with bots, robots or other pre-programmed functions at some point of their career. Young people should be encouraged to have an open mind for technology in order to utilise all of the possibilities it has to offer. Every young person's equal opportunities to develop their technology skills must be ensured for them to have comparable positions in the labour market of the future – and to feel part of the society on the whole.

Public discussion and influencing opinions often take place on social media. To participate in public discourse, you must be able to base your arguments comprehensibly and with respect towards others' opinions, regardless of whether you do it in writing, with pictures or by video. It is also important to know how to read media contents critically and to recognise intentions behind them. The best method of media and technology education is producing content yourself: by creating your own content, you learn also to be critical towards other media contents. Youth work should thus promote young people's resources to use digital media and technology independently, actively and creatively.

Young people strongly think that technology will become more included in people's lives over the next decade (Myllyniemi 2017). Because technology is becoming an integral and more diverse part of our everyday lives, we need to promote knowledge about its operative mechanisms. If technology is only perceived as objects and devices, we can easily ignore the design and choices inherent in its development process. At least in Finland, youth work could be more active in technology education: how young people are encouraged in creative technological thinking and helping them understand how internet

and technology work. For youth work, characteristic ways of approaching crit-
ical technology education could be digital craftsmanship and maker culture.
These methods also provide young people with different ways to realise their
creativity, try something new, and develop their social skills.

As in all education, the genuine presence of a grown up and the young
person's voluntary participation are vital in media and technology education.
For example, everyday discussions about media and technology with young
people can be just as important, and sometimes even more significant, as
various large media educational projects.

Youth work – a great space for learning about media

Anu Pöyskö, wienXtra – medienzentrum

DURING THE LAST DECADE, the simplified concept of young people as "digital natives" often effectively hindered constructive discussions about media education. Initially, "digital natives" merely pointed out a generation born into a world already saturated with digital media. However, it then somehow transformed into an assumption of young people as a homogenous crowd with more or less similar and self-adopted digital media skills. This assumption often clouded our ability to be aware of the differentiated support needs of young people. Also, it allowed many adults – the so-called "digital immigrants," several of whom were also parents and educators— to flee into the comfortable position of "in the world of media, the kids are far ahead of us anyway, there is nothing left for us to do to support them."

Today, several studies confirm what those of us who work with children and young people observe on a daily basis: the media skills of youth vary widely, depending on several factors. A very high factor in developing these skills is the kind of support and attention they receive at home and school.

In the digital society, a person's digital and media skills crucially co-determine his/her opportunities in life as well as their possibilities to participate. It is therefore mandatory to ensure that every individual has equal chances to acquire and further develop their media literacy and digital skills.

Also, it is important to understand that the necessary media and digital skills go far beyond the simple ability to use digital media, to push the right button. These skills include a basic understanding of the underlying media technologies as well as a broad knowledge of digital media and its possibilities and the ability to utilize these oppor-

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tunities in a creative, reflected and responsible manner. An in-depth understanding of digital media enables us to see that media is not something that "happens" to us, but is created and shaped by people, and to join a visionary discussion about how we want our future media environments to be.

Youth work's assets in media education

In a constantly changing media environment, the acquisition of media skills is a life-long process with several significant contributors: family, peers, educational institutions, and media itself. Compared with other, more elementary agents of socialization like family and school, the role of youth work can be seen as complementary. However, what marks out youth work as different from these also defines its assets as an agent of media education.

A mundane but probably also the most significant instrument of media education is dialogue. On a day-to-day basis, we try to make sense of the world of media — it's controversial and often confusing contents, the way media influences our everyday life— by thinking and talking about it. Young people deal with a lot of stuff among themselves, but also long for adult discussion partners. They are, however, rather selective about who qualifies for the task. A trusting relationship is important, but they also expect at least a basic understanding of their media worlds.

Youth work creates social spaces that young people enter into on their own accord. This voluntary basis means we can never reach everyone because there is no obligation. However, on the positive side, youth work as a "third space" allows for different kinds of relationships between young people and adults. Additionally, this enables youth workers to implement more flexible and interest-oriented approaches.

Youth work has the potential to create fertile environments for learning about media simply by continuing to focus on what are often considered to be youth work's focal qualities: establishing trusting and respectful relationships with young people and acting in proximity to their life-worlds. Today, this should self-evidently include keeping up with the media worlds of youth.

Understanding media – understanding the world, society and self

An important component of active citizenship, in a digital society as before, is to stay informed of current affairs and form one's own opinion based on available information. This task seems to be getting increasingly complicated. The themes of today's political discourses are enormous and global, with complex interrelations. At the same time, the information environment for young people has become increasingly fragmented. Earlier generations mostly trusted a couple of established mass media institutions to "explain the world to them": the news on the TV plus a newspaper of their choice. The social media stream of today's youth is a diverse mix of messages of different origin and quality: private messages from friends and acquaintances, quotes from established

media, open or hidden messages from various influence groups, commercial messages, jokes, fakes, etc. "Who speaks the truth? Whom can I trust?"

On the one hand, young people regard the web as their primary source of information. On the other, they claim not to trust the internet. Quite a dilemma. To start with, to ask whether a person trusts "the internet" makes about as much sense as to ask if a person trusts "paper." In both cases, a more differentiated approach is necessary, made possible through the fundamental analytical questions of media literacy: who says what to whom and with what intention.

A certain intellectual laziness is characteristic of the way in which we search for and sort out information. We tend to reach out for information that fits our existing views and beliefs, and avoid messages that challenge us to question our way of thinking. This behavior is also referred to with the term "confirmation bias." The algorithms of many online platforms strengthen this already existing tendency by offering us content similar to what we liked yesterday. We thus quickly find ourselves in an echo chamber of sorts, a community of the like-minded, who share together similar ideas and pass around conforming content. For a young person flirting with radical ideas, or slipping into a personal crisis like an eating disorder, the consequences can be severe.

Media literacy curricula that teach us systematically to analyze media texts fit better into school. Once again, the most prominent tool of media education accessible for youth work is dialogue. Discussions about media-related topics often arise spontaneously, leaving the youth worker zero time for preparation. It is a huge challenge to ponder big questions spontaneously—one's level of knowledge often seems very insufficient. However, it is important to recognize these discussion-starters as a sign of trust and as signals of a need to talk. In most cases, it can be quite enough to add a new and more adult perspective to the discussion and together ask some new and good questions.

Supporting creative self-expression with media

Media education long ago recognized that to be actively involved in media production effectively deepens one's understanding of how mediated communication works. The process is a long chain of decisions (Which angle do we choose? What do we show? What do we leave out?), and each of these decisions has an effect on the outcome. Showing your media work to others and getting feedback often illustrates powerfully that a story can be understood in many different ways, even if the author thought his/her intentions were entirely apparent.

In addition to the "digital native," there is yet another mythical figure hanging around the media educational discourses of the last years: the "prosumer," the active consumer-producer of digital media. The idea was that through the easiness and cheapness of online-based publication, the boundary between media consumer and media producer quasi-automatically gets blurred, and they fuse into one entity.

This idea is certainly valid to some extent. Most young people are active on at least one social media platform, although this often can be regarded as an extended sphere of private discourse rather than a form of communication intended for a wider audience. Looking into slightly more complicated forms of digital self-expression, you get a different picture. Even though most of us constantly carry a powerful multi-media production tool in our handbag or back pocket (I am, of course, talking about the omni-present smartphone), it does not automatically mean we make use of its full potential. Almost all kids watch videos on YouTube, but just a minority run an active channel and regularly produce videos themselves.

There is still a huge need and demand for media workshops and projects in youth work. They can at first effectively spark interest in active media production, and later offer a creative space for deepening one's interest and create opportunities to meet other young people with comparable interests.

When media production takes place within the framework of youth work, it also gives us the opportunity to support young people to deal with questions that come with their new role as media producers. With kids who, let's say, start producing for YouTube, this means dealing with negative comments and accepting the fact that you are not going to be famous overnight.

Media production is, at its best, a complex and demanding co-operation with lots of social learning going on. The function of a youth work professional in these processes is often that of a facilitator, helping to plan and frame the process, to negotiate group rules, deal with the drawbacks and celebrate success.

Supporting young people to speak out

Among other things, media education has often aimed at getting the voice of young people heard in society. Through their own media productions, young people speak out as the bona fide experts on their life-worlds. For young people, the experience of making themselves heard can be truly empowering and encourages further participation. From the community's point of view, it is essential to ensure that younger generations have opportunities to speak out and that they are indeed heard.

Traditionally, our political system mostly communicates through the written word. Young people often prefer other, more visual, forms of expressing their ideas. Youth work professionals can moderate the communication process to ensure that messages that do not fit the traditional pattern also get understood and answered.

In the pre-digital past of media education, it was a huge challenge to find or create suitable forums for the media productions of young people. Today, the publishing possibilities online are readily available, and this is exactly why we should not publish without thinking. Do all the people who were involved in the production process agree with the publication? Do we otherwise have all the rights to the material we are using? Are there other legal questions to consider? What are the relevant audiences for our

message, and which channel is the most suitable to reach them? How do we deal with feedback, comments, and discussions? These are some of the questions young people can learn to deal with in media projects in youth work.

Creating a safe space for identity experiments

The challenges a young person tackles with during different phases of growing up can be referred to as "developmental tasks." With adolescents, one central developmental task is to form a coherent identity. This identity work never was a solitary affair, but always required some kind of a social framework. Young people need feedback on their drafts of self, especially from their peers. Today, a big part of the process takes place on different social media platforms.

As these comparatively new digital stages of self-portrayal emerged, educators started to worry about kids who expose themselves online too generously and give away too much private and personal information. During recent years, the awareness of young people to the possible (negative) consequences seems to have grown rapidly, and they have developed a wide range of strategies to deal with their online presence. While some quite deliberately design and promote their online selves, others prefer to withdraw into smaller groups. Meanwhile, others juggle different identities in various communities; and, yes, there are also those who decide not to care about the possible consequences.

Nevertheless, it is a demanding task to find a suitable balance between self-portrayal and self-protection. There is no single "right" way to be present in online communities, but we should rather all aim to make conscious and reflective decisions about our involvement. Youth workers should encourage young people to reflect on the ways they portray themselves online. Ideally, this also includes talking about the role models young people currently encounter in the media, who can impact positively (e.g. with inspiration and advice) or negatively (e.g. with an unrealistic concept of ideal beauty) on identity work that young people are going through.

Another (and, in my opinion, increasingly important) field of action for youth work can be offering offline, consequence-free spaces for creative identity experiments in face-to-face group situations. Active media production—whether it is with video, photo or mixed media—offers a broad range of methods and possibilities to play with images, roles, and identities. The task of youth workers is to ensure that feedback stays constructive and everybody has full ownership and control of their images. Within such a safe framework, it is easier to experiment boldly, discover new sides of oneself, laugh together, and feel free and at ease. This kind of secure environment can also be the optimal setting to start talking about the experiences young people have with their self-portrayal online.

Learning to use media in a self-responsible way

The media usage of small children is (or at least should be) initially shaped by their parents. In the formative teenage years, the focus gradually shifts from parental guidance towards self-responsibility. The more consciously young people learn to reflect their media use, the better they are in making self-responsible decisions about how they want to integrate media into their everyday lives. This critical evaluation also enables youngsters to make conscious changes if something does not "feel right." Mostly, it's time management issues we are tackling with. Once again, talking about media and how we use media in our everyday life helps, and youth work can provide an excellent setting for such discussions.

When I begin to discuss the media preferences and habits of young people with groups of adults, we often take our media biographies as a starting point and try to recollect our personal favorites as we grew up. Even though the media worlds of today's youngsters might look completely different, the underlying motives behind media use can be strikingly similar. Singing one's favorite songs in playback, using a hairbrush as a microphone, imagining oneself as a star. What happens today on Musical.ly is something teenagers have done for generations. Being a fan of something or somebody enables us to connect and feel part of a bigger community. The difference is that today it might be a YouTube star instead of a rock group. As one's peers become more and more important, so do the means of staying in touch with them. The telephones of yesterday had limited possibilities, but the smartphones of today can offer more. Trying to recognize the motives behind media use helps us regard the media worlds of young people empathetically and with a certain degree of respect. A person's media preferences are part of who they are, which is important to keep in mind when talking about these issues.

As adults, we too often adopt a prejudiced attitude towards the media worlds of young people. Young people sense this and start avoiding conversations about media issues entirely. This refusal is a great loss for both parties.

On the whole, effective media education in youth work is first and foremost a question of the right mindset. As youth workers, we do not need to become digital media experts who have answers to everything. It is enough to be open-minded, curious and willing to try out new forms of media, and be interested in listening to young people and always open to discussions. ●

Educating (critical) citizens in a digital society

Minna Saariketo, University of Tampere

THE FOURTH DIGIBAROMETER was published in June 2017. It is a survey that measures the degree of digitalisation in different countries on three different levels: preconditions, current utilisation, and the effects of the utilisation. It is published by Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications together with Tekes – The Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation, Technology Industries of Finland, and eCommerce Finland. Finland was the runner-up in this year's barometer, down one place from last year.

Pekka Rouvinen, CEO of Etlatieto by whom Digibarometer was conducted, commented on the results by suggesting that in order to improve its position, Finland must focus, among other things, on citizens' digital skills (Helsingin Sanomat 2017).

Citizens' digital skills have been advocated in similar circumstances before. For example, the Digital Agenda for Europe (2010) by the European Union promotes a skill called digital literacy as one of its development areas in the 2010's. Digital literacy is described as a pivotal skill because people need to know how to use digital technology in order to function as customers on online markets and as employees in the growing ICT sector. In other words, digital skills are important in speeding up economic growth.

Certainly, there is a need for novel expertise and understanding in relation to digitalisation. For the past decades, software and code have become an integral part of our daily routines, social communication, cultural experiences, media consumption, and almost all areas of society from administration to economy, politics, law enforcement, and research. This process, through which software has obtained its current ubiquity, has been called 'softwarization', and our society has been described as programmable.

I argue that the aforementioned administrative and business visions on digital skills bring only little insight to the nature of digital technology. They do almost nothing to help us understand the meaning of digitalisation in our everyday lives and the society. It might even be that such efforts to define the content of technology education distort or silence core issues that are essential for digital citizens.

Hence, there is a need for educators and youth workers who bring the much-needed critical stance into the discussion as well as educational practices. I present here the idea of critical technology education (see e.g. Saariketo 2015). It is an approach that challenges mainstream ideas of digital education as solely adapting to existing technology and equipping people with skills needed in order to use technologies effectively (to enhance economic growth).

The objectives of critical technology education are to support (1) understanding technology's role and meaning in everyday lives and the society, and (2) constructing alternative technologies and technology related practices. Instead of assuming 'digital' and 'technology' to be neutral concepts or something that can be harnessed to fulfil the needs of educators or the economy, the focus should shift to how technology alters our perceptions and thinking. The design of digital environments and devices, as all design practices, is guided by a set of interests, values, and ideologies. What kind of power structures does technology construct and maintain? Who benefits from technology? What kind of values does technology create, and how does it alter existing ones?

Even though software-based technology is a central part of our daily routines, it is often disregarded and accepted as it is without questioning. It seems that due to the prevalence of software, it is taken for granted and ignored. For example, the abstruse terms of use of social media platforms have become insignificant partly due to the close and personal relationship we have with technology. The conditions of the platforms become imperceptible also due to design that is meant to act inconspicuously in the background. The challenge for technology educators is to make software and its logic visible and bring it to the centre of attention.

Google and its search engine serve as a good example to consider more closely how our everyday technology conditions our lives. Google.com is the most visited website in the world (Alexa 2017), and every second the search engine is used almost 60,000 times (Internet live stats 2017). The company has an undisputed dominant position regarding how we search for, organise, and understand information in the 2010's. The search functions developed by Google define how online information becomes discoverable and accessible. In June 2017, it was announced that after seven years of investigations, the European Union fined Google 2.4 billion euros for manipulating search results. The company had directed users to its own shopping comparison service and deprived rival sites by pushing them down in the search results. As search engines are more widely relied upon in obtaining information, critical technology education is needed to better understand how search engines work, and how they organise infor-

mation. It is important to comprehend that information retrieval in the sense we have become accustomed to, say, in a library, is not essential for Google, as its interests are based on advertising. Then, how should we conceptualise information provided to us by search engines?

Administration and business advocates promote a future that is ever more dependent and based on software technology. They speak for digital education that conforms us to existing technologies and provides us with suitable skills needed in advancing economic growth. The purpose of critical technology education is to develop an understanding of technology that enables imagining and creating alternatives. I claim that strengthening agency in a digital society requires understanding the terms of digitality. There is a need for conscious evaluation of the technology we want to live with. ●

Digital tinkering and experimentation nooks in youth centres

Marcus Lundqvist & Juha Kiviniemi, Verke

THE FAMOUS WORDS 'the only thing that is constant is change', by the Greek philos-opher Heraclitus, seem to be applicable even today. Technological advancement is rapid, changing the entire world in its wake. The advancement of technology has a wide impact on almost every working area and method we know and on our daily lives. It is estimated that the world will function quite differently 10 to 15 years from now (World Economic Forum 2015). How these changes effect youth work directly is unclear, but they will have a guaranteed impact on young people.

Youth work has seldom been the first to embrace new methods, as we have valued traditions and maintained proven working practices. However, we must take global mega trends into account in order to revise our own methods correspondingly. These mega trends are not realised overnight and they are contemporary even tomorrow, but according to forecasts, they are going to happen inevitably.

Mega trends change the world

Many parties, such as Sitra (The Finnish Innovation Fund), the World Economic Forum and the UN have cast predictions about coming mega trends. The following phenomena are included in these trends: technology changes everything, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, big data and sharing economy. The common factor is that tech-nology, innovation and sharing economy will all have major roles in future society. For example, it has been forecast that in the following 20 years, 47% of jobs will be replaced by automated processes (Frey & Osborne 2013). These changes will be signifi-

cant and they are even comparable with the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of electricity (Kiiski Kataja, 2016). This is why we cannot ignore these phenomena.

One of the tasks for youth work is to educate young people and provide them with sufficient competences for the future. Additionally, young people must be able to express themselves, experiment with new things and develop their creativity in order to grow and learn. The task for adults is to enable these things and lower the threshold for young people to experiment and utilise their skills. (European Commission 2015.) One way of supporting young people while staying on par with development is to constantly re-evaluate the methods of youth work.

Introducing the Internet of Things, digital co-creation and sharing economy into youth work does not necessarily sound easy or even a subject lightly approached. Nevertheless, we must maintain our awareness, or risk being left behind. We should actively utilise the opportunities contemporary technology can offer, while keeping our eyes peeled for future developments and phenomena. It is, however, vital to keep in mind that the focus should still remain in the goals of youth work and the activities themselves rather than the technological apparatus or end product. It is also as important as ever to encourage young people to experiment and be creative, especially in regards to new and emerging technologies.

Youth work must act as an enabler

The Z generation, or young people born after the mid-90's, views sharing and co-operation as natural and easy tasks. They are already focused on the future and are willing to make an effort to reach success. (Meeker 2016.) These factors provide a solid foundation for successfully implemented youth work. Its role as an enabler is important, as not every young person has the opportunity to experiment with new technological possibilities in their spare time, due to economic or other reasons.

Encouraging experimentation culture can be, for instance, done by utilising Scratch, a programming language based on simple movable blocks. This approach could be applied, among others, as a daily youth centre activity, a group activity or even in a camp setting. One or two sessions do not instantly provide miraculous results, but they might encourage young people to continue experimenting at home. There is a lot of discussion about coding and its expertise. While this is also one aim of Scratch, the platform can also provide young people with new ways of expressing their creativity. Young people should indeed be offered ways and tools to create something new and express themselves. Not everyone is required to know how to code, as some mobile applications can even be created with paper and pencil by utilising POP applications. Again, it's not about the tools but rather supporting young people's self-expression and growth; in many cases, professional aptitude naturally follows.

