

COMIT

On February 8, 2007 AMCHAM's ComIT held a seminar on IT, Society and Culture kindly hosted by RTL. Local key players Charles Margue (TNS ILRES), Ghislain Sillaume (CVCE), Monique Kieffer (BnL / National Library), Tun van Rijswijck and Steve Schmidt (BCE/RTL), Patrick Van de Walle (ISOC) and Steve Glangé (openBC/XING) debated on the social and cultural impacts of IT. A concluding panel discussion moderated by Guy Kerger (MindForest) reviewed further technological, economic and societal challenges.



Tun van Rijswijck and Monique Kieffer



Charles Margue and Guy Kerger

When Bill Gates predicts that "The digital decade is happening", it's more than a technology revolution: It's a complete cultural and social shift.

"The digital gap in Luxembourg is still a reality" says Charles Margue of TNS-ILRES. As other Western countries, the Grand-Duchy faces social, generational and professional disparities on ICT equipment and usage: A social gap, toward the Internet access (between Portuguese and Luxembourgers households, between poor and rich families), a generation gap, on computer usage (affecting population of 65 and more), a white and blue collar gap (between manual workers and office employees).

For Tun van Rijswijck of BCE/RTL, the digital differentiation also applies to education perception and media consuming. Born with an ubiquitous access to digital media, "Digital Natives" (in comparison to the elderly generation of "Digital Immigrants") have spent more time watching television and playing games than reading books before adulthood. The cognitive faculties they developed require new education approaches and new business strategies. "We have to be the first on the market as a Telecom and IT services provider" says Steve Schmidt (BCE/RTL). "We now launch the product and then develop the business".

With the "Digital Natives", the demand on media and IT has become faster changing,

more immersing and multitasked. These new consuming trends also affect the relationships within the family, with a shift from monogamy to "ménage à trois".

As a matter of fact, Web 2.0 technologies for example already redefine social networking behaviors. "Now new social software enable people to meet, connect or collaborate via the Internet", confirmed Steve Glangé of openBC/XING. Virtual and computer mediated intercourses slowly replace the traditional social structures and give a new meaning to the sense of communion.

"With an impact on democracy" adds Patrick Van de Walle of ISOC: The second generation of Web-based services „is not only a technology innovation, it is also a societal concept", he states.

Web content brings open communication, decentralized authority, freedom of share and of re-use; the user and the Society as a whole have then become content providers. Among the multiple consequences on both our daily life and on society issues, the technology allows new forms of participation to political life and decisions.

On the future of culture and IT, Ghislain Sillaume of CVCE sees the knowledge transmission issue as a real change of paradigm for our Societies. "We are entering a new digital order which will alter our relationship to knowledge", he said. Providing a trusted infrastructure for collective intelligence and

value co-creation, will be the challenge of technology future.

"The National Library of Luxembourg is a key player in the knowledge society", says Director Monique Kieffer. As the national guardian of Luxembourg's printed heritage and culture, BNL ought to be part of the digital and knowledge challenge. Founded in 1798, the institution has recently become a hybrid library. "And intends to fulfill its new missions in the digital age", she emphasized.

If content has become multivalent and multilateral, all participants agreed: Demand for traditional content and media will remain.

MindForest is specialized in change management, communication and document management. Its reference publication *Repères* outlines the penetration and use of information technologies and communication in Luxembourg. *Repères* constitutes a decision-making tool and aid in regard to the use of new technologies in Luxembourg.

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