

CIDC2006 Conference Paper Abstract details

Title:

Community Informatics research and practice: A discussion of the status quo and the use of grounded theory

Abstract:

Although information technology has been used in a community context for a long time, the field of community informatics is so young that the first significant work was published only in 2000 (by Gurstein), and the Community Informatics Research Network (CIRN) was only founded at the end of 2003. There is enough evidence of community practice (various community “telecenters” projects, for example), as a field of study but it is believed that Community Informatics as a discipline is still underdeveloped. For example, it is still lacking an adequate theoretical analysis regarding the character of Community Informatics as a recognizable form of social institution or practice. As the world of any scientific discipline has boundaries set by a body of theoretical knowledge, which serves as the ground of theories developed in that field of enquiry, to become a recognized field of study, Community Informatics should have an agreed upon set of core questions, an array of methodological techniques and practices, and a set of theoretical approaches. But, do we really need Community Informatics theories? Is there a need for particular methods for Community Informatics research? As these questions are still not yet adequately answered in (emerging) Community Informatics literature, authors of this paper undertook to initiate a discussion between experts aimed to obtain possible answers. The purpose of this paper is to capture the insight, the expertise, the interaction between 19 researchers and practitioners (from 9 countries located in 4 continents) who engaged in the discussion in February 2006.

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