In addition to coding, another method of employing technology is to build something out of electronic construction kits. Good examples of such sets are LittleBits,
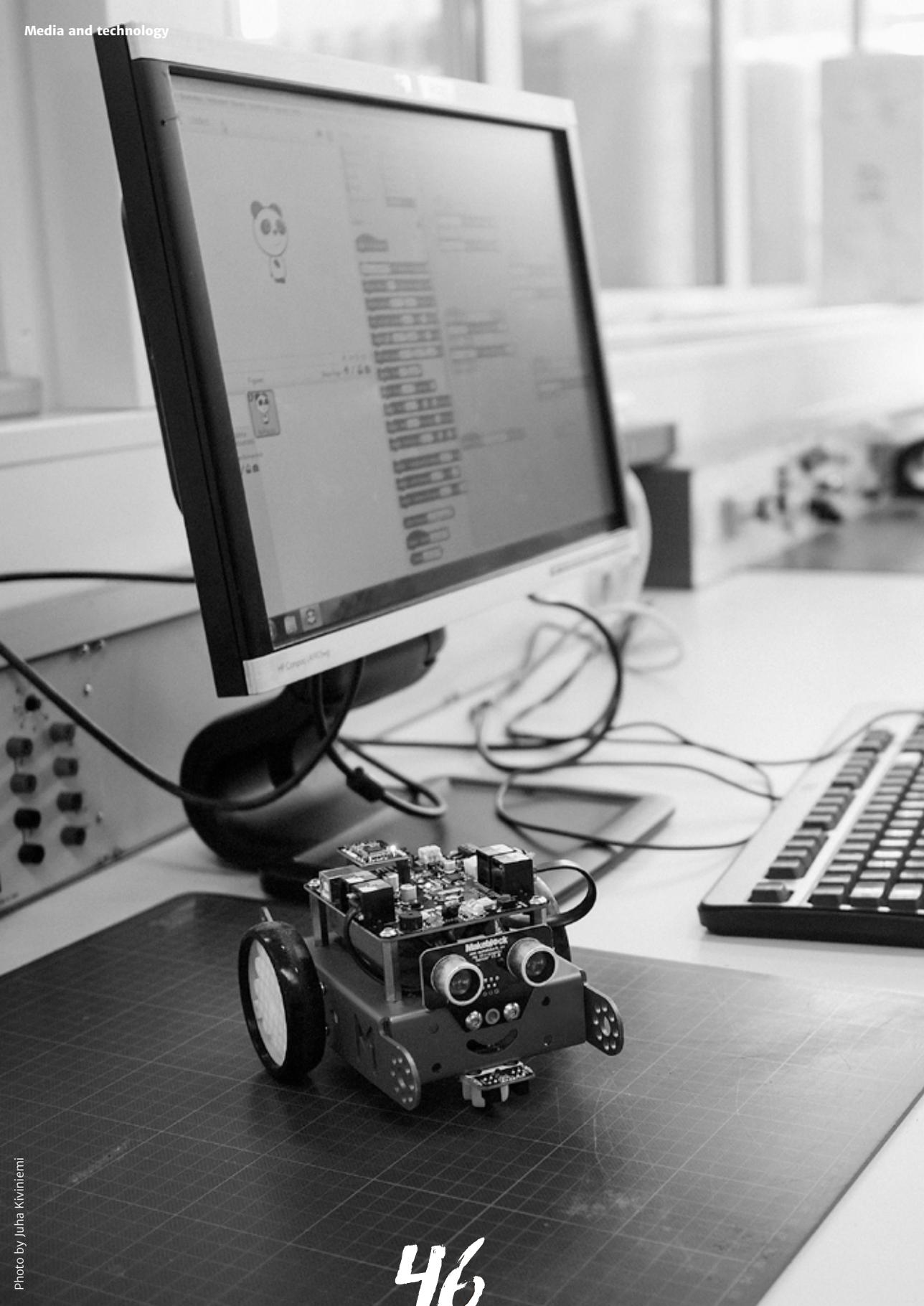
Makey Makey and mBots. These kits consist of parts that offer opportunities to build various devices that can also be connected to the internet. Usually, these sets are very user-friendly and enable the user to get up to speed rather quickly. The challenges they set include finding solutions to various problems, or ideally, even producing completely new ideas and methods. What these tools, applications and sets excel in is making the connection between the often abstract realm of coding and tangible real-world results. They can also often act as a powerful tool in providing young people with positive experiences of success and achievement.

Collaboration is key

The traditional game of billiards at youth centres surely develops coordination, concentration and sociability, but so do many other activities. While it cannot be said that billiards directly provides tools to face the challenges the future has to offer, learning about technology and experimentation culture most definitely do. Billiards and other games have always been a part of youth work, and they will surely continue to be, but their status need not be uncontested. Other valuable tools of youth work could and should be introduced alongside them. Being and learning together has a pivotal role in all youth work activities, both digital and traditional. Introducing technology and experimentation culture in the ways mentioned above strengthens group skills and sociability, in addition to developing much-needed digital skills. Digital activities naturally encourage learning about seeking and sharing information, which are both vital skills as contemporary citizens. The Maker culture that digital tinkering is based on also actively encourages peer learning and sharing of information in its core principles.

Could our youth centres have nooks and crannies specifically for digital tinkering and experimentation? Naturally, this should also include access to technological gadgets and contraptions that would enable young patrons to build something new, whether big or small. Additionally, there should also be more youth workers competent in these areas to support and guide the young innovators. This idea is inspired by existing art corners and gaming areas in some youth centres and the setting should be recognisable to those familiar with youth works long-standing tradition of employing arts and crafts as a method.

For example, in England, there is the Think Big network that is an open place for young people who have ideas relating to utilising technology. Think Big offers the space, devices, guidance and financial support required to realise those ideas. The formation of the initial concept usually requires only a small revelation that can be had, for instance, by playing around with LittleBits or Raspberry Pi. Refining this idea into a viable product already requires a considerable amount of added effort. But above all, it requires encouragement, the right atmosphere, and guidance. These small ideas can have the potential to develop into almost anything.

Learning should be natural

The topic of how different technological applications or devices can help us learn something new is often discussed. New technology is, however, developed continuously, and because of this, we should approach the subject the other way round. We should be asking ourselves how we can change our thinking and methods to better utilise technology in the future? Therefore, it is not important for youth work to offer the most advanced devices and technologies, but to encourage experimenting and self-development, in order to gain resources to face the future. Since the methods implemented in youth work are so different from the formal education field, there could also be much to gain from a more tightly-knit collaboration between the fields, and digital tinkering could be a great starting point.

Significant societal developments are already predicted, and especially young people will have to face shifts and challenges in many aspects of their lives. We should all ask ourselves the following: What can I do for young people? How can I ensure that young people have the required resources to face future challenges? Am I in fact an enabler or a brake? ●

Scratch
A programming language for children and young people, developed at MIT in Massachusetts. Programming is based on movable and stackable visual blocks, that enable creating games and animations and controlling programmable devices. *https://scratch.mit.edu*

littleBits
An open source electronic construction kit. Parts are attached to each other by magnets and no technical experience is required to start experimenting. You can build practically anything with them. The parts come in ready kits to build, for instance, a synthesiser or an RC car. Every part can also be connected to the Internet, and they can, for example, send commands to Twitter or receive signals from Facebook. *http://littlebits.cc*

Makey Makey
A project initiated by MIT students, where you build a circuit that enables using anything that conducts electricity as a keyboard. Using this enables you to construct weird things such as banana pianos or games where you dance in a pool. *http://www.makeymakey.com*

mBot

A fairly affordable, programmable and expandable kit to build and program your own robot. You can attach various sensors, such as ones for colour or distance, and different engines. Programmed via an interface based on Scratch, but it also enabled to work with "proper" programming languages. *http://www.makeblock.cc/mbot/*

IFTTT

A web site, where you can connect almost any service to another service. The idea is to create cut & paste recipes that command the computer to perform certain tasks. You can use the site to create, for instance, a recipe that automatically puts your phone on silent mode when you arrive at work, or one that automatically saves all your Instagram pictures in Google Drive. *https://ifttt.com*

POP

A simple program that enables creating application prototypes of your own ideas. The idea is to draw all the screens and functions of your application on paper and photograph them. These photos can be used in the POP application to construct a working model. *https://popapp.in*

Raspberry Pi

A one-circuit computer that was originally developed to encourage ICT education in schools. The prices of these computers vary from approximately 5 dollars to 40 dollars. The newest (Raspberry 3) has a built-in HDMI port and Wi-Fi. *https://www.raspberrypi.org*

Instructables

Developed to meet the needs of MIT students and teachers to share their final products in the Internet. Currently, it is a website where almost anyone can share their instructions or conducted projects. The topics can relate to almost anything, such as food, electronics, crafts or outdoor activities. A good database where you can look for ideas to utilise Raspberry Pi, for instance. *http://www.instructables.com*

littleBits, a new tool for youth work

Johanna Repo, city of Kotka Youth Work Unit

VERKE LET US BORROW a set of LittleBits building blocks for our camp. LittleBits are electronic building blocks that each serve a particular purpose. The blocks are snapped together by magnets, and their design ensures they can't be connected the wrong way around. The blocks are colour-coded to help users build a variety of fascinating gadgets.

You can, for instance, create a synthesiser for making music or a cat food dispenser that feeds your cat when you send a message to the device. There is a broad range of ideas online for what to build, and each kit comes with clear instructions to help you get started. The colour coding also makes it easy to create various structures.

I stare at the postal parcel with some trepidation. I've postponed opening it for a few days now. With about a week left until the start of our camp, I have to start figuring out what these building blocks are all about.

I grab a young summer worker who knows a thing or two about technology. We spread out the pieces on the table, and I tell him everything I know about LittleBits (which admittedly isn't much). Then I show him a YouTube video, and he starts to get an idea of what kinds of things you can build from these pieces. He says "got it" and starts building. Meanwhile, I turn the pieces over in my hands, wondering what I'm supposed to do. I'm way out of my comfort zone. It's like being back in school and physics class again.

After fiddling with the pieces for a while and admiring the contraption that the summer worker assembled in no time at all, I finally manage to put the pieces together in such a way that a light turns on in one of them. A moment later, the propeller on my gadget starts to rotate. Now I'm starting to get into it!

I unbox the Synth Kit. I follow the instructions, and I practise. By the time I finish playing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star", I'm sold. If a tech-illiterate adult gets this excited about these building blocks, how fascinating must they be for a young person who understands more about technology? Or a young person who has an aversion to these types of things, but learns something new after successfully building a gadget of their own from these modules? I leave the LittleBits on the table while I go work on other things.

When I come back, the rest of our crew of young summer workers have gathered around the table to build little gadgets of their own. I can sense their enthusiasm when I enter the room. They're all so focused on what they're doing!

A few of the young people at our camp tried the LittleBits modules and got quite into it. They particularly enjoyed the synthesiser project and made plans to record their own remix of Sandstorm by Darude. Unfortunately, they didn't quite finish it, but they expressed a hope that we would purchase LittleBits modules for our youth centre so they could continue producing the track and also for other young people to have the opportunity to try the building blocks for themselves. This is a request we will grant with great pleasure.

After the camp, I talked to the young participants about the LittleBits building blocks. We discussed whether they could be used in schools, for example. We all agreed they could make classes fun. I also thought they'd be useful tools for youth work in schools. Working together supports group development and helps lessons become more hands-on in new ways.

These tools also hold great potential in the context of youth work at youth centres. Not all young people enjoy crafts, but this kind of creative activity could prove quite popular. The building blocks could also bring new young people into the sphere of our activities.

Before our experiment with LittleBits, I thought these kinds of things to be very difficult. I was concerned about my ability to provide guidance on how to use them. These fears proved to be unfounded. Using LittleBits was easy. Whenever I didn't know how to do something, the young people I worked with were happy to teach me. While we built gadgets together, we also talked about what was going on in their lives. This meant that the LittleBits building blocks became a new tool to complement pool tables, playing cards, cups of coffee and gaming consoles.

With great enthusiasm, I await the opening of our centre and the chance to start this new activity with the young people who use our services. ●

The young writer is alive and well – online

Maija Puska

I RECENTLY LED A SIX-MONTH creative writing project for long-term unemployed young people. At the start of the project, I asked the participants how many of them love writing. Two hands bashfully went up. When I asked how many of them hate writing, 18 hands went up. The setup was stimulatingly honest; "Not only writing, but fucking creative writing!" one of them sighed.

Many young people have a relationship with writing that is shadowed by shame, fear and paralysing memories from school. There's the fear of the teacher's red pen, the fear of the blank sheet of writing paper, the fear of grammar and the fear of failure. There's the fear of having the opportunity to say something important, only to find out you have nothing to say. What if you end up with only gibberish on your paper?

A tool for participation

When you teach writing to a group that has no interest in it, you need to be at the top of your game. You somehow have to find the methods that work. In doing so, you can't help but think that perhaps the ways we teach writing should be reviewed and improved in general. After all, along with reading, writing is the foundation for education, communication and citizenship. It can be seen as a tool for societal perception, participation and fairness. Well-rounded writing skills can't be a privilege only reserved for an elite few.

Youth work in the context of media pedagogy utilises resources such as social media photo services and videos. The traditional teaching of writing and media education that utilises writing tends to take place in word art schools, creative writing courses

and special editorial teams comprised of young people. The young people who seek out these activities often have a good level of literary talent to begin with and they tend to perform well academically. What will happen to the writing skills of the young people who are not in that group? What happens to those who get anxiety over punctuation?

Changing writing skills

Technological development, the internet as well as social media have brought about radical changes to the ways text is produced and the environments it is produced in. Today, text is increasingly written in various digital environments and communities, in a more multimodal, social and context–conscious manner than before. New media environments are changing the concept of writing as well as the practices of writing.

Online writing has also led to an increase in writing as a hobby among young people: According to a survey of how young people spend their free time, 12 % of Finnish youths listed writing as a hobby in 2009. By 2013, this figure had risen to 19 %.

If a young person lists writing as a hobby, it is likely that he or she writes more than average, at least in some manner. Regardless of whether they list writing as their hobby or not, everyone writes something somewhere: posting comments on photos and videos on social media is one form of writing. Communicating on online discussion forums and instant messaging services also requires writing skills. Using many of the public services that have moved online (such as library services) requires writing skills. Certain internet–based services and social media platforms (e.g. Twitter) have even introduced entirely new forms of textual communication, and mastering these requires developing a particular set of writing skills.

Traditional writing skills alone are not enough to ensure that a person has the communication capacity required in the society of the future. In a context of a broader definition of written text, even a voice message to a friend can constitute written text. In contemporary culture, it is impossible — and unnecessary — to examine writing as a separate phenomenon from text produced in a pictorial, audiovisual or digital manner.

How did it go in practice?

The unemployed young people who participated in my project spent six months studying creative writing with a media pedagogy –based approach. Various media tools were utilised in their studies, including media imagery, media texts, publishing opportunities and practical media education approaches. The project was part of "Young People in the Limelight: Towards Agency through Multiliteracies", a University of Tampere research project in which researchers, pedagogues, artists and journalists organise media pedagogy –oriented art workshops for young people.

During the project, we created text masks, Google poems and memes with the participants. We watched films and translated rap lyrics. We used a video camera as a pen and scripted comedy scenes using sidewalk chalk. We produced various texts

collectively and independently. We told stories on WhatsApp and Instagram as well as in Tagul word clouds.

Media pedagogy-based writing energised the unemployed young people. They laughed, cracked jokes about creativity and carried studio lights around with rosy cheeks. Meanwhile, their output also brought forth commentary on social topics relevant to them, from their personal perspectives and in ways that they felt comfortable with.

It is emblematic in our media culture today that the line between media and the external reality outside media is almost impossible to see. For young people, in particular, the real-time and community-oriented nature and transparency of media make the world of media and the real world practically inseparable. Ideally, this can be a continuous source of new ways to learn and express oneself.

We're lucky we have the Internet and social media. They serve as a platform where we can let go, experiment with new ways of producing text, be someone else for a while, while also building our self-esteem. For a young writer with numerous fears, the online world can offer a role on the stage of an enchanting theatre, complete with a perfect costume, special effects and a bit of magic. And an endless network of stage whisperers. ●

Part 3:

DIGITAL YOUTH WORK IN OPEN YOUTH WORK

FINNISH YOUTH WORK HAS A STRONG legislative base. Youth work is governed by the Youth Act, reformed in 2016, in which the goals of youth work have been set as follows: to promote young people's civic rights and skills and support the prerequisites for their realisation, to support young people's growth, to support young people's hobbies and voluntary activities, to promote equality, and to improve young people's growth and living conditions. The state directs youth work services through legislations and grants, and municipalities are responsible for organising the services locally. The operators, in practice, are the municipalities themselves along with many parishes and non-governmental organisations.

In the context of Finland, local youth work in municipalities can be seen as the basic unit of goal-oriented, preventive youth work, where the goals set in the Youth Act are realised. The objectives mentioned above have not changed, even though the technologisation of society has set new requirements for the practical activities of youth work. The use of digital media and technology is indeed vital in keeping youth work relevant and up to date for the young people using the services.

Digital technology can be utilised in all forms of youth work. Technology can be for example a tool to increase citizenship skills, to be included in hobby activities as their content, to lower the threshold of using youth work services, and to make young people's voices heard in a way natural for them. The potential that digital tools have to enhance the internal operations of youth work organisations and to vitalise external communication must also not be forgotten. Alongside the additional value created for existing services, this technology enables novel and innovative ways of meeting the goals established in the Youth Act.

Innovative approaches to digital youth work have been developed in Finnish youth work in parishes, non-governmental organisations, and in municipal youth work. These innovations are hardly ever conceived by chance, but rather require a few things to flourish. In addition to the enthusiasm of a single worker or a working community, resources – most commonly time

and money – and an operative culture that encourages experimentation are needed. The development of good practices has often fundamentally included a process with colleagues and young people. It continues to be up to the organisations of youth work to secure prerequisites for developing working methods and updating employee expertise.

Even though the vocational and supplemental training of employees is a crucial part of the youth workers' expertise, the significance of experimenting with practical methods together to develop professional skills must not be undervalued. It can be argued that training provides the base, on which strengthening and development of expertise are built on in practical work. This supports both active and participatory digital youth work simultaneously while simultaneously providing young people with experiences of success and empowerment.

The articles in this chapter are examples of the digital youth work already performed in Finnish local open youth work. They also aim to offer a perspective on the realities from which the described practices are built on.

Digital bruises – towards a culture of experimentation

Mikko Holm & Kimmo Hölkki, City of Lappeenranta youth services

"Hello! We're the social media team at the City of Lappeenranta youth services, and we'll be managing this account throughout the summer. We want to look at life and events in Lappeen-ranta from the youth perspective, identify problems and come up with related solutions and development ideas. We've got plans to take over Snapchat and YouTube as well, so make sure you stay tuned. We're a team of seven free-spirited personalities ready to come up with crazy ideas. You'll be hearing more from us soon!"
Instagram 27 April 2016 @nuortenlpr

In the spring of 2016, a total of seven young people were hired in the city of Lappeen-ranta to create a social media team tasked with increasing awareness of the city's youth services and making the voices of young people heard. The team members were given access to their preferred social media channels used by the city's youth services as well as the opportunity to develop new methods of highlighting the activities of youth services in a way that would appeal to the young audience. The duration of the social media team's assignment was about four months, and they were paid for their work. The team members were given free rein to come up with ideas and set their objectives. During the project, the team took the initiative to produce a useful assessment of the perceptions of the city's youth services among the local people. This assessment also served as the starting point for the team's work. Among other things, the social media team conducted a national campaign in which young people challenged people from other communities to describe their views of their hometowns using specific keywords. The social media team additionally evaluated the youth services' activities on social media, provided suggestions for improvement and, in general, brought more visibility to the lives of young people.

"There is strong prejudice towards the youth services, but also positive feedback. / Young people don't spend much time in youth centres. / Young people don't know what the city's youth services actually does."
Results from the survey conducted by the social media team of the City of Lappeenranta youth services

The feedback from young people was very direct, but the same can be said for the social media team's approach to its work. Right from the start, they put their personalities on the line and were not shy in front of the camera. The image of Lappeenranta they communicated wasn't glamorous but rather realistic, and carried with it the authentic flavour of the language and culture of young people. Their posts with the hashtag #vainlappeenrantajutut (#justlappeenrantathings) even included somber visions and images of how Lappeenranta comes across with its endless construction work in the city centre and long lines at the central hospital as well as shots of day-to-day life and the urban environment in the city's suburbs. At the same time, the pictures conveyed a genuine sense of love and concern for their hometown.

