

Editorial

We (Ludi and Danny) have offered, partly in response to the last newsletter's call for an editorial team, to get together the three newsletters of 1997. In the past, it has been felt that one person doing more than one newsletter on the run was in danger of running away with the damn thing, or that gluttons for punishment do not make suitable editors. We are seeing our offer more positively, and would like to challenge any other editorial collective to propose itself for the three 1998 issues. And if our own offer for 1997 does not meet your approval, then write to the Troika before the AGM in February 1997, or better turn up in person and join the merry debate, and offer yourself(ves). We haven't got a manifesto but have talked about adding new and young writers to Radstats. Neither of us want to see it go on an academic-journal path, but we are open to the debate that is happening in the pages of Radstats about its nature.

The issues covered in radstats 63 range from electoral statistics, health, disability, poverty, sickness, unemployment, ethnicity and crime to the internet. Contact sites for the various contributors in this newsletter are given below or in the inside cover. Autumn and Winter 1996 begins with an invitation to join the debate over whether the General Household Survey should have a future, thanks to Angela Dale (Census Microdata Unit, Manchester University).

Next, Julian Wells continues the debate about the future of the newsletter and David Drew (Computing and Management, Sheffield Hallam University) provides a suggestion for 1998. With an election looming, Ron Johnston (Geography, Bristol University) and colleagues discuss electoral registration, followed by an invitation from Alison McFarlane and the Health Group to debate the priority groups proposed by the last Labour government.

Next, David Gordon and Pauline Heslop (SPS, Bristol University) provide evidence that disabled children in Britain tend to live in the very poorest households; Roy Davies (9 Teggan, Pontyclun, Mid Glamorgan) considers the problems of widespread sickness and the underestimating of unemployment in the Welsh Valleys; while Joanna Southworth (Geography, Bristol University) continues the debate on racial statistics in the run up to the next census test. Christina Pantazis and David Gordon introduce new evidence that poverty raises people's fear of crime but not their chances of being victimised; Ray Thomas (Social Sciences, Open University) argues for a better way of counting unemployment and, the CCIS group describe the Internet services in Craigmillar, Edinburgh. Book reviews and graphics are supplied by Ludi Simpson and Susan Kerrison.

I am grateful to the authors for their patience with my queries and cajoling and to Hanne Page for help typesetting. This Newsletter only survives because people find the time or can be persuaded to send in material. The more that is sent in unsolicited, the easier it is to edit. So please, if you have something to say, contact us and send it in.

A second necessity for survival is readership, and the larger it is the easier it is to get writers. If you think one of the articles here would interest someone else - pass them a copy and suggest they subscribe!

Danny Dorling, December 1996

SPREADING THE WEB FROM A HUMBLE BASE

A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO CYBERSPACE

CCIS EDINBURGH

INTRODUCTION

As with the advent of the feudal and capitalist modes of production (symbolised by the agrarian & industrial revolutions) before it, we are today experiencing the on-set of what the Tofflers' term a 'third wave'¹ of social change, which like earlier social transformations has the potential to increase the quality of life for those classes and individuals who can develop the skills to cope with the attendant socio-economic changes, in this case, the technologies of the digitised information revolution.²

The emergence of the cyber paradigm and the information society³, a society characterised *inter alia* by electronic mail, cyber cafes, modems, teleworking, telebanking, video conferencing, World Wide Webs, Internets, virtual reality and so forth, in which the inexpensive and instantaneous global movement of bits and bytes replaces the mass production and movement of atoms⁴, means that, inevitably, some groups in society will benefit while others become the digital disenfranchised.

¹ A & H Toffler, *Future Shock*, New York, Bantam, 1970, *passim*; *POWER SHIFT*, New York, Bantam, 1990, *passim*; *The Third Wave* Pan Books, 1980, *passim*.

² See for example, the Department of Trade & Industry's Information Society Initiative, (URN,96/541:02/96), Feb 1996. See also, Europe And The Global Information Society, (also known as The Bangemann Report), Brussels May 1994.