Through solutions towards new problems

The social media team represents one part of the change in operating culture in the City of Lappeenranta youth services; a change which began a few years earlier. In autumn 2014, the city's youth services recognised that digital youth work had become separate from other youth work, and the designated online youth worker was alone responsible for online youth work. Having identified this problem, the department made a conscious decision to incorporate the digital world into the daily life of youth workers. This decision is now reflected in many areas, including the basic job descriptions used in recruiting new personnel.

The change was implemented by way of three decisions. The first one was the simplest, as it could be solved with money: equipment was purchased for personnel to make it possible for them to operate in digital environments. The second decision was to change the online youth worker's job description to emphasise the guidance and training of other personnel as a key task. The third decision was to institute a policy whereby working hours should be allocated to online work.

As the concrete operational obstacles were eliminated, it became clear that the new challenge lay deeper within the work culture itself. The spirit of youth work has been one of rapid change and adapting to the phenomena in the world of young people but, for some reason, this did not seem to be case with changes related to digitalisation. The rate of change has simply been too fast. The traditional model of adaptation, with an external trainer showing up with PowerPoint slides and user's manuals, no longer works. Following such training, people tend to look through their notes and materials, cautiously trying to use the new equipment. This has led to situations where the deployment of new hardware or software can easily take as long as six months or a

year. Periscope is a good example of how the life cycle of a digital product can be very short but, during the peak of its popularity, it can be a useful tool for youth work. To take advantage of these types of opportunities, it is necessary to adopt a new kind of operating culture.

"We know how to do this!" is a key principle in the City of Lappeenranta youth services organisation. Behind this statement is the view that, concerning the core objectives of youth work, it doesn't matter whether we are working online or offline. We already possess the professional expertise we have applied in our work at youth centres and in outreach youth work. This insight allows us to discover the courage needed to try new things.

Examples and role models within the work community also help build courage and confidence, which is why the management has taken the digital approach to work into account in recruitment and evaluated the applicants' skills and attitudes related to digitality and the online world as part of job interviews. This expectation was evident in recruitment activities in 2016, when the required qualifications included competencies related to the digital world and gaming activities for the first time.

Management encourages employees to make mistakes

It's not easy to let go of the idea of relying on training, but an open-minded attitude towards new things makes it possible to experience successes that create a positive spiral that feeds further progress on the path towards a culture of experimentation. The management's job is to encourage the employees' experimentation and inspire confidence in that they will learn to use the tools needed in their work. When you're learning, you also need to be allowed to fail. We often tell young people that making mistakes is part of growing and learning, and the same applies when it comes to our work. Still, we tend to forget the fact that everyone makes mistakes. The right way to go about it is to admit mistakes, make the necessary corrections and move on. The biggest mistake of all is to not act at all for fear of making mistakes. In the words of the diplomat Bruce Oreck, the master has failed more times than the novice has tried.

The sharing of experiences is also important for learning, which is why it pays to promote mutual interaction within the work community, enable the exchange of ideas and highlight the learning experiences of others. Amidst all this, we must keep in mind that not only digital culture but also youth culture is in a state of constant change. We must ask ourselves whether we have the ability to look beyond the words and pictures when we work in the digital world. You can also turn this question around: are the young people familiar with what we do? The survey conducted by the social media team revealed that the level of awareness of the youth services' activities is low among the young people of Lappeenranta. To rectify this, we need to engage young people in the development of our operations and learn to listen to them. They are the ones who will build the future. We can only serve as guides. ●

Through the digital lens – an evening at Mikkola youth centre

Noora Järvi

MIKKOLA YOUTH CENTRE in Vantaa is about to open its doors for an open evening for young people. I'm visiting the youth centre in the role of an observer. Before my visit, I've looked up the youth centre's Instagram account, and it seems that Mikkola is active on social media. The account has posted ads and photos related to the youth centre's activities as well as video clips by its employees. I am welcomed at Mikkola by Riikka Helminen, the youth worker in charge of the centre. Before the doors are opened to the young people, I talk to Riikka about the role of digitality in Mikkola's operations.

"Our Instagram is full of photos of the empty youth centre with the caption 'the youth centre is open', but we've tried to come up with ways to make it more engaging," Riikka says.

"We have a gaming week coming up soon. For that, we could post videos of our employees talking about their favourite games or how much time they spend playing games," Riikka explains.

The right mix of planning and spontaneity

"We've been working on various theme days and weeks, and our planning template now includes a section on how the theme could be reflected in our social media," Riikka says. The staff get together and discuss what kind of social media content the youth centre should put out. Utilising social media in a work context is indeed much easier when planned correctly. It means you'll end up with fewer photos of empty spaces or posters on the walls.

Focusing on planning does not, however, mean that there is no room for spontaneous content. Mikkola's Instagram account also includes videos shot by the employees in which they chat informally about a wide range of topics. The videos have often been posted in connection with events such as the Youth Work Week when the featured videos focused on the common theme of equality. While the topic of each video is planned ahead of time, the videos typically have a personal and spontaneous feel to them.

"For instance, I've recorded videos of myself chatting about the importance of incidental exercise during my walk to work. They are quite spontaneous little talks, but they are fun and we have received positive feedback on them from our young audience," Riikka explains.

Taking a planned and systematic approach is one way to establish digitality as part of daily life in youth work. But what else does digital youth work at Mikkola entail besides the use of social media?

Once the youth centre has opened its doors, the first youngsters take up their usual spots on sofas and start playing the NHL game. The gaming console at Mikkola is located near the common sofas, and a large screen ensures that everyone can get a good view of the action. The central location of the gaming console means that the gamers are not excluded from the rest of the group and, conversely, those who don't want to play games can still be part of the group. Instead of simply providing the equipment for playing games, the youth centre has made gaming an open activity that increases the sense of community.

Kahoot! is a tool for versatile participation

It's early November, which means it's time for a meeting between the youth centre's staff and young patrons. The agenda includes discussing the young people's wishes regarding the youth centre, reviewing the common rules and engaging the young people in the development of further activities. This particular meeting uses voting based on the game Kahoot! (www.kahoot.it).

Even before the meeting, the young people get into playing Kahoot! amongst themselves. Many of them are familiar with the game, as it's been used in their schools and previously at the youth centre to organise a Mikkola-themed quiz, for example. Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform for creating and completing quizzes and organising voting. Quizzes at Mikkola feature a computer connected to a television so everyone can see the distribution of answers among the participants, who can use their phones or the youth centre's laptop computer to submit their answers. The participants can remain anonymous by using screen names.

On their own initiative, the young people start two quizzes which the centre's staff also end up joining. The themes of the quizzes are chemistry and intoxicants. After the spontaneous quizzes, the rest of the young people in attendance are invited to get on Kahoot! to start the meeting. They answer the questions posted on Kahoot! using

their screen names. The results can then be discussed in the group to find ways to improve the youth centre's activities. The Kahoot! template for the meeting includes pre-written statements such as "I have been able to influence the activities of the youth centre" and "I have felt welcome at the youth centre". The game makes it easy to collect feedback from young people and broach topics that might be difficult to discuss out in the open. The meetings are an important channel of influence for the young people and a way to support their active civic participation. The use of Kahoot! has not made this objective any less important; on the contrary, the meetings have become even more participatory than before.

Games as a tool in encounters with young people

The Mikkola youth centre has also used digital and gaming-related approaches in encounters with young people in other ways, including the Kumita game (www.kumita.fi). Kumita is part of a condom campaign by the Population Research Institute and the National Institute for Health and Welfare targeted at upper comprehensive school students. The established practice at Mikkola is that whenever a young person asks for a condom, they play the Kumita game with him or her and discuss the game's questions and multiple choice answers. The game guides the young person to reflect on the topic and readily facilitates a relaxed discussion. The player must think about the answers independently, but they also have the support of a youth worker in processing the questions that arise from the game.

The open evening at Mikkola proves that incorporating digitality into youth work goes beyond the mere deployment of new tools. Digitality does not change the ultimate purpose of youth work: being an educator, supporting young people in voluntary activities, social empowerment and being there for them. When used appropriately, digitality can be a natural part of all of these things.

The observations I made during my evening at Mikkola prove that even small details can make gaming a community-oriented activity that supports the goal of educating young people, just as they can make social media activity more purposeful and help incorporate digitality into youth engagement and how young people can exert influence on their lives. ●

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Digital youth work requires cooperation – and a grumpy bear

Anniina Korpi, City of Pori youth services

THE EIGHT NEIGHBOURING municipalities of Satakunta (population: 2,000–85,000), also known as "the Bear Municipalities", experienced similar problems in reaching young people, communication, and in implementing digitality in youth work. Some municipalities in the region had maintained websites for young people, but the employees did not have sufficient time or technical expertise to keep them updated. Some of the municipalities created printed materials that became obsolete almost as soon as they were published. Neither form of communication reached all the young people in the region, and the information was not up to date. It was decided in 2015 that to solve the problem all the youth services in the Bear municipalities would be assembled under two websites: nuokka.fi and jeesari.nuokka.fi. Nuokka is focused on spare time services, whereas Jeesari is a help service covering the topics of, for instance, studying, health, and employment.

The purpose of the sites is to make it easier for both youngsters and adults working with them to find information about local services aimed at young people. Collecting the fragmented services under two websites is also meant to facilitate both the upkeep of content and the maintenance of the digital services. One municipality took the main responsibility for technical issues, and other operators of the site check that their content is up to date by notifying administrators about any changes. This way municipalities can equally focus on producing digital content in their youth work, with no requirements for technical expertise in updating websites.

In conjunction with publishing the websites, something new, different and courageous was needed; something to market the services that would appeal to young

people and really stick in their thoughts. Nuokkakarhu ("Nuokka bear"), the mascot of the site and youth work, designed by Aleksi Salminen, was inspired by Irish 'SpunOut' youth website's campaign 'Ditch the Monkey'. SpunOut's animated monkey tried to persuade young people into negativity and passivity, and the site encouraged to ditch the monkey, participate and seek help. Nuokkakarhu's personality is negative, passive, and grumpy, which reflects both the stereotypical Finnish mentality and 'teenage angst'. The slogan of youth work is 'Don't listen to the bear', which encourages young people to abandon the passivity of Nuokkakarhu and to participate. Grumpy Cat is another source of inspiration for Nuokkakarhu, even though Nuokkakarhu is not as malicious as she is.

The phrases used by the character are written in the dialect of the Bear Munic‐ipalities region, and they always have a hint of tongue‐in‐cheek sarcasm. It can be sometimes difficult to convey sarcasm in written form, but young people understand it. This appeals to young people better than being overly cheerful, and that is why Nuok‐

kakarhu is distinctive from other similar youth work mascots. He has good intentions and wants to participate, even though he hides in a shroud of grumpiness and whining, just as young people occasionally do.

The regional youth work had previously utilised Facebook in approaching and communicating with young people. At the time the site was published, young people started embracing new social media services, and youth workers wanted to tag along. The Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube accounts of the Bear Municipalities youth work were named after the mascot: @nuokkakarhu. The accounts are jointly managed by local young people, youth workers and other people who work with youngsters. By having multiple people managing the accounts, the social media channels are more consistently updated than would be the case with only a sole, often busy youth worker. The Nuokkakarhu social media accounts are used to inform young people about interesting current affairs, offer a more entertaining type of content, arrange campaigns and to help young people to have an impact on services provided for them.

There are laminated versions of Nuokkakarhu available that can be taken along to youth centres, events and activities. You can write anything the bear might say at that moment in the speech balloon with a whiteboard marker. You can take a selfie with the bear, or you can choose to hide behind it if you don't want to have your face shown on the social media channels. The bear has made it easier for employees to publish pictures on social media and to inform about activities. Nuokkakarhu also comes in customised versions. For instance, during Christmas, the bear wears an elf cap, and the Gamer bear used in gaming youth work wears a headset and has a controller.

Nuokkakarhu has been accepted well, and young people like him:
'Nuokkakarhu is the best.'
'Nuokkakarhu makes me feel ok about not being so cheerful and energetic all the time.'
'It's so adorable. I feel like hugging him.'

Creating common websites and social media channels is not by itself a sufficient implementation of digital youth work, as it inherently requires constant learning and development. The youth workers of the Bear Municipalities are getting familiar with digital youth work, its related phenomena, and the new social media services used by young people in shared training sessions and experimentations. The Nuokkakarhu social media channels, young people's working groups and the Finnish online youth participation service Nuortenideat.fi have helped us to collect young people's views and opinions about developing digital youth work. ●

ActionTrack as a part of participatory budget data collection

Tuija Ronkainen, City of Helsinki youth services

THE CITY OF HELSINKI YOUTH SERVICES performs participatory budget planning for young people called RuutiBudjetti as a part of the city's youth work. Its purpose is to include young people in making decisions about the activities and services in their residential area. Ideas are collected from young people in various phases of the process so that as many young people as possible can participate in developing recreational and youth work services as well as the community in general. This year we used ActionTrack, a mobile app that enables the building of custom activities for users, for the first time to collect data for the participatory budget of the Vuosaari area.

Data was collected the previous year by having discussions between the instructors and a class of students and then having the pupils write down their thoughts on paper. This year we preferred to use a mobile platform over a paper form because we felt that using the application would be more engaging in getting 7th and 8th graders to participate and to answer the questions during the data collection phase. The platform also seemed to offer more diverse ways of motivating young people to participate with enthusiasm. Inspiring and encouraging young people to participate in their communities is a central task and challenge of regional youth work.

ActionTrack is a platform that consists of a licensable web tool and a free-to-use mobile application. You can create and manage your custom activities and their visual look using the web tool. Using ActionTrack requires no programming skills and the license includes a manual that provides easy access to instructions about creating activities, for instance. You can create ActionTrack activities based on Google Maps, and

the GPS navigation system built in the application will assist the user when they are participating in the activity. Alternatively, you can build activities upon floor plans of buildings, for example, and use QR codes to activate tasks.

The Youth Department of Helsinki arranged an introduction to ActionTrack for its employees in the autumn of 2016, and we held another training session for our local work community in the spring of 2017. In the introduction, the trainers provided us with ideas of how the platform could possibly be used and utilised in participatory budgeting. It is vital in implementing the new tool that employees have sufficient time to get familiarised and to plan its practical applications in youth work.

Building ActionTrack activities and technical solutions

Creating an ActionTrack activity starts with creating a map template and separate tasks, which can later be attached to the template. We created the ActionTrack template and designed the participatory budget data collection simultaneously. It was an inspiring method of working, as we were able to simultaneously develop the task template and come up with ideas of what kind of tasks would provide us with the data we needed from the young people.

Problems and errors in creating the task template were not apparent to us until we went and tested an activity on-site, although the activity could be also tested in the office, if you disabled GPS in the template settings. Our team had problems, for instance, in sending videos shot in the activity. This would have proven to be a big problem in data collection, as it would have prevented delivering the messages young people wanted to convey us. The problem was solved by contacting the platform administrators. They usually replied very quickly, and their response time in solving problems was as quick as possible.

It was already decided in the planning phase that the application would be used on the iPads of the Youth Department, and not have young people download the application on their phones. This helped us to ensure that there are enough devices that have sufficient battery life and network connections. We were able to procure 20 iPads with an internet connection. The arrangement made data collection in teams possible by having one to three young people use each iPad.

Examples of tasks:

One task was called 'Pay It Forward' and the task was 'In your group, think about three things you could do for other people. Write your answers below!' The answers included 'Help with chores', 'help with homework', 'look after pets if a friend is travelling', 'stop teasing' and 'be kind to other people and respect them'.

Another task was called 'First one at the gym, last to leave', referring to a song by a young Finnish rapper Musta Barbaari, and the task was 'Shoot a video or write an answer where you explain what sports activities young people need'. We received videos,

where the answers included 'An activity that is interesting and requires exercising' and 'It's good if you can earn a living [out of the activity] in the future'.

We included memes, articles, YouTube videos and pictures related to the questions to liven up the tasks. We mostly used videos and written text as answering methods. Young people knew how to use ActionTrack pretty well, and they learned quickly how to use every tool in the application.

Experiences from using ActionTrack for the first time

ActionTrack was a good, active and hands-on approach to performing data collection for participatory budget planning. Youth leader Ricardo Acapo said that in addition to facilitating interaction between young people, ActionTrack also works well as an icebreaker activity. He thinks that questions were more approachable for young people because we used methods and tools familiar to them. The task of collecting local data for the process became simultaneously more fun and engaging for the young people.

Taru Sorsa, who leads participatory activities, thinks that ActionTrack encourages young people to move around in the near area and participate in the process much better than a questionnaire on paper. She thinks that the platform is applicable in very different outdoor environments, and it is easy to use indoors as well, if necessary. Even though at first it was cumbersome to get to know the platform's every feature, and to see how they are shown to the users, the range of alternatives and methods of answering were viewed as a positive feature.

Creating an ActionTrack template and producing a functioning activity for the first time was demanding, and it required a lot of practice, mistakes and experimentation. It was a challenge to figure out how the battery life on the devices would suffice in a long activity. In addition, it was necessary to figure out how multiple groups could use the devices simultaneously. We also noticed that it was important to assess whether an Internet connection was required for the whole duration of the activity, or if it was sufficient that one was available only at the end and beginning of an activity. An active internet connection is required, for example, to send answers and play YouTube videos in ActionTrack.

It was problematic for the purposes of data collection that a user could bypass tasks without answering. We held a short instructional session for each class where we asked pupils to see that they do not leave questions unanswered. We also gave other general instructions about using the application before each activity.

Extracting the answers from the ActionTrack service proved to be somewhat problematic. Answers in text and number form were easily extracted into an Excel table, but video answers needed to be downloaded one at a time. Even though the platform is not intended for data collection purposes, we think that we received good material and data suitable for our intentions in planning the participatory budget. Young people's attitudes towards this method were good, for the most part, and they were motivated

to perform activities from their beginning to the end. The most common feedback was 'Pretty good!'

From data collection to 7th graders' team building

This autumn, we will use ActionTrack to support the team building capabilities of 7th graders. The purpose of the activities is to help pupils get to know each other and their teacher in a newly-formed class better, and to help them work better as a group. The team building sessions last for a school day, and we will utilise the ActionTrack platform to enable team building activities for two classes each day with the help of six youth leaders or other youth work professionals.

The previous team building exercise in our area has been a city adventure, where the class has acted together and in smaller groups. The city adventure has included, for instance, warm-up games, team tasks, riddles and pop quizzes about participatory budget planning. In addition, classes have had a chance to get to know the activities of the youth centre better.

The team building exercise this autumn is still going to be a city adventure, but with the help of ActionTrack, more pupils can move independently from one task to another. We hope that the application will make the tasks and the whole day more interesting and contemporary for the students.

Team building tasks include 'Take a picture of your whole group', 'one passer-by in the background' and 'one plant and one picture'. The task can also be something like 'Make a word of these letters, write it down and head towards the next task'.

We try to combine using ActionTrack with traditional team building exercises to create a team-building program that can offer sufficient challenge to seventh-graders while providing them with a chance to have a fun day together. The use of an online app or platform in no way eliminates the significance of the contact and guidance between a youth leader and a young person. Using this kind of a digital method provides youth work with another useful tool, and it helps us to better reach young people who actively use digital applications. ●

Investing in competence in Kouvola

Niina Soisalo, City of Kouvola youth services

THE MISSION OF THE CITY OF KOUVOLA'S youth services is to work where young people are, together with young people. In addition to physical environments, there is a focus on having a presence in the digital environments frequented by young people. Youth engagement is a top priority in all of our activities. Engagement can be defined as the opportunity to exert influence and the experience of being part of the community, no matter what the environment. To participate in the decision-making concerning their lives, young people require knowledge, skills and support in the environments they act and exert influence in.

Evolving digital environments are challenging youth work practitioners to maintain their know-how and constantly keep up with digital innovation. The basic professional competencies of a youth worker include being flexible in acting in changing environments while being self-driven and quick to react to new challenges. Further key competencies in youth work include active, self-directed learning and continuous professional self-development.

Digitality provides tools for reaching out to young people in their natural environments. This is possible for all of us — all it takes is the willingness to experiment and put oneself on the line. We must not forget the most important piece of the puzzle — the young person — and the reason why we need digitality. Digitality not only provides young people with different ways to come into contact with professional youth workers, but it also offers chances for new experiences of engagement and being part of a community.

Enhancing competencies through development projects

Young people, as well as youth work practitioners in youth centres, have highlighted the need to enhance digital skills and develop further digital activities in Kouvola. For us to reach young people in the environments they operate in, we must invest in tools and enhance the competencies of youth work practitioners.

In March 2015, we launched the one-year project 'Inxa Goes to SoMe'. The project was based on youth engagement and functionality at the Inkeroinen youth centre. The project activities included acquiring gaming equipment as well as running a video blogging competition and a game club. An online application for the city's youth services, Mobinuokkarit@Kouvola, was developed as part of a youth leader's thesis. The application includes a membership card, contact details for youth centres, information on youth services via links to the youth services website and an opportunity to chat with local youth workers. The functions developed under the project have increased the sense of community at the youth centre, brought young people closer to each other and strengthened their team spirit and teamwork skills. All parts of the project were brainstormed, planned and implemented in close cooperation with young people. Engagement among the participating youths was substantially strengthened during the project.

A follow-up project called 'Digital Kouvola for Young People' was launched immediately after the first project concluded. The latter project supports upgrading the city's youth services' equipment as well as training personnel and training volunteer team leaders for gaming activities. The project also supports camps and events organised in cooperation with young people as well as the planning of digital activities based on generating ideas on new operating models and forms of activity.

Based on these project activities the following development areas have been highlighted for digital youth work in Kouvola:

- Collecting and analysing data, developing new forms of activity and establishing digital approaches as part of essential operations.
- Making the production of media content an active and routine function.
- Attitudes. Strengthening a positive and collective approach to work. No-one is superior when it comes to digitality, but by experimenting and doing things together we will succeed (and if it goes wrong — so what!)
- Engagement. Young people as communicators and content producers. The youth leader plays a significant role as an enabler and a source of inspiration. Invest in strengthening the culture of engagement to ensure that it is more clearly reflected at the practical level.
- Online communication and chat activities (e.g. using WhatsApp groups or incorporating chat services on the nuortenkouvola.fi website)
- Keep in mind that digitality is not a value in itself — it is a tool. Everything is based on youth work, encountering young people and having an educational orientation.

Media education is also a key development area in our youth work, and it always includes the perspective of digitality. In Kouvola, we engage in broad network cooperation in media education with schools, non-governmental organisations, professionals, young people and their guardians.

The project gives rise to new ways of encountering young people

The Digital Kouvola for Young People project has already made new equipment available for grassroots level youth work, which has created opportunities for encountering young people in new ways. Practical examples of digital investments in day-to-day youth work include purchasing PS4 gaming consoles for youth centres, investing in youth centres' network connections in cooperation with the city's ICT unit and purchasing gaming PCs and an HTC Vive. This hardware has made it possible to organise events such as FIFA and NHL tournaments at youth centres as well as other fun and social gaming activities.

Systematic investments in network connections have enabled a more fully-fledged use of gaming as a youth work activity. The young people have also been engaged in organising gaming activities, which has seen them give encouragement to their peers and teach online games to new players. The online gaming activities have also given other young people — the non-gamers — the opportunity to experience a new sense of community and learn new cooperation skills. There are also plans for a console ice hockey tournament organised jointly by the KooKoo esports league team and the city's youth services. The aim is to turn this cooperation into an annual event.

The phones and tablets purchased as part of the project have increased the role of online youth work in the primary operations of the city's youth services. Using WhatsApp groups to disseminate information is now routine at youth centres, Instagram photos are taken every day at work, and sometimes the youth workers even venture over to Snapchat. The project's funding was also used to develop an electronic customer card for use by youth leaders and visitors to youth centres. In practice, the card is a browser-based application that allows users to view the opening hours of youth centres and log in. They can also use the application to reach on-duty youth leaders and access the service counselling section of the nuortenkouvola.fi website. Youth leaders can use the application to access the customer information of all visitors to youth centres in Kouvola as well as monitor visitor statistics.

Enthusiasm and inspiration are key to learning

Even in the absence of high-level technical competencies, it is necessary to have enthusiasm, courage and an open mind towards new cultural phenomena among young people. In youth work, technology only plays a supporting role. It is important to keep the focus on youth work activities and the objectives of youth work. Critical digital

media education and media literacy are key competence areas in online youth work and in taking a digital approach to work.

We can all develop the necessary competencies as long as we are able to overcome the threshold to start fiddling around with tools and experimenting with new things. It is also important to focus on how we share knowledge with each other to enable peer-to-peer learning among youth work practitioners. Learning always requires motivation, and motivation requires enthusiasm. The personality of the herald of peer knowledge and his or her attitude towards the "learners" plays an important role. They must not be even a hint of superiority evident.

It is essential to take each youth work practitioner's specific competencies into consideration and strengthen them further. It is also important to identify areas requiring development to enable an equal approach to work. Here in Kouvola, one of our perceived strengths is a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere that supports effective peer learning!

Enhancing competencies in digital youth work is enabled by implementing coordinated and systematic activities with the support of management. The physical elements must be in order for digitality to be leveraged with good results. Learning is an ongoing process that can change and move in many different directions as the activities go on. New goals are created and shaped by the activities themselves as well as the ever-changing technological environment. It is important to foster an enthusiastic and innovative approach to work. That way, we can genuinely say that we invest in competence in Kouvola! ●

Part 4:

DIGITAL GAMING

GAMES ARE A SIGNIFICANT form of entertainment and communication for young people. Digital games can be used to maintain contact with friends or make entirely new ones. Multiplayer games can be considered full-fledged social media, as other users always create at least part of the content consumed in multiplayer sessions. The decisions made by other players introduce new dimensions to the gaming experience. Even players who are physically alone in a room with their computers or other gaming devices might have pervasive networks that they are connected to during gameplay. Games also provide opportunities for learning various skills, often without even realising it. Different social situations and conflict resolution can serve as useful preparation for working life, for example.

Games are not that different from many other digital or real-world settings. From a young person's perspective, communication on the Steam platform, for example, is no less valuable than face-to-face interaction. When they interact with others, young people may often need adult guidance or advice on creating shared rules within groups as well as ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to be involved.

While discussions on games often highlight their negative or positive impacts, it would be better to move on from this juxtaposition. The important thing is to engage young people in youth work by taking advantage of environments and methods that make the activities fun for them. Games are attractive and diverse, and they facilitate communication. These are noteworthy attributes from the perspective of youth work. Any pastime that is popular among young people can be well suited for use in youth work.

In Finland, there have been many open-minded experiments to find different ways of utilising games and the associated culture around them as part of youth work. Presently games serve as a tool for youth work, an operating environment, a content and a form of activity in various youth work organisations. The work done via digital games can sometimes be very spontaneous and casual, but in other contexts, digital games can be underpinned by a very systematic and structured approach to youth work. The work related to games

doesn't even necessarily always involve actual gaming. Various events, social networks, and other functions can be built up around a mutual interest, which in this case is gaming. It also makes it possible to engage young people and provide them with engaging activities.

The following articles highlight various youth work –related examples of using digital games. They represent a small but diverse sample of the digital gaming work done in digital youth work in Finland.

Don't be scared of video games

Miia Lyyra, The City of Jyväskylä's Youth Services

"BUT I'M SCARED, so I don't want to." This is a phrase that is often heard from adults as well as young people. New things can be unnerving, and people may have a tendency to avoid them. Some adults perceive video games as threatening and corrupting. Using electronic devices can be tricky, and there are all kinds of cables here and there. Nevertheless, youth culture is now at the stage where pool tables are becoming a thing of the past and digitalisation is becoming an increasingly significant aspect of youth work.

So what are you supposed to do when your own expertise falls short? The City of Jyväskylä's youth services began implementing the #GameONjkl gaming project in 2015. The purpose of the project was to shed light on gaming for both young people and adults. During the year, the project organised five gaming events, instructed young people on game development, visited parent–teacher meetings and arranged a seminar for educators. The first year was a process of familiarisation for all of the parties concerned. The start of a project is like forging a new friendship. It involves working on common practices and figuring out what can be implemented and which ideas must be abandoned.

The effective implementation of gaming-related activities takes a lot of work and competent people. However, you don't need to know how to do it all yourself. The role of the project leader is more like that of a producer. He or she needs to know who has the required expertise for a given task. The project leader holds the steering wheel and brings talented people together. The model used at the City of Jyväskylä's youth services includes only one full-time employee, so it is almost impossible for that person to put all of the plans into action on his or her own. So what does it take?

There are many gaming-related resources available in large cities, and even in smaller towns. They are often members of associations or individual gaming enthu-

siasts. When it comes to gaming-related activities, competence is essential. The best person for the job is someone who is an active gamer in his or her own right. Collaboration provides access to more resources and expertise. There are many gaming-related resources in the Jyväskylä region with different skill sets, such as the Legacy Gaming Association, the Jyväskylä esports Club, EXPA, the University of Jyväskylä and the Fantasiapelit game store. However, they all struggle with the same problems, including a lack of marketing and human resources. Working together, they can help solve each other's problems while also sharing their knowledge and skills.

I urge everyone interested in gaming to consider how they can promote digitalisation in their sphere of activity. It's time to leave your fears behind and start creating something new with an open mind. If there is no local expertise available, you can look for help at the national level. Many parties in Finland already have experience of gaming and linking it with youth work.

However, a project is not necessarily the ideal method of implementation for all parties. Activities can also be developed and improved in small steps. Open youth houses can incorporate gaming events, employees can participate in seminars, or young people can be asked to tell youth leaders what gaming is like and how the hardware works.

It is understandable to feel anxiety when faced with things that are new and beyond one's understanding but, as the culture is changing, it would be beneficial for youth work practitioners to have a broader grasp of the subject. It would make it easier for them to understand what young people do and how things such as games influence their lives.

In spite of being a relatively active gamer to start with, I have had feelings of incompetence during the project. I've been nervous about how the project will go. The best way to learn is from the young people themselves. They are ready to give advice and direct feedback on how the activities should be developed.

So how did our nine-month project go? You could compare it to pregnancy. For nine months, we have carried this good idea, which ultimately developed into a real form of activity. #GameONjkl gaming activities have reached visitors who would otherwise not use the services provided by the City of Jyväskylä's youth services. At the time of writing, our statistics show we have more than 1,000 new patrons. All this was achieved through effective cooperation between various parties. The most skilled participants in the project were young people under the age of 29 with active gaming backgrounds. Gaming is clearly becoming one aspect of the activities of the City of Jyväskylä's youth services, one that will be viewed as a method of youth work in the future.

We made it through the pregnancy unscathed. Next, we must foster the healthy growth of these activities. My dream is that, in five years, Jyväskylä will be home to a media centre that combines games with other digital media and is run in cooperation with other parties in the Jyväskylä region. ●

Ylivieska Game Days

Maija Pihlaja

THE MOBIDIGI PROJECT of the Settinetti Youth Information Service organised a LAN party in Ylivieska, with some 40 young people and adults participating. The LAN party was part of the four-day Game Days event that provided training and exciting experiences to youth work practitioners and parents along with information on games, gaming, and gamification. As Settinetti's Youth Information Officer, I was the organiser of the Game Days event and the chief organiser of the LAN party. Besides Settinetti, the organisers of the LAN party included the OSAVA project of Centria University of Applied Sciences, JEDU Ylivieska vocational school, and the Ylivieska 4-H Club. It was the first experience of organising a LAN event for all of the parties and employees involved.

In the beginning, I had no idea what LAN parties are about or how they are organised. I started my preparations by visiting a LAN party to see what the facilities and activities look like and what is included. I asked a few questions about technological aspects and such, but it was all quite new to me, so I didn't remember much of it afterwards. I decided that I would stay out of the technical side of things and leave it to others. I invited an experienced group of adult LAN party enthusiasts to take responsibility for LAN technology and the event programme.

Our meetings before the event highlighted certain concrete issues, such as what kind of equipment is needed for a LAN party: desks, chairs, network connections, cables... But what about rules and other activities? Youth workers with more experience of organising youth events brought up issues such as preventing disturbances, substance abuse, and other problems, although the feeling I had was that events such as LAN parties are not particularly prone to such problems. One reason why I felt that way was that we were organising the event on the premises of the vocational school. The young

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participants would go through a lot of trouble to haul their computers there to play games together. The situation might have been different if the location were a youth centre, where many different kinds of young people come and spend time in various states of mind and engaged in a variety of activities.

In spite of my optimism, I looked to establish rules that would prevent any disorderly conduct at the event. I searched the web for rules and guidelines for LAN parties organised elsewhere and also came across some online discussions regarding age limits and other things to note. These rules were applied in our event with a degree of flexibility, as the participants also included adult gamers and the main focus was on ensuring that everyone had a good time without being too strict about things. There were two supervisors on hand throughout the event, but I felt that the participation of adult gamers was even more effective in creating a sense of security. I felt it was good for the young first-time participants to see how more experienced LAN party-goers behave. This served as a natural way of introducing an educational perspective to the event.

Premises and technology

The space used for the LAN party was the media workshop at the JEDU vocational school. The media workshop is a studio where students practice the use of stage technology and video photography. The size of the available space was approximately 100 m2. The room came equipped with a large number of electrical sockets, a big screen, a projector and audio hardware. We also had access to classrooms, one of which was converted into a break room with mattresses brought in from the gymnasium. The local 4-H Club operated a kiosk in the foyer. The participants also had access to a microwave oven, refrigerator and coffee machine.

Each player was provided with a two-person desk and a chair. The size of the desk was just right. A smaller desk would not have sufficed. The desks were set up in rows. There wasn't much space between the rows, which was mentioned in some of the feedback we received afterwards. There were instances of engaged gamers swinging their arms around and accidentally hitting the person sitting behind them.

In setting up the room, we also wanted to account for the fact that many of the participants had indicated they wanted to sit next to their friends. There was one group of ten gamers who were assigned desks in two rows across from each other. However, in the end, there was another boy who wanted to be with the same group, so we added one more desk to the end of the row.

The vocational school's IT support officer arranged the network connection, which turned out to work very well. The routers and cables were supplied by the LAN group that was assigned responsibility for the event's technical aspects. The media workshop had a sufficient number of extension cords. The air conditioning was adequate, although it was important to take note of the automatic settings beforehand: by default, the air conditioning is reduced during weekends.

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One electrical problem was encountered during the LAN party, with the circuit breakers of the residual-current devices being triggered repeatedly. According to the school's staff, this problem had never occurred before. The potential causes of the problem were discussed after the event. For example, could it be that if one device is leaking current, the leak is multiplied when there are many devices in use? How could this situation be avoided? These days, all new electrical sockets are equipped with a residual-current device, and this could become a real issue if a LAN party were to be organised in a new building.

In hindsight, it might have been good to invest a little more thought in the break room. Some of the participants complained of headaches during the night, and they were instructed to take breaks. Perhaps it would have been good to have some basic painkillers available.

How many participants?

The aim was to accommodate everyone who wanted to join the event, as this was the first LAN party for young people organised in Ylivieska. The size of the premises was evaluated beforehand with the help of a more experienced LAN party organiser, and it was determined that the maximum number of participants would be 50. This seemed like a realistic figure in all respects, and the room's technical premises and power supply capacity were sufficient to support that number of computers.

A total of 40 people registered in advance and the number of actual participants on the day was 38. This was a good amount: manageable for the organiser, but still large enough to allow many different games.

LAN party age limit

I had talked to a few young people about the LAN parties they had attended, and it seemed that the usual age limit was 15 years. I thought there might be some younger people who also would want to take part, so we decided to have a flexible age limit of 15 years. In practice, the age limit was 15 but, space permitting, younger participants would be allowed subject to parental consent. After receiving many enquiries from people who were turning 15 later that year, we reworded the rule: the event would be open to those who turn 15 that year and, space permitting, younger participants would also be welcome.

The majority of the participants were 14 years old. We also had a good number of 15- and 16-year-olds and only one 13-year-old. For many of the participants, it was the first LAN party they had ever attended. The flexible age limit was also a good policy in that it made it possible for siblings to attend the event together. The youngest participant was a 12-year-old with parental accompaniment. There were also 11 participants aged 18 or older.

In my opinion, it was good to have participants of all ages attend the event. It gave those who were attending their first LAN party the opportunity to learn from the more

experienced gamers. The feedback we received after the event suggested that the more experienced LAN party-goers should have been more active in inviting everyone to participate in competitions and streaming. This indicated that some participants might have felt left out. We discussed the matter afterwards and decided it would have been a good idea to put up a list on the wall for participants to sign up for competitions.

Playing games with an age rating of 18 was prohibited under the rules of the LAN party. Of course, the adult participants were allowed to play such games, which led to one game being occasionally streamed on the screen for everyone to see. This was something we should have been clearer about: even if the adult participants were to play games with an age rating of 18, they should not have been streamed due to the presence of minors.

Duration of the LAN party

The duration of the LAN party had a degree of flexibility to account for age differences. For the minors, the limit was one night. They were allowed to come in at 6 p.m. on Friday, and they had to stop by noon the next day. Our thinking was that some of the young participants might not possess the restraint to eat and rest during the night, so two nights might be too long. As it turned out, one night seemed to be quite enough. Many of the participants started packing up around 9 a.m. Another reason for the one-night limit was that finding supervisors for two days might have been challenging.

The adult participants, however, were allowed to stay at the event through the weekend. In fact, this was something of a condition for the more experienced LAN party-goers to bother bringing their equipment and provide technical support. The question was brought up whether the younger participants would find it unfair that others get to keep playing through the weekend. The way I saw it, minors are used to being subject to many kinds of restrictions and would adapt accordingly. One night was indeed enough for most, and even the over-18 group of upper secondary school students only spent one night at the venue.

Lock-in curfew

The minors were not allowed to leave the LAN party venue during the event. This rule was to prevent them from using the LAN party as an excuse to spend the night out somewhere else. Allowing minors out alone at night would have been a bad idea in general, as the event supervisors were responsible for them. The underage participants were informed that going home early is, of course, possible, but the supervisors would have to discuss such arrangements with their parents by telephone. The doors of the venue were locked, and no-one was allowed to enter without first calling the supervisors.

The adult participants were allowed to come and go as they pleased, but they had to arrange for someone to let them back in after leaving. There were no problems with this arrangement.

Energy drinks and intoxicants

Before the event, I talked to youth leaders about the rules governing the consumption of energy drinks. While many youth workers supported a policy of zero tolerance, the consumption of energy drinks is part of LAN party culture and is not against the law. I felt that being too strict about it would create the wrong kind of vibe. That said, it was necessary to restrict the consumption of energy drinks in some way, and the adults needed to take responsibility for this issue.

Following the discussions, I decided that energy drinks would be allowed in moderation. Parents were made responsible for this. The parental consent form stated that parents are responsible for ensuring that their child will not bring an excessive amount of energy drinks to the event, while the organisers were responsible for ensuring that energy drinks were not brought in from elsewhere. The agreement did not specify what constitutes an excessive amount. The matter was left to the parent's discretion and common sense.

When participants arrived at the venue, they were asked how many energy drinks they had with them. At the same time, the supervisors made sure that the participants had brought enough food and snacks. Many of the participants showed the contents of their food bags when arriving at the venue accompanied by their parents. Most of them had no energy drinks at all. About five of the participating minors had 1–3 energy drinks each.

The LAN party was a drug and alcohol free event, which meant that even the participants aged 18 and above were not allowed to consume alcohol. Adult smokers were given instructions on a case-by-case basis.

Programme and activities

At the start of the LAN party, I delivered brief opening remarks including information about the venue and its exits as well as general instructions. It had been suggested to me that I should ask the gamers to switch off their displays while I address them. All of the participants paid attention to my remarks, and I enjoyed seeing the joy and excitement on their faces as they listened to what I had to say in spite of their eagerness to get on with the gaming.

When the LAN party started, a concurrent discussion event for parents was arranged in a nearby classroom, led by a gaming industry professional. The number of participants was small, but they seemed to enjoy the discussion.

Also making an appearance at the event were a couple of computer game characters. Cosplayers from the "Panthers Tear Forge" group visited the LAN party room in full costume and also said hello to the parents.

The LAN party was streamed live and shown at a local bar that hosted a simultaneous event featuring a board game tournament for adults as well as the opportunity to try the Xbox Kinect. This added a nice element to the LAN party. These details represent

my attempt to create a sense of community, increase the locals' general awareness of gaming as a hobby and bridge the gap between different generations and age groups.