³ On the concept of paradigms, see T.S. Khun, *The Structure Of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition, Chicago, 1970. See also his *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies In Scientific Tradition And Change*, The University of Chicago Press, 1977.

⁴ See N Negroponte, *Being Digital*, Coronet Books, 1996. See also, WH Davidson & MS Malone, *The Virtual Corporation* Harper Business, 1992.

In this context, what about community groups and people living in deprived areas like Craigmillar⁵ in Edinburgh, which is stereotypically and sensationally projected (wrongly) in the media as hell on earth, an urban Calcutta, ravaged by crime, racked by AIDS, teetering on the abyss of sin and suffering? Will the new technology revolution pass them by? Will those that are computer literate become the new elite, leaving behind those that are not behind? The curt answer is 'yes', unless intervention to promote technology transfer to the community sector is forthcoming.

If we are witnessing the death of the industrial society and the rise of a new civilisation then this begs the question, how can communities prepare for the challenges ahead? Enter the CCIS (Craigmillar Community Information Service), as a template for making the information society part of our common heritage.

CCIS EDINBURGH-BACKGROUND

Recognising that a spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of the information society, the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Office used Urban Programme monies to create the CCIS, a community based and driven on-line communications service, which provides the following services: free Internet e-mail accounts; free access to 600 conferences/news groups through our dial up bulletin board service; free in-house access to the World Wide Web on 7 public access terminals which are permanently linked to the Net; free user support, training and consultancy. We also create, host & post Web pages for community groups. Additionally, clients can access CD ROMs, download free software/shareware, create their own conferences and transfer files.

⁵ Craigmillar is an urban, peripheral housing estate which suffers multiple deprivation. For instance, Lothian Regional Council's Dept of Planning Report, Craigmillar: Social Indicators 1995, measured the unemployment rate for the area at 32% for men and 20% for women, compared to 10.8% and 6% respectively for Edinburgh.

In two and a half years of running networks (up to September 1996) the CCIS has encouraged over 200 community groups to come on line, including a dozen Citizen Advice Agencies and 48 secondary schools. In addition, because the CCIS is European hub for a world-wide freenet of over 3 million users called OneNet, a further 800 individual users throughout the UK link into the project, gaining dial up access via ten modem lines. This makes the CCIS the biggest FREE BBS in the UK.

User statistics from March 1994 to September 1996 show that CCIS networks are regularly being accessed, with currently, on average, over 300 daily logins. It should be noted that the propensity for logins is on a positive, upwards trend over time.

Moreover, between February and August 1996, over 1,000 surfers have 'hit' the CCIS Web server which itself links to 28 home pages for community groups in Craigmillar. Arguably, Craigmillar is the first virtual community in the UK.

CCIS USER STATISTICS MARCH 1994-SEPTEMBER 1996

TOTAL LOGINS	234,187	DAILY AVERAGE	257
TOTAL OPENS	6320049	DAILY AVERAGE	6,937
TOTAL CLOSES	6251516	DAILY AVERAGE	6,862
TOTAL SUBMITS	592023	DAILY AVERAGE	650
TOTAL DIRECTORY			
SEARCHES	40503	AVERAGE	44
TOTAL TIMEOUTS	3,472	DAILY AVERAGE	4
BYTES UPLOADED	1074000009	DAILY AVERAGE BYTES	
		1178924	
DOWNLOADED	2638847376	DAILY AVERAGE	
		2896649	

CCIS SERVER STATISTICS

TOTAL DELIVERIES	639123
RECOVERIES	52
USERS ADDED	477878
USERS DELETED	1029
AUTOREGISTRATIONS	876

TYPES OF APPLICATION

The CCIS supports civic networking and seeks to develop electronic initiatives which further community social, economic and development goals. Here, community groups have an opportunity to use information communication technologies to talk electronically to one another about issues relevant to themselves⁶. Conferences regularly accessed include: urban regeneration; democratic left; trades union; housing; the on-line research clinic; education & training; welfare rights; local jobs. There is also a conference called ChristianNet which deals with matters gospel (one is convinced that 21st Century worship will be conducted over electronic networks). Moreover, some groups are posting minutes of meetings, reports and using local public conferences to discuss matters of community interest. In this respect, CCIS is not waiting on hardware, rather we are awaiting peoples' imagination. In short, it is the service and value that a group can add to the network that counts and not the server itself.