Advance registration and price of admission

The original plan was to collect a fee of five euros from the participants, but we forgot to mention it on the poster and decided to make the event free of charge. In spite of the event being free, admission was subject to advance registration, and minors were required to bring a consent form signed by their parents. The consent form was sent to all participants by e-mail before the event along with the LAN party rules and instructions. Each person's name was checked against a list and their age was also written down. Those aged 18 or above were required to provide proof of identity. The moment of the participants' arrival was quite hectic, with everyone showing up at the same time. I set up a table by the door for myself to greet the participants and collect the parental consent forms. It would have been good to have one more person besides myself at the door to guide the participants inside the venue.

Marketing the LAN party

The LAN party was included in the marketing of the four-day Game Days event. The event was marketed on social media on the event partners' networks, and posters were distributed to local schools, but that was largely the extent of it. A press release was distributed, and it achieved good coverage: it was prominently featured in the Kalajokilaakso newspaper published in the municipalities in the area, and there were also a couple of articles published in a smaller local paper and an interview broadcast on Yle radio. The LAN party was also mentioned in the morning announcements at the local upper comprehensive school, and a bulletin was distributed to all upper comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools in Settinetti's operating area and published in the Wilma student information system.

Communication via schools proved to be the most effective marketing tool. We began to receive enquiries and registrations immediately after the morning announcement was made at the upper comprehensive school. The bulletin that was intended for publication on Wilma and sent to the school principals and guidance counsellors mentioned that the event is free of charge and does not involve any commercial operators or objectives. Some schools are very explicit about not wanting to advertise any commercial activities.

Supervisors

The LAN party had two supervisors in attendance throughout the event. The supervisors also managed the kiosk. The supervisors' shifts were 6 p.m. to midnight, midnight to 6 a.m. and 6 a.m. to noon. The supervisors were provided with emergency rescue information as well as information on other things like participants' possible illnesses to be mindful of. ●

Game Days LAN party rules and instructions:

What to bring:
- Your computer (display, mouse, keyboard and power cords)
- Headphones
- Ethernet cable, preferably with a length of about 5 metres
- You can bring an extension cord just in case, but they will also be available at the venue
- Sufficient amount of food and snacks
- Some pocket money. The 4H Club will operate a kiosk at the venue with refreshments and snacks for sale.
- You can also bring a blanket and a pillow to get some rest.

Rules:
- No alcohol or drugs
- No games with an age rating of 18
- The event is free of charge, but only those who have registered in advance will be allowed in.
- Minors must bring a consent form signed by their guardian. The consent form will be sent by e-mail after registration. Adult participants must provide proof of their age.
- Leaving the venue is not allowed.
- Keep the consumption of energy drinks moderate or minimal. Bags will be checked.
- The event will be attended by supervisors to ensure that the LAN party goes off without a hitch.

Esports in youth work

Pasi Tuominen, Verke

THE FINNISH BROADCASTING COMPANY YLE became a Finnish pioneer in the summer of 2014, as the first to broadcast esports tournaments on live television from the Assembly gaming event. These tournament broadcasts both delighted and angered members of the public. Some considered the broadcasts to be the best thing on Finnish television, while others viewed Yle as having descended into the pits of the television world.

What are esports?

Electronic sports or esports consist of competitive digital gaming. Two players or teams play the same game against each other. The number of players and the conditions and limits in force depend on the game in question. Tournaments and leagues abide by the same principles as any other sport. As in tennis, sledging or running, a single discipline may involve several forms of competition.

Digital games determine the conditions and rules of gaming. The players are challenged to make use of the game mechanics and are allocated resources as efficiently as possible. Although the player's physical strength plays only a minor role, they need to be in good shape as the games and tournaments often take a long time. In addition to being in good shape, players need strategic observation, communication, quick decision-making, teamwork skills and self-control.

Great arenas

One of the most common fears often mentioned in connection with esports and digital gaming is lack of physical activity. Particular attention is paid to ensuring that children and young people get enough exercise. Encouraging children to play games or participate in esports activities does not in any way undermine their opportunity to do sports.

On the contrary, esports are not intended to dominate their lives or take up all their time. Esports is a hobby just like fishing, drawing or going to the gym.

Electronic sports are very popular. The Finnish media has yet to catch onto esports, but the pastime is gaining plenty of press attention abroad. Just as in traditional sports, this popularity has attracted money. When the public becomes interested, sponsors are attracted, and money begins to be drawn in. In the esports world, major prizes are already measured in millions of euros and many people make a living out of electronic sports in one way or another. In Finland too, some professional players make a living out of esports.

The herald of youth work

Esports is a form of game culture for young people. They are very interested in games and esports and frequently play games included in professional competitions. Just like traditional athletes, players in professional tournaments have loyal fan bases. The big teams have fan clubs and accessories are in high demand.

As a popular hobby among young people, electronic sports provide an excellent medium for youth work, enabling youth workers to meet with young people immersed in their own culture. An educational approach and support are valuable contributions to esports. Youth services can also support young esports teams, for example by helping them to find training premises, a coach or equipment.

As a form of youth work, esports are breaking down barriers. They naturally combine online and physical activities and enable new forms of cooperation between gaming communities, organisations, municipalities, parishes and businesses. This form of work makes it possible to reach young people who may not otherwise use youth services. Esports activities can even inspire a young person to join a club or visit a youth centre. Youth workers do not need to become coaches or spontaneously turn into esports gurus. Simply being interested and enthusiastic is enough at the beginning – everyone working with esports is bound to learn something new. For esports activities to succeed, it is often enough that young people want or need certain activities, no matter whether the activity in question is band activities, arts and crafts or graffiti painting. The grown-up's role is to listen, support, enable, organise and guide.

Not all professional youth workers need to become gaming experts, or even feel enthusiastic about this form of work. Not everyone is interested in cooking or music clubs either. Most workers nonetheless understand the value of these forms of youth work, and understand what makes them excellent settings for reaching out to young people. Similar understanding should be extended to professional youth workers who want to leave their floorball equipment in the cupboard and take out game console controllers to play a tournament of the latest MOBA game alongside young people. ●

Boys' gaming group

Anna-Laura Marjeta, Youth department, City of Helsinki

THE BOYS' GAMING GROUP established at the Helsinki Youth Department's Pelitalo (Game House) in 2011 is an activity aimed at young men aged 15–25 who suffer from social exclusion as well as attention disorders or mental health disorders. The boys' gaming group is a form of youth work in which group guidance can be implemented on a multidisciplinary basis (for example, a community pedagogue, a social welfare officer and a public health nurse). The aim is to support boys and young men in their psychosocial growth, the development of gender identity and social empowerment. The approach consists of closed small-group activities closely related to digital gaming. The starting point for the activities is that the young participants' interest in and skills related to digital gaming are valued. Gaming is utilised in the work done with the participants, including group formation and social empowerment exercises. The use of diverse gaming is also aimed at influencing the participants' gaming habits to encourage them to take an interest in playing games with others, and participating in other gaming-related social activities, instead of playing games alone at home.

Implementation

Digital gaming is utilised to increase the participants' interest in, and commitment to, the group/support activities. Their social skills and networks are strengthened through activities related to digital gaming.

Members for the group are primarily sought through professionals who work with young people (particularly in outreach youth work and child welfare services). Each group has approximately eight members. All of the participants are interviewed before the first group meeting. The initial interview aims to ensure that the participant is personally interested in the activity and willing to commit to it.

The term of the group can range from six months to a year, with one three-hour meeting per week. Three out of four meetings involve the group getting together to play digital games. The games can be played against each other or as a team against a common opponent. The group plays several different games, and the members' experiences with the games are discussed in the group at each meeting. One out of four meetings consists of non-gaming activities. Such activities may be new and challenging to the group members either from a functional perspective (activities that none of the group members have previously engaged in) or due to the setting (such as a new operating environment or new people).

The term of the group also includes an interim interview and a final interview, which are discussions between the counsellors and each individual youngster. The purpose of the interim interview is to find out whether the participant has enjoyed his time in the group and whether he has any suggestions for further developing the group's activities. In the final interview, the participant is prepared for disengaging from the group and joining an open youth work activity, for example. The final interview also aims to determine the changes taken place in the participant's situation during his time in the group as well as his need for individual support after the group is disbanded.

Resources

When implemented by three group counsellors, for example, organising the group activity requires the counsellors' time (approximately 5h/week/worker on average throughout the group's term) as well as the following resources:

• Computers for all group members and counsellors
• A local area network that is fast enough for gaming
• Game licences for all group members and counsellors (individual licences are required for each player for each game)
• Suitable premises (with access to computers, network, etc.)
• Activity budget to cover small meals and the non-gaming activities at one out of four meetings

If putting together the resources to enable this activity is challenging, it is recommended that cooperation opportunities are explored with local non-profit gaming cafés, gaming clubs or gaming centres. There are also many associations whose activities involve gaming-related themes and may be interested in cooperation.

Experiences

At the Helsinki Youth Department's Pelitalo facility, the activities of the boys' gaming group have been evaluated by interviewing the young participants as well as the group counsellors. The experiences have been positive. The young participants have shown

a very high level of interest and commitment in the activity. They have indicated that the activity is important to them and that they've made new friends as a result of joining the activity. They've also mentioned that they have become more confident in social situations.

However, it has been noted that the group should stay together for a long time (preferably for a full calendar year) because it takes time to build trust with socially excluded young people. Similarly, after trust has been established, it takes time to develop social skills and relationships. As this activity requires considerable resources, it is particularly important to ensure that the young participants represent the appropriate target group.

Benefits from the perspective of youth work

This form of activity has reached — and engaged in youth work activities — a target group that has been difficult to reach and engage with other existing forms of activity. Based on our experiences, the activity has had the effect of strengthening the young participants' social skills and networks. This kind of activity also serves as an example in the field of youth work of how digital gaming can be utilised as an activity that provides particular support for the objectives of youth work. ●

Summer G4mes — a camp all about gaming

Kimmo Pölkki, City of Kuopio Youth Services

THE IDEA FOR THE SUMMER G4MES camp is largely based on the Bytecamp concept by the Federation of Tampere Evangelical Lutheran Parishes and Jussi "Kaapo" Kosonen. For a long time now, I have wondered why the youth services of our cities and municipalities do not organise the types of camps that Kaapo has implemented for several decades and found them to be a very effective aspect of youth work. Or if someone has organised them, they haven't been very vocal in sharing their experiences.

The Summer G4mes camp is a youth summer camp like any other, but the theme that unites the camp and its participants is digital games and gaming culture. All summer camps organised by the City of Kuopio's youth services follow the same pattern of having a particular theme around which the camp activities are built. The participants of the 2016 Summer G4mes camp were expected to bring their own computer to play games on. As this was not feasible for everyone, we also offered them the opportunity to borrow the city's youth services' new gaming computers. This made it possible for anyone to join the camp.

Who was the camp intended for?

The camp's target group was young people aged 12–16. Immediately following the start of the camp registration period for summer 2016, enrollment activity was quite low. The camp was advertised on social media and on the bulletin boards of youth centres. The rate of registrations increased towards the end of the period and the final number of participants was 17, with only one girl among these. The camp counsellors wondered whether participants representing a wide range of different ages would get

along and find things to talk about. The older camp participants initially also had some complaints about the rule prohibiting games with an age rating of 16. This meant they didn't have many games that were allowed, besides League of Legends and Hearthstone. Finding a game everyone could play would have been a difficult challenge had the city's youth services not acquired a sufficient number of copies of the game Overwatch, which the camp participants could then borrow.

What happened at the Summer G4mes camp?

One might imagine that the camp was a four-day LAN party for youngsters fueled by energy drinks and microwave pizza. However, this was not the case. We wanted the camp to have the same daily routine as other summer camps. Meal times created an appropriate rhythm for each day: breakfast, lunch, dinner and an evening snack. Between these important times of the day, we played not only video games but also traditional outdoor games, made foam core weapons and painted miniatures. After the evening snack, the participants typically had the opportunity to play computer games or Magic the Gathering (MtG), with each participant provided a welcome deck for the game. The best thing about these evening moments was that the most experienced MtG player was one of the young participants themselves! He helped the counsellors, as well as his peers, learn the game.

The daily computer gaming sessions included both instructor-led and free sessions. The instructor-led sessions involved playing Overwatch and Stepmania in groups. Overwatch was by far the most popular game at the camp, and nearly all participants played it. Without Overwatch, the camp's positive atmosphere and community spirit would surely have been different. The games played by the participants during the open sessions included LoL, Tanki Online and Growtopia. But the game the participants played the most was Overwatch! It was an instant hit with the players. This meant that there was no need to spend time during the instructor-led gaming sessions trying to persuade people to play the game. Instead, the guided sessions could focus on team tactics and how to use the different roles in the game to achieve the team's goals.

Looking back at the camp

The camp was a resounding success. Cooperation with Pohjois-Savon opisto, a school which provided the facilities for the camp, was very efficient and making the practical arrangements was easy. The participants were genuinely enthusiastic about joining a camp with a program they were interested in. For a few of them, it was the only camp they wanted to go to during the summer. The participants hailed from different parts of Kuopio, with the majority representing the surrounding municipalities that have been merged with Kuopio and the city's suburbs. This is an interesting observation, as other summer camps in Kuopio are not as clearly split between the city centre and the rest of the region. The special nature of the camp was also evidenced by the fact that

youths who might never meet each other outside of the camp often added each other as friends on Steam and began playing games together. The only girl at the camp also made new friends and has stayed in contact with them afterwards.

In their feedback, almost all of the participants said they would come to the camp again and recommend it to their friends. Based on the feedback and my personal experience with our first camp, I would recommend that other youth work practitioners also experiment with gaming-themed camps. Here in Kuopio, we have every intention of keeping the Summer G4mes going! ●

Part 5:

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN ONLINE ENVIRON- MENTS

IN THE VERY EARLY STAGES of contemporary internet, the Finnish youth work field had the foresight to start experimenting with using it as a viable environment for youth work activities. In the beginning, development was primarily focused on various data archives and platforms for the needs of young people's information and guidance services. Additionally, many organisations started developing easily accessible online help services, where young people could contact youth work professionals either in real-time or in delayed discussions.

These early-stage services already had characteristics in common with contemporary digital youth work approaches, such as the basic needs and goals of the work not changing regardless of the tools being used. For example, the initial development of web-based youth information and counselling services met the same need for information as the information and counselling work previously performed face-to-face. Similarly, engaging young people on online services aimed to support young people just as the work previously performed in face-to-face settings. The distinction is that there is often a lower threshold of using online services by eliminating obstacles related to, for instance, accessibility and anonymity. These characteristics still apply to this day, even though the range of activities offered and platforms being utilised have expanded from tailored online services to the social media platforms and mobile applications used by young people.

Building young people's guidance and advice services on digital and centralised platforms lowers the threshold to seek information and support in crises young people experience at different stages of their lives. Even though there is plentiful information available online, it is fragmented across various services operated by different parties. This sets very high demands – and a steep learning curve especially for young people – regarding information seeking and evaluation skills. On the other hand, counselling work performed online lowers the threshold of discussing difficult topics, and gives an opportunity to create a contact with a trustworthy adult without a long and sometimes even demanding process of seeking the aid of social and health care services.

The organisation of Finnish youth work and its regional financing model set certain challenges for providing web-based guidance and advice services, as they are often hard or impossible – not to mention impractical – to allocate regionally. The services have indeed often relied on centralised support from national-level organisations. Ideally, though, web-based activities can support providing local youth with regional services. Supplementing face-to-face work with online services can also make youth services available for those young people who cannot or do not want to use the "offline" services, whatever their reasons. Contemporary online help services are often implemented in practice in close cooperation between national and regional youth work organisations.

The Finnish field of youth work is in luck, as our government has enabled the development and implementation of diverse web-based youth work services. We believe that these examples can generate ideas about implementing digital technology in providing young people with online counselling, guidance and advice services in any context of youth work.

Appreciation for digital youth work is the starting point of resource allocation

Sami Laaksonen, Lutheran parish of Loimaa

IT'S SPRING 2008. The winter holiday confirmation camp is nearing its end, and all that's left is the drive home. At the front of the bus, a student in the early stages of his bachelor's degree in social services chats with an experienced confirmation camp pastor about the potential uses of the internet in youth work. Facebook is starting to grow in popularity in Finland, and there is speculation in the media about how much of a flash in the pan it will be. The pastor is quite convinced of the potential held by Facebook, but the student not so much. He doesn't even have his own Facebook account. Nevertheless, something about the conversation persuades the student to create a Facebook account soon after the camp.

Now, about a decade later, digitality is a significant aspect of that former student's job description. It is probably also no coincidence that the pastor later went on to start the Spiritual Life Online project at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, which made the church perhaps the most significant public operator online, at least temporarily, and a earned the church a pioneer status in digital youth work.

I eventually finished my studies, and the digital world became familiar to me through my evening job at the youth centre. The online youth centre Netari was run by my employer at the time and, while I wasn't directly involved, some of its echoes reached me as well. The end of the first decade of the 21st century was a time of rapid technological proliferation, also among young people, and my work at the youth centre kept me in touch with that trend. This was also when the first Mobihubu games were launched and played with varying degrees of enthusiasm at youth centres.

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National work online

By the time I began working at the parish after graduation, I was already convinced that youth work had to be done digitally as well as through the traditional channels. The Spiritual Life Online project was well underway and the training related to it gave me the spark to get involved in the church's online youth work, which at the time took the form of large group chats held on Sunday evenings on the social networking website IRC-Galleria. The church had been active on IRC-Galleria for some time by then, but things were slowing down by the time I got involved. Nevertheless, a group of interested church workers had formed around these activities, which served as a springboard for moving forward with the development of the church's online youth work.

After IRC-Galleria, the church became active on Facebook. This started with the Church in Finland page, which was subsequently complemented with a confidential, anonymous chat function. My commitment to the chat took up my weekly working hours to the extent that we held a job description discussion with my supervisor and added online youth work to my duties. My job description doesn't specify how much time to allocate to digital youth work, nor does it address the methods in any detail. Instead, we've agreed that I will keep my supervisor informed of how much time I spend on the church's collective work.

The church's Facebook page became popular, so we decided to create a separate Facebook page targeted at young people. Unfortunately, our high hopes and big plans did not come true. The page became primarily a channel for communication between youth workers rather than communication between young people, which is what we'd hoped for. This proved that it is essential to keep up with the times in digital work. By the time we mobilised, Facebook had begun to be dominated by parents and grandparents rather than young people.

We moved on from our experiment with Facebook. Next, we decided to try Ask.fm, which had garnered a fair bit of public attention in Finland when the church's youth work created an account on it. Ask the Church at Ask.fm has surprised us with its popularity. There seems to be demand for this service, which is still available to this day.

Our activities on Ask.fm are a concrete example of the benefits of the church engaging in collective activities rather than working only at the parish level. A relatively small group of about twenty workers produce the service, which can be accessed from anywhere in Finland and the rest of the world. Most of the questions can be answered without local expertise. Some questions are such that the users are unwilling to pose them to adults they know for fear of stigmatisation. Of course, each parish could provide this service separately, but that would require at least ten times more workers, and there would be unnecessary overlap in what they do.

Digital presence at the local level

Digital work must naturally be done at the local level as well, but its nature is different. In our parish, which is physically quite large, a significant amount of communication

is performed digitally. Various instant messaging channels are also a natural way for young people to contact the parish workers. The workers having a genuine presence in the digital world constitutes a large part of digital youth work. Local Facebook groups, for example, are an important networking channel.

For several years now, the training groups for confirmation school group leaders have had their own Facebook groups used for communication, enquiries and other correspondence, such as sharing photos that are intended to stay within the group. There is also a separate group for those who have already completed confirmation school group leader training. The group is used for communicating information on activities and announcing various jobs, sometimes on very short notice. The Facebook group that has become perhaps the most significant is the group for each year's confirmation school students and their guardians, where the students can find information on confirmation school studies as well as tips on local events. The guardians can also post questions on the page. In many cases, another guardian will answer the question before a parish worker sees the post. Peer support is a great resource!

In our work related to confirmation schools and camps, our goal is to support the young participants' spontaneous content production. The aim is to provide them with various ways to analyse the confirmation school's learning content while also providing their families and the parish at large with the opportunity to see confirmation school through the eyes of a student. In practice, we've implemented this in the form of photo challenges where the groups of confirmation school group leaders are assigned a theme and their task is to produce one photo per day on that theme. We are also planning to extend this concept to video clips in the near future. Confirmation school students have been informed of camp-specific hashtags and the general hashtags of the parish, which have been widely used on Instagram in particular. The national hashtags #ripari2015 and #ripari2016 have also been used, which facilitates virtual visits to the confirmation schools of other parishes.

"Where will I find the hours I need for online work?"
Mention online work to a group of youth workers and you are likely to see a divide. There are those who are already working online and those who feel the main task of youth work is to keep young people offline. Somewhere in between are the youth workers who feel that online work may be important, but their opportunities for it are limited. Some might feel limited by a perceived lack of knowledge and skills, while others might have a problem with lacking the required equipment. A third group, and perhaps the most common one, consists of people who don't have enough time for online work. The critical question often posed by the members of that group is: "What should I stop doing to have enough time for online youth work?"

It's true that online work takes time. It takes time just as it takes time to have face-to-face meetings, and perhaps even more so, because you have to know where

the young people are and go there. This means that the work done online is ongoing outreach youth work. Nevertheless, I would argue that the efficiency of time spent on online work compares favourably to the time spent at youth centres, for example, not to mention the preparatory side of things. So you need to find some extra hours somewhere. But where?

For me, face-to-face communication and marketing have been the activities that I've reduced in favour of online work. I've noticed that using online channels reduces the need for paper advertising, which is a considerable time sink. If I wanted to put up print advertising in all upper comprehensive schools and the parish's own facilities, it would take 60 kilometres of driving and a couple of hours out of my day. Visiting all of the lower comprehensive schools in the area to distribute ads for activity clubs, for example, would take at least another hour. Newspaper advertising — the traditional method used by the parish — mainly reaches the adult population and is expensive.

Of course, digital communications are not without problems either. The websites of parishes suffer from information overload and organisational jargon. For example, a young member of my parish wishing to find information on activities aimed at his or her age group would have to click on three links and be familiar with language related to the church's hierarchy. The website also reflects the same problem that the church suffers from in general: passively waiting for parishioners to show up. At least to a certain extent, we lack the willingness to go out to the people, to meet them in their physical and digital environments.

Social media can be a difficult terrain to navigate. Services come and go at a rate that makes it hard to keep up. Instead of trying to be familiar with all of the new services out there, it is more important for youth workers to be familiar with their operating environment and to know what services the local youths are using and how to establish a presence on those platforms. You also need to be sensitive to new cultural phenomena among young people and have the ability to adapt and address them in your work.

Resource allocation calls for creativity

In my work community, the significance of digital work is recognised and the church's national online work, which I'm involved in, is highly valued. I've been able to define my own "digital duties" and develop my work in accordance with the relevant needs and my areas of interest. This is supported by the work culture of the church and our parish, which gives employees a fair bit of flexibility in developing their work in a way that suits them. You get to put your personality on the line, and your work tends to be more effective when it involves your own areas of interest.

At the same time, the digital work of the parish has been discussed and developed as part of the parish's "normal" youth work. The digital environment is not separate from other areas of life. On the contrary, it is an integral aspect of the lives of young people, and it should equally be an integral aspect of youth work. The digital work

we have done thus far has mainly consisted of using social media environments and engaging in media education, which is something we try to incorporate in all of our activities. We've thought about ways to expand these activities, but we haven't really identified natural directions to follow, nor have our discussions with young people uncovered any ideas that we could've acted on.

From the perspective of resource utilisation, the lack of sufficient facilities is one of our major challenges. We haven't been able to allocate premises specifically for digital activities because our premises are intended to be available for use in a wide variety of operations. This means that activities revolving around computer or console games, for example, have been difficult to organise. For this reason, we're planning to develop cooperation with other parties in our gaming-related functions. There are a few major LAN events in our area each year, and working with their organisers could increase the parish's visibility among young gamers. This could be modelled after the church's Lataamo recharging station at the Assembly demoscene and gaming event.

Ultimately, the issue of the availability of premises is similar to the issue of the availability of time. It's a matter of resource allocation and it requires creativity and the willingness to look at things in new ways. You don't always need a designated space or a designated block of time to engage in digital work. Instead, digitality can be incorporated into existing forms of activity in a natural and flexible manner. However, it also makes sense to assess existing work duties and activities to determine whether they're still necessary. At the parish, in particular, it feels like many clubs and other activities are organised under the same priorities as they were 30 years ago. The critical evaluation of existing activities should be as important as generating ideas on new ways of doing things. ●

Working as peer supporters in the Netari online youth centre

Iida Putkonen & Milla, peer supporters for Netari

"HAVEN'T YOU HEARD ABOUT THIS BEFORE?" This question from a classmate led me to take my first look at Habbo Hotel, or Habbo for short, in spring 2008. Using Habbo is addictive because it's not just a chat platform, but rather a game environment in which you can build things, compete and hang out with friends. After accumulating skills and experience over the years, we now serve as peer supporters in Netari, the online youth centre on the Habbo platform. So what is this all about?

Visitors to the Netari room on Habbo can meet peer supporters alongside youth workers. There are 11 of us around Finland, with the youngest being 14 years of age. Peer supporters have been part of Netari on Habbo for several years, and youth workers continuously train new ones as needed. We mostly meet online, but we also know each other in real life. We've met face to face, and we keep in touch on Skype, Facebook and a WhatsApp group. The motive for being a peer supporter is to provide visitors with meaningful conversations and organise fun day-to-day activities.

In practice, a Netari peer supporter on Habbo is someone people can talk to and someone who starts and steers group discussions. The topics of discussion depend on who shows up on any given night. If many of the users are on the younger side, the topic can be something like pets or school. If the users who show up have a common interest, like gaming or films, the conversation will be more fruitful on those topics rather than covering the same old ground of pets and whatnot.

We also organise contests and other activities. The peer supporters also coordinate events related to holidays and theme weeks. At Halloween, for example, the Netari tradition is to decorate the virtual room with pumpkins and scary stuff and host an

autumn-themed quiz. Other past contests have included "name the recipe", Christmas card drawing and so on.

To plan the contests, we get a number of peer supporters together on Skype and start throwing ideas around. To enter the contests, the participants typically notify the peer supporter in charge of it or mark their avatar as a participant.

You learn a lot as a peer supporter

The most exciting part of being a peer supporter is getting to know new people you wouldn't have met if it weren't for Netari. Even before we became peer supporters in Netari, Habbo provided a way to meet lots of new people and even forge friendships that sometimes crossed over to real life. Once we signed up as peer supporters, we made new friends at training events and peer supporter camps. These meetings are not only intended to familiarise the peer supporters with Netari's operations, but also to support team building and the effectiveness of the group. At the training events and camps, we have used a variety of ways to create a close-knit group, including group work, acting, discussion exercises and a wide range of icebreaker games.

One benefit of being a peer supporter is finding out what your peers' views are on current issues. One recent example is an interesting conversation we had with a few upper secondary school students after the start of school last autumn. We provided peer support to each other as we agonised over the prices of textbooks and our heavy course loads.

Becoming a peer supporter has also given us a new perspective on how to use Habbo. When you're online in the role of a peer supporter, you can't just type whatever crosses your mind. At the same time, you have to be an active participant to show your interest. Once you've become a peer supporter, you may find that you no longer use Habbo in the same way you once did as a normal user. Even if your interest in basic Habbo use has waned, you may still occasionally get into a bit of role play and chase credits in contests organised by the Habbo admins, for example. Habbo can still serve as a significant outlet for channelling your creativity into decorating rooms, solving puzzle rooms, having a laugh with other players, exchanging ideas and sometimes resolving disputes.

The most challenging aspect of being a peer supporter is that it's occasionally hard to come up with topics for discussion and getting people to participate. Thinking of topics and suitably neutral comments takes practice. We believe that coming up with the courage to engage in conversations and address the less vocal users on Habbo is a good way to get started as a peer supporter.

When you can't think of a particular topic for discussion, as a peer supporter you can still resort to the reliable old questions: "How's school?" "Did you get any snow there yesterday?" or "Did any of you watch the hockey game last night?". These conversation starters are in your muscle memory after being a peer supporter for several years.

Organising contests often involves practical challenges. There are also various difficulties related to the use of time. Finding a schedule that suits everyone can be hard when there are many people involved. Peer supporters in different grades in school and in different cities have their own schedules and sometimes it's impossible to fit them together.

Being a peer supporter means you have to be responsible for your conduct and for the online discussion in general. At the same time, it represents a unique channel for interaction that allows you to gain experience of youth work. Interaction and conversation are important skills in any professional sector, whether you end up pursuing social work or some other line of work. Being a peer supporter is also a natural way to build and maintain competencies for any profession that involves a lot of online activity.

As a peer supporter in Netari, you can learn new skills. For example, you can enhance your people skills. Dealing with various group work situations is much easier after spending a few years trying to agree on decisions between twenty or so people. You also learn to listen to other people's opinions and apply your ideas better. Putting your ideas and opinions into words also becomes easier with practice.

Netari on Habbo

Habbo Hotel is a place for young people to meet online. It can be used for chatting and multiplayer games. Habbo is not only an online chat service, but also a visually unique platform for building rooms and customising them with items bought from a catalogue or earned as rewards. Logging in frequently will earn the user credits, and new players get a starter kit of items.

The Netari online youth centre has its own room on Habbo, where Habbo users can chat amongst themselves and with youth workers. The room also offers occasional opportunities to meet representatives of other professions. For example, Suunta counsellors specialising in education have visited the room to help Habbo users find out more about future opportunities. The room also organises various contests and special theme days. ●

Periskooppi chat facilitates discussions on substance abuse prevention at youth centres

Piia Aspegren, EHYT

PERISKOOPPI CHAT IS a twice-yearly live chat event for people aged 13–19. The event is marketed to youth centres across Finland and it is organised by EHYT, the Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention. In this article, I will describe how Periskooppi chat works and what its key factors are.

The idea to develop large-scale chat events initially emerged in cooperation with our Amis vocational school project in autumn 2014. The very first event was built in a conference room in DIY spirit, and it was aimed at lessons held in vocational schools. Our Youth and internet unit supported the event with its online chat expertise. When the Amis project concluded at the end of 2015, the unit continued to develop the activity under the Periskooppi brand.

The name Periskooppi refers to the live stream and the way it scans the horizon like a periscope to determine what are the hot topics of the day among young people. The event is not affiliated with the Periscope app in any way. Periskooppi chat has now taken place three times in its current form, with the themes of relationships, substance abuse and sex. The event is organised twice a year, in spring and autumn. The theme of the next Periskooppi chat scheduled for November is again substance abuse, as the event will take place during Substance Abuse Prevention Week.

Periskooppi chat is produced in cooperation between several parties. The event partners help with content production, contribute towards the costs and provide the

venue for the event. The three Periskooppi chats organised thus far were held at Walkers House in Helsinki, in cooperation with Children of the Station. Other partners have included Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi, the Population Research Institute, Nuortenelämä.fi and Verke. The event aims to introduce the themes of substance abuse prevention to public dialogue.

Periskooppi chat consists of a live stage show and real-time chat

Those who attend a Periskooppi chat event at Walkers House will see a stage with cameras as well as tables with laptop computers set up side by side. The event consists of two components: a live stage show with hosts interviewing interesting guests and a live chat that includes a channel restricted to invited guests in addition to the public channel. The guest chat features the guests who are not on stage at that time. The public chat is a discussion that all young people can participate in. Comments from the open chat can be brought up for discussion on stage and in the guest chat. This ensures that there is constant communication between all three components.

The three-hour events feature many different guests on stage and in the chat, including celebrities, subject matter experts and young people. The selection of guests aims to achieve a balance between two factors: guests should be interesting and entertaining to the target audience of young people, but they also need to be familiar with the theme.

The live broadcast is streamed on YouTube. The video and chat windows are both available on a single web page, which can also be accessed on mobile devices. The event is easy to follow regardless of where the audience member is physically located, and young people can use their smartphones to participate in the discussion. Participating in the chat does not require registration. Questions and comments can be made anonymously.

No question is too embarrassing for Periskooppi chat!

Periskooppi chats always take place from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday evenings. We have found that the quality of the discussion is better when young people participate voluntarily during their free time instead of being pressured to participate by a teacher in a school classroom, for example. Nevertheless, the public and anonymous chat tends to make some people push the boundaries of what is appropriate, which is why all messages sent to the chat are moderated before being posted.

Back when the event was organised during the school day, it was easy to reach the audience through vocational schools. But how to get young people to watch the event on a Friday night, during their free time?

"Get comfortable and let the live broadcast get the conversation going!"

When we were thinking about ways to reach young audiences effectively, actively cooperating with youth centres was naturally mentioned as one option to explore. Per-

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iskooppi chats can be used by youth centres to spur discussion on important themes that might otherwise be challenging to broach. They also provide youth centres with an easy way to organise a meaningful activity on a Friday night. For EHYT, Periskooppi chat also serves as a valuable link between youth work and substance abuse prevention.

Youth centres can register as remote event locations in advance. The most recent event was followed in more than 30 youth centres across Finland. Youth centres that register for the events receive a set of materials by mail, including ideas for methods of discussing the theme with young people.

Youth leaders can rely on the experts in the chat room to help them answer questions from young people. Some youth centres have participated in the discussion using a collective chat handle, with youth leaders relaying questions and comments from the local group of patrons to the chat. This model has seemed particularly effective.

"Good info that I couldn't quite be sure of online!!"

The above quote is a comment made by a Periskooppi chat participant. Every Periskooppi chat event is a new learning experience for our team. We are not professional live broadcasters or streamers, but we are fortunate to have employees whose music and gaming hobbies have helped them acquire audiovisual production skills.

The technical aspects always involve a few surprises as well: microphones that aren't suited for the venue due to background noise, issues with the seating configuration on the stage and so on. We've learned many new skills by organising the events. For example, we've become really good at making cue cards for presenters.

We've received good feedback from our young audience members, and the numbers speak for themselves: during our event in April, the chat reached 900 logins, some of which were the collective handles of youth centres with dozens of young people watching. The actual size of the audience was therefore even larger. In addition, a total of 255 unique users participated in the chat. Individual audience members watched our live stream for an average of 26 minutes, which is a very good figure.

Periskooppi chat also brings up topics of discussion that young people might not otherwise have the courage to talk about. For example, in the feedback survey for our most recent event, the theme of which was sex, 64 % of the respondents indicated that the event covered topics that they had previously not had the opportunity to discuss. In addition, 95 % of the respondents felt that these types of chat events are necessary. These results suggest that the traditional group chat is not a form of activity that is dying out, at least not when combined with a live stream. ●

Youth Information and Counselling Services in the digital era – 5 things to consider

Mika Pietilä & Venla Tuohino, Koordinaatti

Tradition

The digital era we live in has brought many new tools and channels to make communication with young people more effective, but the essential needs of young people have remained surprisingly similar over decades. The principal tasks of youth information and counselling have traditionally been the provision of information, guidance and counselling to young people. The tools and methods, however, have varied and changed over the years.

Finnish youth information and counselling services date back to the 1950's, and the work originally started out as guidance to those young people who moved from the countryside to the cities in search of work. In bigger cities such as Helsinki and Turku there were advisory and information offices made available to meet the needs of newcomers. These offices provided information mainly on rental apartments and jobs. (Heikkinen 2010.)

The basis for the services was not unlike what it is today: responding to young people's information needs and offering high-quality advice, counselling and support. Numerous experiments and pilot projects have been undertaken to find the best approaches and processes. Even so, it can be seen that young people's needs for information on matters that concern them have not disappeared; however, the questions now asked are more diverse. Another change took place when a problem-based approach developed into a preventive one. The intention is to offer, at the earliest possible stage,

information on the available choices, so that young people can apply this information when they are making decisions in their own lives. (Heikkinen 2010.)

It is often said that youth work goes wherever there are young people. Looking back, youth information and counselling has been offered in bus and railway stations, schools and clubs — and sometimes even in places that did not yet exist. There were online services even before the internet. Nuorisotietopankki ("Youth Information Bank") was a videotex-based electronic information tool that Kansalaiskasvatuksen keskus (Centre for Citizenship Education) established in 1987. Nuorisotietopankki provided information on various subjects, but it also offered young people an opportunity to participate in the information provision process with its interactive channels. (Heikkinen 2006; Heikkinen 2010; Fedotoff & Pietilä 2011.)

Pre-internet solutions such as Nuorisotietopankki paved the way for later online youth information and counselling services. The possibilities of the internet in disseminating information were discovered during the 1990's. The idea was to improve the availability and accessibility of youth information and counselling services, and the internet proved to be a suitable tool for that. People working in the youth sector at the time quickly understood that the internet would also become a popular medium among young people. Fairly soon, many local youth information and counselling services in several municipalities had their own websites. (Fedotoff & Pietilä 2011.)

Principles

The Youth Act from 2006 emphasised supporting the growth and independence of youth, promoting active citizenship and social empowerment and also improving the living conditions of young people. One of the services the Youth Act specified was youth information and counselling services. (Aaltonen 2007.)

Besides national legislation and strategies, Finnish youth information and counselling services follow the sector's European guidelines as found in the European Youth Information Charter (2004). In 2009, the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) adopted the European Principles for Online Youth Information. The provision of services is the act of providing access to information and counselling services for all young people. The aim is to guarantee the equality of access to information. Special attention should be paid to disadvantaged groups and to young people who may have specific needs. (Fedotoff & Pietilä 2014.)

In addition to the European principles, the heart of youth information and counselling services lies in children's and young people's right to access information, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The European Union's proposed Youth Strategy 2010–2018 also aims to improve access to youth information and help disseminate information through all possible channels at local, regional and national levels. (Fedotoff & Pietilä 2011.)

The overall statement is that youth information and counselling provide all young people equal access to youth services. The first step towards empowerment is being able to access information. Long story short: youth information is a necessity, a right and a basic human need. When in possession of information, young people become the messengers, the leaders of their communities. The same principles apply in the digital operating environment of youth information and counselling services.

Digital Youth Information and Counselling Services

When we think of young people today, we acknowledge their ability to adjust to the digital world. Recent Finnish research points out that young people are in contact with each other more through social media than meeting face-to-face. Three out of four young people are daily in contact with their friends through digital media. Every fifth young person communicates with friends in social media several times a day. (Merikivi, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2016.)

However, when it comes to youth information and counselling services, the statistics tell us that young people mostly come to local service points and ask for advice face-to-face. This suggests that we cannot replace those services by offering only an online service. Online services have certainly improved the availability of youth information and counselling, especially for young people living in remote areas. Digital interaction and online youth information complements and enhances the availability of local services, so it is important to keep on developing functional digital youth work in general. This means also taking care of its quality and accessibility.

Even the term digital is sometimes vague. It might be useful to discuss what the term digital means in our services, in our daily work and what kinds of competencies, skills and knowledge are needed. Digital is a broad term and can be approached from very different individual viewpoints. However, youth information and counselling work benefits from the internet and social media, and a lot of digital technology is used in the daily work with or without customers. In that sense, digitality in youth work can be understood not only as a tool but also as a space, content and a new operating environment (Lauha & Tuominen 2016).

If we look at the current practice of digital youth information and counselling services, we can draw a division between real-time and non-real-time services. Online chat is a real-time, one-on-one communication tool that allows young people to seek advice anonymously. Youth workers who operate in chats are trained for their task. They need to have a vast amount of knowledge on matters concerning young people's lives in order to support and advise them online.

 Young people can also pose questions online in non-real-time Question & Answer (Q&A) services. Q&A services are in fact more popular than chats. Typically, users will receive an answer to a question within three days. The youth information worker can take their time to answer the question — perhaps providing a more detailed response

based on the topic and the background information that has been given. Having more time to formulate a response makes the task easier for the youth worker. In that sense, a non-real-time service is more forgiving than a real-time one.

Social media has changed the nature of youth work. Social media has affected youth information and counselling work because it enables the mobility of the work. Instagram, Facebook, Messenger, Kik, Snapchat and WhatsApp are all applications that can be used in youth information, and with mobile devices. Päivi Timonen also suggests that different digital games fit well into youth work, and can be exploited in youth information work as well. (Timonen 2016.)