CONCLUSION

Many inanities have been written about the Net, for some, the 'kiss me quick', skateboarding, CB radio techno fad of our time.' Yet, despite the hype and exaggeration, one thing is for sure-the Net is here to stay and will increasingly impact on the way we live, work and play in the context of the information society. Some still only glimpse the special nature and potential of the Net, but many more will soon come to grasp the essential idea that it will fundamentally transform society.

If computer technologies are set to become the commanding heights of the economy and a key infrastructure of the 21st Century, then community groups

⁶ Here, see A McDonald, CCIS Edinburgh: The Community Case For Cyberspace, "The British and Urban Regional Information Systems Association Journal", July 1996, pp2-4.

must act now to develop their own electronic networks as a tool for community problem solving, local discourse and democratic dialogue, therein recasting civil society.

Here, the trick is to open up access to information communication technologies and make electronic networking a tool or practical resource for community development and problem solving.

CCIS is an example of a 'bottom up' approach to democratising the super digital highways. Firmly rooted in the community, the CCIS has subscribed to the idea, better than most, that the Net must lose its elitist and mystical quality and become part of our common heritage.

Part of the reason for our statistical success lies in the formula of low cost access/high value applications. There is no reason why this model cannot be replicated elsewhere.

By way of conclusion, as today's fictions become tomorrow's truths and realities, if communities such as Craigmillar fail to grasp the emerging opportunities offered by the Net, then people in these communities will become further disenfranchised, disadvantaged and digitally deprived.

Poverty, inequality, exclusion: new approaches to theory and practice

by Maryse Gaudier

No. 17 in the Bibliographic series of the ILO
International Institute of Social Studies, Geneva
1993. £8.80 from ILO, Vincent House, London
SW1P 2NB

Reviewed by Ludi Simpson

This literature review is full of stark statements of poverty, seen as endemic to 'the current world economy'. As an internal report to the International Labour Organisation, a tripartite organisation of employers, workers and governments, it is not surprising that it does not identify the problem with the current world economy itself, which would be better described as imperialism.

The book has 40 pages - repeated in French and English - reviewing research approaches and research conclusions, with statistics and evidence taking a back seat. There follows a listing of 1,063 sources which may be very useful to academic and policy researchers in this area.

The rise in poverty in the 1980s is blamed on the world economic crisis, IMF rules and socialist collapse. The review goes on to population growth in poor areas, the breakdown of traditional solidarity from class, family and state, and welfare cuts as extra reasons for deepening poverty.

It finds that socio-economic theories of poverty are dominant but that a general theory is elusive, with no agreement on definitions or measurement. I wonder whether the author found it easier to see disagreement than to restate the structural causes that had been already set out.

The incisiveness and honesty of the analysis was impossible to carry through to the conclusions. Economic rights must include employment, but social security should be replaced by training and work experience. Responsibility for this should be handed to voluntary groups, trades unions, local authorities and businesses, even the recipients themselves, in order to adapt it to local needs. This seems to me rather like suggesting that powerful criminals no longer give a percentage of their takings back to the victims, but that the victims should organise themselves to work for the criminals so as to pay off their misfortune in a more 'inclusive' way. Who should more likely agree to this: the criminals or the victims?

INTERPRETING OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Ed by Ruth Levitas and Will Guy Routledge

Reviewed by Susan Kerrison

This book will be of tremendous value to anybody who uses Official Statistics whether as an academic or as an individual concerned about social changes in Britain. *Interpreting Official Statistics* addresses two important issues which affect the usefulness of different official datasets. First political interference, or the way that the meaning of official statistics is obscured when they are unpopular with those in power. This applies particularly to statistics about increasing social inequality. Secondly, in a changing world what is represented by key analytical categories: poverty, unemployment, social class, ethnicity and disability.