These are just a few examples of digital youth information and counselling, and there are many new practices yet to come. If we look at digital youth information today, we will probably notice the boom in the popularity of visual images. The field follows the interests of the young, which explains why the sector is now investing in videos, for example. Videos attract the young, not only in Finland but worldwide. Videos and pictures also engage people in other social networking sites. It will be interesting to see how the development of VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality) technologies will affect youth work.

Requirements and challenges

We now live in a digitalised world and working in it demands, at the very least, an eagerness to learn new things and an open attitude towards changes in the working environment. A contemporary youth information worker needs to be able to adapt to new tools, software and applications. Work is conducted on the go as youth information is more mobile than ever before. A curious mindset might also help a lot in sensing current trends in young people's social media usage. Any youth worker also benefits from an inherent drive to immerse themselves in new digital media.

Besides the provision of information, guidance and counselling, youth information and counselling services involve producing content on various themes for young people. This information deals with topics that relate to young people's lives. Producing this informational content is challenging. Processing all available knowledge and picking the relevant, usable and easily applicable pieces of accurate information is a complicated task. The skills needed for information management and handling information and deciphering it will not necessarily have been part of the curriculum during the youth worker's professional training. (Fedotoff & Pietilä 2014.) In times of information overload, it is even more significant to be able to track down the facts.

A particular challenge in real-time services is the dialogue with a young person during an acute crisis. How can a youth worker provide the best possible support and aid in such situations? Judging by the feedback received from the field, it appears that in online work the approach is more one of guidance than information and counselling. Often the discussions in chats are problem-based, and the young person needs some

sort of assurance in his/her issue. In this context, guidance means the dialogue between the youth worker and the young customer. Ideally, the customer takes an active role in solving the problem, based on the guidance that has been provided. A youth information worker should avoid offering ready-made solutions. (Fedotoff & Pietilä 2014.)

The digital era requires particular skills from the youth information worker. You even need to keep up with the slang young people use online and have up-to-date graphic skills to be able to communicate visually. Some youth workers have addressed their concerns about their own skills, worrying that they are not appropriate and that they fall short of the required high standard. This leads us to find ways that allow workers to feel comfortable and competent enough to cope with their work.

Possible solutions

The objectives of youth information and counselling services are young people's educational guidance and the strengthening of their social identity. The services also aim to support young people's growth towards independence and active participation. Koordinaatti (Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling) provides expert and support services to youth information and counselling organisations, both in the public and the private sectors. Koordinaatti helps to find the right solutions for the provision of their youth information and counselling services. Additionally, the national youth information and counselling service network facilitates the sharing of know-how and good practices. Here are some ideas for the future of youth information and counselling work.

Enabling young people as planners, providers and evaluators of the services is particularly important. Young people have already been included in many projects, but we ought to make the most of the direct feedback we receive from young people and let their ideas have a greater influence in developing processes. Young people can also participate in youth information work in different peer-to-peer groups. We need to continue motivating the young. Youth information workers can even learn from the digitally literate, skilled and competent young. However, as educators, we must seek out those young people who are at risk of social exclusion and enable their inclusion in activities.

Networking and peer-to-peer communication are crucial for the development of youth information work. Regular and high-quality training is required to help employees in the youth information sector feel confident about themselves. Open dialogue supports workers' well-being at work, and its meaning becomes emphasised in cases that are mentally strenuous, such as the previously mentioned handling of a crisis in the online environment. There have also been some discussions about the automation of online chats. As some of the chats are constantly congested, maybe bots could help in reducing queues. Digital technology and analytics might offer brand-new solutions.

The evolution and changes in the virtual world are fast. Sometimes it demands a little extra to keep up with the changing trends. Perhaps we need to accept that changes

are slower within the youth information sector. We should favour the new communication methods to keep up with the pace and share more of our best practices and learn from each other. The key to success is in the networks: youth information and counselling work benefits from multi-professional and multidisciplinary approaches. ●

Part 6:

STRATEGIC PLANNING OF DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

STRATEGIC PLANNING IS A TOOL to coordinate operations and lead them towards a common goal. The strategic planning of digital youth work means including digitality in an organisation's strategic youth work plan. This requires a clear definition of the goals and methods of digital youth work and appointing people to be in charge of processes. Clear roles in delivering digital youth work is not yet very common in Finnish youth work: In a 2017 survey conducted by Verke, 47 % of the respondents felt that they do not fully understand what is expected of them regarding digital youth work (Hernesniemi 2017).

Changes in the near-future operating environment are forecast in strategic planning so that the actions of the organisation can be developed accordingly. The starting point of strategic planning is based on facts: what sort of operating environment does the organisation currently have, and where is it headed? It is important to understand technological development and the changing ways young people use the web to understand the digital operating environment of youth work. What kind of digital youth work meets the young people's requirements, and what are the possibilities and limits as set by current technology?

To support the strategic planning of digital youth work, data can be collected by conducting your own surveys about, for example, the ways local young people use digital media, or by compiling existing research data according to your own needs. With regards to efficiency and credibility, it is good to make a connection in the strategy between your own operations and other governing documents such as national or European policies and relevant legislation.

In practical youth work, the goals are not constantly re-evaluated, as they are often built in the practices and processes of youth work. From the perspective of digital youth work, however, it is good to consider now and then how digital media and technology can be utilised to support meeting the goals of youth work. When setting goals for digital youth work, it is vital to remember that digitality has no intrinsic value but should rather support youth work in general.

Goal-setting and evaluation can highlight the impact of digital youth work as well as the significance of youth work. The goals need to be set so that they are both evaluable and achievable. Qualitative evaluation methods should be included alongside quantitative measuring methods. It is also necessary to consider how to evaluate operations together with young people. Once the goals have been set, their realisation can be ensured, for example, by introducing guidelines. The guidelines support carrying out innovative and equal digital youth work. The guidelines should be created in cooperation with employees and young people – thus ensuring their commitment to them.

In addition to guidelines, an important method of implementing strategy and goals is employee training. The demand for developing the competencies related to digital youth work should be regularly evaluated in the working community. Including digitality in existing youth work means that youth workers do not need to be ICT gurus in order to perform digital youth work. However, the general lines of development of technology and young people's online cultures should be familiar to practitioners. From the employer's perspective, this means that employees must have sufficient resources and time to update their expertise.

The capabilities required in digital youth work are not only limited to technical and cultural issues, but are also related to core competencies of contemporary youth work. Even though many youth workers use digital media plentifully in their spare time, meaning that the phenomena and technologies are familiar, it requires refined professionalism to connect digitality to the goals of youth work and to adapt the methods of youth work into digital operating environments. Youth workers are required to understand the connection between digitality and the goals of youth work, and to adjust the methods of youth work to fit a digital world. In the future, there will be a need for further training on how digital media can be utilised in face-to-face youth work, and what kind of digital services could be built or used in a youth work context.

Towards digital Guiding and Scouting

Mikko Lehtonen, the Guides and Scouts of Finland

DIGITALISATION IS THE choice of a successful organisation and "the new black" of development. For us, it has taken shape in separate IT projects and developed further in our scouting projects. Our IT strategy has guided the development of digital services for scouts, local troops, and the regional districts. The year-long youth experience Roihu culminated in July 2016 in a summer Finnjamboree-event for 17,000 scouts. It broke our previous records and was the largest public event of the year in Finland. It was our first Finnjamboree of the social media era, and it combined a forest camp with urban services. It also marked the digitalisation of the way we organise our events.

We are implementing the measures outlined in our development plan drafted a couple of years ago to improve the way The Guides and Scouts of Finland manages its IT administration. The Guides and Scouts of Finland produces, for example, essential IT services at the national level for its regional districts to eliminate overlapping administrative work and costs. Donation programmes and partnerships are utilised in the development of digital services.

The Guides and Scouts of Finland is well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities presented by technology in developing its operations. Professionals in IT administration, information systems, and marketing communications, for example, volunteer their time and expertise to support the development of digital services. Roihu is the hottest case of digital services at The Guides and Scouts of Finland. The following highlights illustrate our path towards digital guiding and scouting.

Roihu — a Finnjamboree for the social media era

A thousand Roihu volunteers across Finland worked in a shared digital operating environment using cloud services and instant messaging applications. The Guides and

Scouts of Finland acquired digital Office 365 tools for Roihu and other activities thanks to Microsoft's donation programme. Once the use of digital tools had been practised in the context of Roihu, the new operating environment was easy to deploy in October in other scouting activities to bring people, communities, and projects together and improve the organisation's information management. Our new intranet, Jemma, replaced the separate intranet solutions used by regional districts and our document management, which was decentralised on social media.

In the Roihu project, digitality also meant new options and opportunities in organising the Finnjamboree. In a break from previous policy, the guides and scouts were encouraged to bring their mobile devices with them to the forest. The devices were used to access an application created for Roihu by scout volunteers as well as play a forest-themed mobile game developed in partnership with the forest company UPM. RoihuApp included instructions and event details that could be edited and supplemented during the camp, which would not have been possible with printed materials.

The new kind of digital Finnjamboree also required reliable basic information technology and related services. For example, the camp-wide wireless network built with partners enabled the day-to-day operations of camp offices and supported communications during the camp. Reliable network connections also helped introduce electronic payment methods in the camp's coffee shops and kiosks. Paying for an ice cream in the forest was as quick and easy as it is at the local supermarket.

Guiding and Scouting provides opportunities to demonstrate skills and competencies

The strong visibility and network connections of Roihu meant that the event had an impressive presence on social media, strengthening the brand of The Guides and Scouts of Finland as the country's most vital youth organisation and the best place for volunteering. In July 2016 alone, Roihu's social media accounts racked up more than 2.8 million displays. Social media manager Tiina was one of Roihu's 3,000 volunteers who contributed nearly 200,000 hours of volunteer work in total. We have made systematic efforts to ensure that the competencies acquired in guiding and scouting are formally recognised to help people like Tiina earn academic credits for their volunteer activities.

"I am making use of the work I did for Roihu in my studies. I am studying digital communications and planning to major in social media strategies and production. My role with Roihu was exactly what I imagine my future job to look like: planning and producing content for an organisation's social media channels and responding to customer messages. I've already had the opportunity to plan a Christmas calendar campaign, write blog entries on training and interview people. I will receive 15 credits towards my degree for the work I do as a Roihu volunteer."

–Tiina, a scout

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Managing digitalisation

The development of digital NGO operations and scout organisations goes far beyond the Roihu project. The digitalisation of scouting programme is an important and current topic for us. With more than 5,000 guides and scout groups getting together in Finland every week, digital services must be scalable to hundreds of local troops.

Last year, we developed a new state-of-the-art material database in the form of the partio-ohjelma.fi website. Everything that is done in The Guides and Scouts of Finland organisation is part of The Scouting Programme. The website is based on open (programme) data, and our aim is to encourage not only guides and scouts but a broader audience to take advantage of it. Our next step on the digital scouting path is to develop an application to support the Scouting Programme. The application will allow scouts to keep track of their development and growth as members of the organisation.

Digital guiding and scouting as a concept means new ways of accumulating experiences and making decisions, new ways of being a guide and scout and new ways of working with guides and scouts. Digitality enriches our activities, the scouting organisation and guiding and scouting as a hobby in general. It's not enough to have digitalisation mentioned in the organisation's strategy — it's a process that must be managed. The creation of a new guiding and scouting culture requires digital participation and interaction by guides and scouts. We also need a digital vision that determines our direction and helps us allocate our resources, time and expertise. This vision is what we're defining right now on our journey towards digital scouting. ●

Social media policy supports realising objectives

Virpi Sojakka & Peeter Nummi, City of Turku Youth services

THE CITY OF TURKU YOUTH SERVICES created a specific social media policy for its youth services in the spring of 2015. The policy is based on the city's general social media policies, but also on the questionnaire conducted in the spring of 2015 surveying how young people from Turku use social media, and on recent national and regional studies about young people's use of social media. The policy was created in cooperation with Projektiässät ("Project Aces"). Projektiässät is a training course designed for university students, where students gain project management and development expertise in actual customer service situations. Four students from Projektiässät were involved in creating the social media policy for youth services.

Projektiässät conducted the questionnaire about social media use in three upper comprehensive schools in Turku. Views from the members of the Turku Youth Council about social media content that interests young people were also gathered. The input from young people about the use of social media was very consistent content-wise, in regard to both regional and national data. This is why answers from three upper comprehensive schools and the Youth Council were considered to be sufficient to base the youth work policy on, and the questionnaire study was not repeated in other upper comprehensive schools. Youth services collected practical examples from youth work professionals of successful social media practices previously implemented inside their organisations and nationally.

The social media policy of Turku youth services aims to encourage, introduce and give tips about social media, but also to recap general policies governing Turku city employees. The purpose of the policy is to provide youth work with practical and concrete tips and to increase the understanding of social media and its special characteristics.

The aim of the policy is to support the development of a form of more compelling and participatory social media communication for young people.

The policy consists of five chapters. The first chapter is about youth work and social media at a general level. The second chapter describes the special characteristics of social media. The study conducted on young people in Turku and their habits on social media are covered in chapter three. The fourth chapter describes the special character-istics of social media channels most popular in Turku and their purposes from young people's perspective, and the fifth chapter provides youth workers with practical tips about utilising social media.

The investigative work related to drafting up the policy helped to narrow down the relevant social media channels, and had a significant impact on the choice of social media channels now in use. Based on the data collected, the City of Turku Youth ser-vices decided to focus on three social media channels in 2015. The selected common youth service social media channels are Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. In addition to these, youth centres, houses and activities may at their discretion use Snapchat, WhatsApp or other instant messaging services to contact young people directly.

Of the common channels, Facebook is seen as a channel for conveying information, where young people can easily see the opening hours of youth centres and additional information of events, but where young people rarely produce their own public content. This channel is not intended for actual social interaction, but its primary function is to convey information. The hashtag #turunnuoret (youth in Turku) was deployed to collect pictures as every house, youth centre and activity maintained their own pro-file. An individual profile offers the possibility to be profiled to a certain house, youth centre or activity, and the common hashtag brings the functions and units together. Young people can find their own group and also learn more about other youth service activities under a single hashtag.

YouTube was selected as a new common platform. The City of Turku Youth Services YouTube channel had organised content produced weekly together with young people, and a video was published every week on the channel in 2016 with the title 'Video of the week!'. The Video of the week! describes the everyday life of youth services from young people's perspective. Youth workers assist young people in making the videos, but they focus on presenting the activities from the perspective of young people. The process of creating the videos includes a strong educational element regarding media, which covers among others the topics of copyrights and the young person's rights to his/her product and publishing it.

To enable interactive communication in social media, all youth work employees were provided with a personal work phone. This way communication in WhatsApp or other instant messaging services is not held between a young person and a youth house, centre or other work unit, but rather young people can reach youth workers personally. After the social media policy was completed, there was a lengthy discussion

about how public communications and municipal youth work performed in social media can be distinguished. In official municipal communications, the person behind the message is often not visible. The message is the same for everyone and it is sent by the city, not an individual person. Young people need to know who they are communicating with, something that is mandatory for trustful dialogue.

In addition to work phones, the youth services have procured an iPad for each house, centre and activity. iPad became the chosen tool due to its versatility and user-friendliness. The social media policy is not only applied in equipment procurement, but also in the personnel training programme. To implement new equipment successfully, the staff needs to be trained properly. Many novel applications also require implementation training, let alone revising legal viewpoints, such as copyrights, that the new working methods might include.

The social media policy was inspected and updated regarding the selected channels at the end of 2016. The channels remained the same, but they were weighed differently. Content produced together with young people was transferred to Instagram, where content production is performed in a quicker tempo, and it describes everyday activities better. The content produced for the YouTube channel is now more extensively scripted and edited. As young people change their behaviour on social media or begin to focus on other channels, youth services also need to re-think their choice of social media outlets while re-examining their objectives. It is not a question of being active daily in as many channels as possible, but rather one of being visible in the correct channels with the appropriate methods. ●

Quantifying digital youth work

Marika Westman, Culture and Leisure Division, City of Helsinki

THERE IS AN INCREASING emphasis in youth work on incorporating a digital approach into all of its areas. Digitality in youth work can be developed in many ways; for example, in various projects and by producing online services and websites. The challenge lies in bringing the digital approach to day-to-day youth work, as part of the broader framework of interaction. The online world is no longer separate from the other ways young people spend their time. Instead, it has become a constant presence. Accordingly, youth work needs to be part of this twofold presence that comprises both face-to-face encounters and digital sharing. The environments in which young people interact have changed, and the work that is based on interaction must evolve with them. The central activities of youth work are based on encounters, interaction and group activities. It is natural for young people to operate online under these themes.

Introducing new tools and operating methods and incorporating them into youth work in a natural manner is challenging. Some youth work practitioners are enthusiastic about new tools and see great potential in them. They are prepared to experiment with new applications and find new methods and platforms for activities. For others, this may be more difficult. They may be less familiar with the new environments and tools, and their experiences of these types of encounters may not feel credible.

Achieving change is difficult without goals

When an organisation wants to change the way its work is conducted, it needs to provide new contexts for activities and set goals for them. Without goals, engaging in new activities tends to be haphazard and unlikely to contribute to a broader change in operating practices. The new practices will then depend on the individual workers'

motivations and competencies instead of being established as the organisation's fashion of doing things. Accordingly, digital youth work should incorporate clear goals, just like other aspects of youth work.

Goals can be set by assessing the content and quality of operations. These assessments often focus on the forms of youth work in which digitality is a natural component. Greater depth in these functions can be sought by focusing on content, methods and activity levels, or perhaps by analysing the customer experience. If the aim is to achieve a broader change, it is necessary to have the courage to set clear and quantifiable goals for operations. The goals must be feasible and supported by the availability of the necessary tools.

Quantification of digital youth work

Quantitative indicators for digital youth work can be generated from many different perspectives. Services can be evaluated by measuring website traffic or the contacts received from website visitors. However, much of digital youth work is done on social media platforms whose complex nature makes measurement challenging. One solution that has been used is to focus on interactive encounters with young people in digital environments. The content of these measurements of online youth work is based on indicators of the number of visits by young people.

The key indicators used at the City of Helsinki Youth Department include "young people encountered online". It has been part of the broader set of visitor statistics for several years. When the Youth Department was revising its key indicators, the division of visitor statistics was developed further and online encounters were incorporated into an indicator that measures contacts with young people outside the Youth Department's own operating locations. This means that online encounters with young people are assessed at the same level as encounters with young people on city streets, in schools and at events. The purpose of revising the indicators was to put more weight on digital encounters and to reinforce the role of online work as part of the Youth Department's core activities.

As with all quantitative operational figures, it is important to create definitions for digital youth work indicators. What makes the definition of the indicators both challenging and enriching is that they delineate and guide operations. Indicators of online youth work are often linked to specific operating environments, the organisation's own website or a given social media platform. Strict definitions are difficult to implement in new online environments that operate under a different logic. Online interaction can take the form of pictures as well as words, and defining what constitutes sufficient interaction is difficult. Accordingly, the definitions must be based on the qualitative goals of operations and each organisation must determine whether a "like" on social media counts as interaction and constitutes an encounter. Using quantitative indicators requires youth work practitioners to exercise professionalism, good judgment and self-criticism.

Developing operations is difficult without actions

Well-defined indicators and motivating targets often lead to lots of activities. For example, setting a target of a specific number of social media contacts is geared towards generating activities that involve incorporating social media services in youth work. In the constantly changing and evolving world of social media, the working methods are often created through open-minded experimentation. When an activity has become well-established, it is easier to evaluate the content produced and assess the quality of interaction, for instance. When you have achieved a sufficient volume of activity, you can increase its quality as necessary. It makes sense to develop indicators in a more qualitative direction as the volume of activity increases.

For an organisation to incorporate digital working methods as a natural part of its activities, it should start with goals that are easy to achieve. The first step might be simply to produce online content. Social media and websites are interrelated elements of day-to-day digital work. One of the tasks of youth work is to increase the visibility of young people and the positive activities they engage in. The real-time nature of the online world challenges us to update social media accounts and websites while events are still going on. The working methods and tools need to be available to everyone and you can't wait for the expert to get there.

In 2015, the City of Helsinki Youth Department defined the number of website updates as one of the targets of youth work. This was met with some criticism for missing the element of quality, and there were concerns that updates would be made simply for the sake of making updates. To make the online world an operating environment that is as natural for the organisation as any other sphere of activity, it is important that everyone learns to utilise its potential. To accomplish this, it is important to ensure that there are enough things to do. In this case, the goal was to establish a working method that involves communicating information on upcoming events and activities in advance as well as sharing online content as they happen. In the stage of adopting this type of new working method, I would say that quantity can sometimes be more important than quality, especially when learning new tools is involved. The threshold must be low and the online world must be perceived as a routine environment. Sometimes, the story and the people are more important than using polished language and high-quality photos.

In digital youth work, carefully chosen quantitative indicators can create activity and make the working method available to everyone within the organisation. As the method evolves, it makes sense to develop the content of the indicators and increase the quality of work. Quantitative measurements should be complemented by more detailed assessment tools that support the systematic development of operational quality. Nevertheless, quantitative indicators can be used to generate key figures for evaluating the scope and development of operations. This helps the organisation determine whether it has developed a digital approach to its work. ●

cMOOC in supplemental education of digital youth work

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THE SUPPLY OF MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCs) has risen especially sharply since 2012, which was back then called "the Year of MOOCs" (Haber 2014). Currently, there are thousands of MOOCs on different subjects available online. In this article, we will present perspectives about utilising open online courses to strengthen professional expertise. The framework of the review is digital youth work in the further training of youth work sector.

This article is about the Distanssi – MOOC nuorisotyön digitaalisen työtteen vah-vistajana ('MOOCs in the Digital Approach to Youth Work') project financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and carried out in the term 2015 to 2016. The first digital youth work online courses open for everyone were arranged in the spring of 2016. They were arranged by the HUMAK University of Applied Sciences, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and the centres for the development of youth work Verke and Koordinaatti. The project was prolonged for the term 2016 to 2017 with the goal of establishing the presence of MOOCs.

The ways the Internet is used are constantly changing, and digital technology and media have become an integral part of the daily lives of young people in Finland and globally. Technology and social media follow young people everywhere, regardless of their age being over or under 18 years old. For example, 87% of 18 to 34-year-old Americans say that they constantly keep their phone with them (Verke 2016). This, along with the intense growth of the prevalence of images, must have an impact on the methods of youth work, and on what kind of issues a youth worker has to take a

stand. You must assess your relationship with media and technology, and youth work organisations have to evaluate their professional preparedness critically.

Even though the majority of youth workers use the Web and different applications in their work, the expertise related to the subject has been viewed as incomplete (Lauha 2014). The need for further education has increased significantly. The goal of the Distanssi project is to offer youth work professionals an opportunity to develop digital expertise and to improve preparedness.

Digital expertise in the youth work sector

The aim of the Distanssi project was to develop digital expertise by offering courses open for everyone, regardless of their location. According to a questionnaire conducted by Verke in 2013, municipal youth workers felt that there was a need for further training regarding digital work. Almost everyone who answered the questionnaire said that they need to develop their expertise of using the internet in youth work. Individual identified development areas were, for instance, utilising social media tools in youth work, producing media content and general ICT skills. Additionally, expertise regarding digital gaming was considered to be lacking. (Lauha 2014.)

The study unit 'Basics of digital youth work' was arranged in February to June 2016, and it included three MOOC courses, each worth one credit. The courses were 1. Introduction to digital youth work, 2. Digital participation and agency in youth work, and 3. Digital encountering and dialogue in youth work. Participants had the opportunity to select one or more of these courses. The first course was held twice.

The concept of digital youth work is relatively new, and its content is not known very widely. This was shown by the fact that only 16 % of the participants in the first MOOC said they felt they knew the concept very well. The concept was somewhat well known to 66 % of the participants. Over half of the participants had experience in performing digital youth work. The majority of them had performed digital youth work for one to three years. The most significant reason of participation (57 %) was the desire to update professional expertise.

cMOOC as a study mode

A large number of MOOCs are study units performed outside degrees or formal curriculums (Haber 2014). This was also the starting point of the Distanssi project, where it is essential that the participant is genuinely interested in the topic. On the other hand, there is no reason why MOOCs cannot be utilised as a part of other study units.

MOOCs have traditionally been divided into two models. One emphasises the production of information and interaction between participants, whereas the other focuses more on adapting existing information. These approaches are distinguished by the prefixes c (connectivity) and x (extended) – resulting in cMOOC and xMOOC models. (Siemens 2012.)

The Distanssi project was designed from the very beginning to be a cMOOC course, where the course activities were designed to support discussion between participants and peer learning. During the course design phase, it was assumed that the participants had diverse backgrounds, knowledge and skills, so enabling peer learning was an integral part of the design. Approximately half of the participants worked in the youth sector as youth workers or in other jobs. Additional participants were teachers and students of youth work and other areas.

The course was executed per the coaching pedagogy ideology adapted in HUMAK, which emphasises learning stemming from the professional field, group-based learning and student activity (Sirkkilä 2015). cMOOC courses have also focused on exchanging information between participants, which can be seen in the so-called five-step model of E-learning applied in the Distanssi project (Salmon 2013). Coaching is in a key role in a course that relies upon the interaction between participants. The work of the student groups was assisted by E-coaches, who ensured that their groups were progressing by monitoring, commenting on and evaluating certain tasks.

Student experiences about the courses

The total amount of participants in the Distanssi courses in the spring of 2016 was 602. The average completion rate of the courses was 70% of the students who started the courses, which can be considered to be good. Many students enrolled in more than one course. The most popular course was Introduction to digital youth work, started by 235 students.

The cMOOC courses were performed online in their entirety, and they lasted for four to five weeks. Each week contained three to seven assignments and material related to them (webinars, recordings of lectures, literature, electronic material). Only a few assignments were to be done individually. The course assignments were primarily carried out in groups, so that each member had an initial answer to the question at hand, or had created a written or visual presentation for it. Processing the task continued with group discussions, sharing experiences and peer reviewing. Some of the assignments were evaluated by an E-coach. Group-based studying was perceived to be quite efficient, and four out of five students said that they felt the Moodlerooms learning environment to be user-friendly.

The participants of cMOOC courses had positive experiences of developing expertise. The course developed digital youth work expertise at least slightly in the opinion of 94 % of those who completed the cMOOC1 course. Additionally, 94% of participants felt that they had gained the knowledge and skills they were hoping to acquire. The figures of the second and third course were similar.

'The course would benefit all youth work students.'

Regarding the goals of Distanssi learning, it is desirable that participants can apply what they learnt in the courses in various digital youth work experiments or to develop existing working methods. When assessing the courses' impact on the students' expertise, it is worthwhile looking at the feedback. The replies especially emphasise that the study unit has 'provided a lot of professionalism', and that it has 'opened a lot of new opportunities' or enabled 'new ideas'. The feedback also says that the content has provided 'a lot of new information'. A student, commenting on the methods of execution, gives thanks for the discussions and says that 'peer learning was a great experience', whereas another student is grateful for the multiple channels available. In addition, some content was viewed as especially useful and encouraging: '[the course] changed my outdated perceptions of digital games'. On the other hand, criticism was aimed at the fact that not all of the group members were active participants, and that students do not complete assignments in synchrony. This may have caused problems for both fast and slow learners.

cMOOCS: Possibilities and challenges

'It is great that such courses are arranged.'

The digital youth work cMOOC courses were arranged for the first time, and as a part of a development project, they are still experimental. They can be developed further based on the feedback. It can be said, though, that the courses have been modern and useful in the participants' opinion. The execution of the courses can still be refined, especially regarding group-based learning process design, scheduling and assignments. Similarly, the role of E-coaches should be considered more thoroughly. According to the participants' wishes, different themes, such as the practices of encountering young people in digital environments or online outreach work, could be examined further. The feedback prompted an internal discussion on further courses for advanced learners. There were also wishes of trying out digital youth work in authentic environments in the framework of these courses. Ideally, coaching pedagogical methods include at least simulating practical situations, if authentic working environments are not accessible (cf. Sirkkilä 2015). We should indeed head in this direction.

Many top-ranking universities have arranged courses in MOOC environments, and almost anyone has access to teachings of respected lecturers. Studying with MOOCs is independent from time and place, so even individuals working full-time can partake in studies in their spare time. Approximately 90% of our students participated in a MOOC course for the first time, but the completion rate of the courses was still high. The interactive nature of the courses was seen, for the most part, to be a positive aspect.

cMOOCS seem to be in demand, but their supply depends on public financing. The open nature of MOOCs includes that they are free of charge, and people could also participate in the Distanssi courses without fees, including the delivery of their final

certificates. The feedback did not emphasise the significance of the courses being free of charge, but it does not necessarily imply that it is completely insignificant to the participants. A general international model of earning with MOOCs is to include a fee for certifications (Shah 2015). In the future, it is necessary to consider whether the education organiser here should also include a fee for course certifications.

Hundreds of youth workers, eager to develop their skills, could be reached with the use of cMOOCs. Reaching this number of participants and covering such a large geographical area would not have been possible using contact teaching. What does the future of open digital youth work education look like then? The significance of digitality in the field is constantly increasing, and working methods are developed in various ways. The success of these courses depends on how well the expertise of partners from the field can be included in the execution. Open MOOCs offer interesting opportunities to learn new things, and based on the students' views, they seem to strengthen existing knowledge base aptly. cMOOCs have continued to be arranged in 2017, and there are attempts to study their impact. The goal of the parties involved in the Distanssi project is to permanently establish this recently created digital youth work education model. ●

Appendix: Guidelines for digital youth work

Support for creating a digital youth work development plan

The goal of the strategic development of digital youth work is to enable organisations to examine the possibilities digital media and technology have to offer as a part of developing all aspects of youth work and activities. This requires that digitality is considered in as wide a context as possible.

One way of including digitality in the strategic process of a youth work organisation is to create a development plan for digital youth work. The development plan can include, for example, an assessment of how digitality is now realised in the organisation's youth work processes, which can in turn function as a base for selecting the focal points and practical methods of development. The principal idea is that the plan should define clear objectives and methods for digitality, and appoint persons in charge of monitoring and advancing those processes.

The following form was created as a tool to support creating these kinds of development plans in the context of Finnish youth work. The form can also function as a base for discussions about the guidelines of digital youth work in work communities. The form can be utilised, for instance, in the organisation's annual planning, team building exercises or more freely as a part of the daily planning and development of the work community. It is essential that the process leader understands the purpose the form is used for. When using this material in a context other than Finland, it is also necessary to take into account the different cultural, historical and other realities that the local youth work is based on.

Some of the principles are more clearly related to administrative and strategic planning; some are more focused on youth work practice. It is important that when going through the principles, it is considered thoroughly who are included in the planning process at each stage.

Guidelines for digital youth work

1. The operational culture encourages curiosity and experimention

We have an open, flexible and unbiased attitude towards the opportunities that the digital media and technology offer for youth work.

Measures:

- In the work community, we acknowledge the digital media as a key environment for the growth and activities of young people, and the key role that digital technology plays in their everyday lives.
- We support and develop our work with the young, done with the help of the digital media and technology.
- We experiment boldly with various operating models and services that utilise the digital media and technology.

2. Strategic planning supports long-term development

The aims of strategic planning include the coordination, management and long-term development of digital youth work.

Measures:

- We take the goals, measures and division of responsibilities with regard to the digital dimension into account in the action plans and strategic guidelines of our organisation.
- We collect information on the way young people use digital media and technology, and use such information in support of planning.
- We utilise the competence and strengths of employees, young people and stakeholders in planning processes.
- In planning, we take account of the strategic programmes of our organisation and the regional, national and international programmes that have a major impact on our activities.

3. A goal-oriented approach and assessment improve the quality of activities

Digital media and technology are used in accordance with the goals set for youth work. Work and activities are developed on the basis of assessment results.

Measures:

- We define assessable goals for the use of digital media and technology in youth work.
- We encourage employees to use digital media and technology in line with the goals of the organisation, for instance by way of various guidelines and instructions.
- We assess activities and the achievement of goals together with the young.
- We share tried and tested assessment models with stakeholders.
- We use the assessment results in the development of our activities and making them visible.

4. Resources are targeted at digital youth work

The implementation of digital youth work requires various resources, including infrastructure, tools and equipment, working hours and other financial and human resources.

Measures:

- Together with employees and young people, we identify requirements related to infrastructure, tools and equipment and other resources.
- We offer employees access to various software and applications, and innovative digital technology.
- We take account of the digital dimension in employees' job descriptions.
- We encourage the sharing of resources within the organisation and with partners.
- We evaluate the use of resources and the need for them, on a regular basis.

5. We ensure the skills and competence of the work community

Whenever necessary, we know how to utilise digital media and technology in all of our work and activities with young people.

Measures:

- We assess the skills and competencies of the work community and the need to enhance them on a regular basis.

- We offer employees various ways of developing their skills and competencies.
- We encourage employees to strengthen their digital expertise independently and together with colleagues and young people.
- We share expertise within the work community and with partners.

6. Digital youth work is developed through cooperation

Cooperation ensures the accessibility, adequacy and quality of digital youth work and the compatibility of activities, and facilitates the development of new and innovative activities.

Measures:

- We cooperate with various stakeholders in the preparation, planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.
- We share experiences and best practices related to digital youth work.
- We acknowledge other organisations' best practices and utilise them in development.
- We seek new kinds of partnerships and forms of cooperation.

7. Digital youth work promotes the inclusion and equality of young people

Among young people, digital youth work facilitates new experiences of inclusion and ways of having an impact. Regardless of age, gender, background and other factors, the young have equal opportunities to participate and make a difference.

Measures:

- We encourage young people to influence issues related to them through digital media and technology.
- We take equality and accessibility into account in all digital youth work and our web services.
- We offer young people opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.

8. Youth work strengthens young people's media skills and digital skills

Media skills and digital skills are a must for acting in society. Youth work has the aim of encouraging and promoting critical understanding, self-expression, and other activities and having an impact via the media culture and digital technology.

Measures:

- We recognise the role and significance of media and technology education in youth work.
- We encourage our employees to handle media culture and digital technology content in partnership with young people.
- We promote the skills and preparedness of young people in using digital media and technology independently, actively and creatively.

Self-assessment: Filling in the form

The development plan form progresses according to the guidelines of digital youth work, and it includes eight themes:

1. Operating culture

2. Strategic planning

3. Goal-orientation and evaluation

4. Resources

5. Expertise

6. Cooperation

7. Young people's participation and equality, and

8. Young people's media competence and digital skills.

A principle that promotes digital youth work and three to five suggestions about methods are listed under each theme, and their aim is to help bring principles into practice.

In the sections Strengths and Weaknesses, you are asked to assess the current realisation of the quidelines in question. Strengths are things that function well in the organisation or existing resources which especially support performing that method. Weaknesses are flaws or issues that require development and need to be improved to perform that method better.

Focal points of development are things that are considered to be primary points of improvement based on, for instance, plans and lines of development for the coming year.

In the plan of action, you are asked to write a short list of the details of the details of the central development procedures: how, when and by whom? All sections are not required to be filled in if it can be decided, based on common agreement, that there is no need for developmental procedures.

Because technological advancement and changes in the use of digital media and technology are rapid, it is advised to return to the development plan regularly – annually, for example – and assess the status of how the procedures have been realised and in which direction the activities should head in the future.

The Digital Youth Work Guidelines and the development plan form can also be found in electronic form at https://www.verke.org/materials-2/?lang=en.

1. Operational culture

The organizational culture encourages curiosity and experimentation. We have an open, flexible and unbiased attitude towards the opportunities that the digital media and technology offer for youth work.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
1.1. In the work community, we acknowledge the digital media as a key environment for the growth and activities of young people, and the key role that digital technology plays in their everyday lives.				
1.2. We support and develop our work with the young, done with the help of the digital media and technology.				
1.3. We experiment boldly with various operating models and services that utilise the digital media and technology.				

2. Strategic planning

Strategic planning supports long-term development. The aims of strategic planning include the coordination, management and long-term development of digital youth work.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
2.1. We take the goals, measures and division of responsibilities with regard to the digital dimension into account in the action plans and strategic guidelines of our organisation.				
2.2. We collect information on the way young people use digital media and technology, and use such information in support of planning.				
2.3. We utilise the competence and strengths of employees, young people and stakeholders in planning processes.				
2.4. In planning, we take account of the strategic programmes of our organisation and the regional, national and international programmes that have a major impact on our activities.				

3. Goal-orientation and evaluation

A goal-oriented approach and assessment improve the quality of activities. Digital media and technology are used in accordance with the goals set for youth work. Work and activities are developed on the basis of assessment results.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
3.1. We define assessable goals for the use of digital media and technology in youth work.				
3.2. We encourage employees to use digital media and technology in line with the goals of the organisation, for instance by way of various guidelines and instructions.				
3.3. We assess activities and the achievement of goals together with the young.				
3.4. We share tried and tested assessment models with stakeholders.				
3.5. We use the assessment results in the development of our activities and making them visible.				

4. Resources

Resources are targeted at digital youth work. The implementation of digital youth work requires various resources, including infrastructure, tools and equipment, working hours and other financial and human resources.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
4.1. Together with employees and young people, we identify requirements related to infrastructure, tools and equipment and other resources.				
4.2. We offer employees access to various software and applications, and innovative digital technology.				
4.3. We take account of the digital dimension in employees' job descriptions.				
4.4. We encourage the sharing of resources within the organisation and with partners.				
4.5. We evaluate the use of resources and the need for them, on a regular basis.				

5. Expertise

The skills and competence of the work community are ensured. Whenever necessary, we know how to utilise digital media and technology in all of our work and activities with young people.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
5.1. We assess the skills and competencies of the work community and the need to enhance them on a regular basis.				
5.2. We offer employees various ways of developing their skills and competencies.				
5.3. We encourage employees to strengthen their digital expertise independently and together with colleagues and young people.				
5.4. We share expertise within the work community and with partners.				

6. Cooperation

Digital youth work is developed through cooperation. Cooperation ensures the accessibility, adequacy and quality of digital youth work and the compatibility of activities, and facilitates the development of new and innovative activities.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
6.1. We cooperate with various stakeholders in the preparation, planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.				
6.2. We share experiences and best practices related to digital youth work.				
6.3. We acknowledge other organisations' best practices and utilise them in development.				
6.4. We seek new kinds of partnerships and forms of cooperation.				

7. Young people's participation and equality

Digital youth work promotes the inclusion and equality of young people. Among young people, digital youth work facilitates new experiences of inclusion and ways of having an impact. Regardless of age, gender, background and other factors, the young have equal opportunities to participate and make a difference.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
7.1. We encourage young people to influence issues related to them through digital media and technology.				
7.2. We take equality and accessibility into account in all digital youth work and our web services.				
7.3. We offer young people opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.				

8. Young people's media competence and digital skills

Youth work strengthens young people's media skills and digital skills. Media skills and digital skills are a must for acting in society. Youth work has the aim of encouraging and promoting critical understanding, self-expression, and other activities and having an impact via the media culture and digital technology.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
8.1. We recognise the role and significance of media and technology education in youth work.				
8.2. We encourage our employees to handle media culture and digital technology content in partnership with young people.				
8.3. We promote the skills and preparedness of young people in using digital media and technology independently, actively and creatively.				

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Digital youth work
– a Finnish perspective

Society has become profoundly digitalised, and technology is present in every area of young people's lives. The current rate of technological, cultural and societal change is more rapid than ever and is only accelerating. Can youth work keep up? Can we support young people in building the skills they need? Do we adapt or risk becoming relics?

Developing digital youth work is currently a focal point in many countries, as is natural in our current ever more technologised society. Several countries already have long traditions in implementing, for example, media education, online counselling and digital gaming into youth work. While youth work is always rooted in both the cultural and societal realities of each country, to keep digital youth work up to date and inspire new innovations, intercultural dialogue and sharing of good practices are needed.

"Digital youth work – a Finnish perspective" is a collection of articles from 32 contributors from the vanguard of digital youth work in the Finnish youth work field. The examples provide insight on both the how and the why of digital youth work by showing glimpses of both the practical activities as well as organisational support and development strategies.

This book is for everyone interested in youth work, and the effects technologisation has on it. While the examples contained within are by no means a comprehensive list of all possible digital youth work activities, we hope they can provide an understanding of the versatility of digital youth work and act as an inspiration when enhancing your own digital approaches in youth work.