As the authors note, when trends in statistics appear to moving in a direction that confirms government policy then the derivation of the statistics tend to be transparent. However when unpleasant trends are emerging, official statistics tend to be distorted and obscured. In the latter case the figures can not be taken at face value and considerable skill is required to decide whether official statistics are a partial, distorted or completely false representation of reality. The authors of this book have employed that skill to great effect.

In the chapter *The struggle for independent statistics on poverty* Townsend uses the publication "Household with Below Average Income (HBAI)" to expose the cunning ingenuity that has been employed in recent official publications to obscure increasing social inequality. Prior to 1990 when publication of HBAI began, a count of the number of people with income levels below the minimum required for benefit provided some measure of poverty. In contrast HBAI by concentrating on information about households with incomes in the lowest 10%, provides a definition of poverty which manages to avoid counting the increasing

numbers of people below a "poverty line" while at the same time by excluding data about the richest half of the population provides little information about relative poverty or social inequality. Inequities are further disguised by such devices as using median instead of means in income distributions. When the incomes of the poor fall and incomes of the rich rise markedly then this leads to an understatement of inequities.

The chapter *Health for All?* carries a similar message, that inequalities in health are increasing markedly but official publications place little emphasis on this fact and treat it as though it were of little importance. Guy reiterates Wilkinson's comment that in Britain, as in many other countries, the scale of the excess mortality associated with lower social status dwarfs almost every other health problem. If risks as great resulted from exposure to toxic materials, then offices would be closed down and the population would be evacuated from the contaminated areas. Guy analyses the reception of the Black Report and argues that the evidence which has accumulated since its publication has tended to vindicate Black's view that social inequalities and poverty is the main cause of ill health. The implication of Wilkinson finding that inequalities damage the health of all of us, not just of the poorest, provides a chilling conclusion to the chapter.

While it is clear that the message is obscured in some highly politically embarrassing areas, in other areas datasets are becoming available which enable a more detailed analysis of social problems. There has been an increase in the number of surveys such as the Labour Force Survey and the British Crime Survey which provide considerable checks on the distortion of unemployment figures by changes in eligibility criteria and in crime figures distorted by police practices. Similarly, the inclusion of question about occupation injury in the Labour Force Survey provides a check on administrative procedure which report workplace accidents. These surveys are subjects to their own problems. For example, access to the dataset via a computer, while having many advantages, also maybe be extremely costly as there may be heavy charges for the provision of information. In her chapter *Fiddling while Britain burns. The "measurement" of unemployment* Ruth Levitas notes that while the Labour Force Survey has provided greater information, for instance, on the way unemployment has effected

certain groups: women and ethnic minorities it too underestimates unemployment. Paradoxically, in mid 1994, although unemployment (as measured by the claimant count and the Labour Force Survey) was decreasing, so was the number of people employed. Clearly, many people for whatever reasons were defining themselves as economically inactive rather than unemployed. Levitas suggests a measure of "implied" unemployment, a calculation based on the difference between the number of people might expected to be working, and the numbers who actually have jobs.

Four other chapters focus a different issue: the problem of defining different social categories in a society that is rapidly changing. What do social class or the ethnic minority categories in the census actually represent ? (See article by Jo Southworth in this issue, ed) What problems do they expose and which problems are hidden by the definitions used ? The chapter *Social Class: official, sociological and Marxist* by Theo Nichols asks the important question: what is the meaning of traditional social class categories when traditional skilled occupations have been gutted and many of those in managerial occupations have been forced to adopt have work intensification and casualisation ? In *Counting Ethnicity: Social Groups and Official Categories* Fenton argues that the 1991 census question barely does more than divide people into black and white, and in doing so disguises much important differentiation particularly in respect of white ethnic minority communities such as the Irish. An issue that is likely to assume increasing importance because of the free movement of people within the EU. Jackie West, in *Working Women*, argues that official statistics are not helpful in analysing the polarisation of women's work which has occurred between highly paid managerial work, and part time work and other forms of "non standard" work with increasingly low pay and casualisation. Writing from the perspective of disabled people, Abberley, in *Disabled by numbers* criticises the methodology adopted by the one of the few major surveys on disability undertaken in Britain, the 1985 OPCS survey (see article by Gordon and Heslop in this issue, ed) . The survey is criticised for both the definition of disability as the inability of people to undertake specific tasks, and the use of a methodology which grossly underestimates the cost of disability. Abberley argues that information gathered

on the basis of an oppressive theory, unless handled with circumspection is itself one of the mechanism of oppression.

In writing this book the authors have made a very valuable contribution to clearing the fog around some of these statistics and exposing what many powerful people would chose to hide, evidence of an increasingly divided society where many are being forced into poverty with increasing social disadvantage.



"I SEE NO SLEAZE, MY DEAREST HAMILTON..."

Best Data Graphic

Ludi Simpson

Both figures show the widening gap between the top and bottom earners of Britain.

In Figure 1, average manual earnings (£281 per week in April 1996) were 72% of non-manual (£390), contrasting with their similarity in 1979. The manual earnings took an average 44 hours to earn, 6 hours longer than the non-manual working week.

Figure 5 monitors the slower growth of the smallest pay packets compared to the biggest ones, in 9 of the last 11 years. In 1995 the wages of the lowest 10% of earners grew at a third of the rate of inflation.

In truth the fortunes of the true top boardroom earners and the true low income unemployed are even more divergent than these two figures show.

Figure 1 Average gross weekly earnings, full-time employees on adult rates

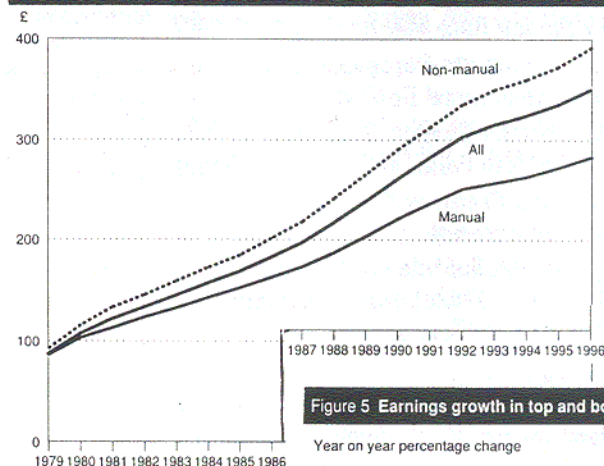
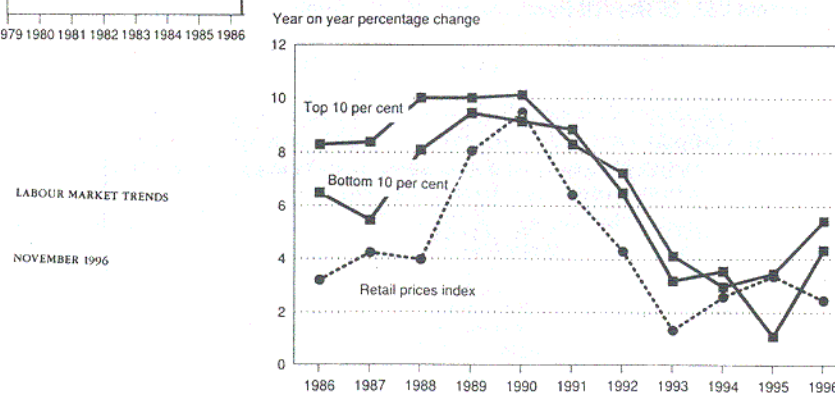


Figure 5 Earnings growth in top and bottom deciles 1986-1996



LABOUR MARKET TRENDS

NOVEMBER 1996