

PUBLIC ACCESS TO ICT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Dr Steven Pace, School of Creative & Performing Arts

RESEARCH INVITATION

In 2010 CQUniversity's Dr Steven Pace was invited by the Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program to assist with a study of the social impact of providing low-cost public access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in developing countries. Steven's role involved mentoring two research teams in Chile and Argentina. The Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program is based at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain, and is part of a larger international research project sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



WORKING IN CHILE

The first research team that Steven mentored was based at Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago, Chile. The aim of this team's project, entitled 'Women and new technologies in Chile', was to explore, from a gender perspective, the social impact of providing public access to ICTs through the Quiero Mi Barrio network of telecentres. Quiero Mi Barrio (translated 'I Love My Neighbourhood') is a social intervention program of the Chilean Government that seeks to improve the quality of life of people living in 170 of the country's poorest neighbourhoods.



WORKING IN ARGENTINA

The second research team that Steven mentored was based at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The aim of this team's project, entitled 'The impact of public access to ICT on Argentine low-income urban youth', was to investigate how young people in poor urban neighbourhoods made use of ICT through public Internet-access venues. The researchers investigated the impact of these facilities in the areas of education, employability, civic participation and sociability.



RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Over the last decade, governments, international development agencies, foundations, and corporations have made significant investments to increase public access to ICT, particularly in developing countries. As these investments continue to grow, questions are being raised about their social, economic and political impacts. The Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program is strengthening the capacity of emerging scholars in developing countries to carry out rigorous research that can answer these questions.

WHO WAS AMY MAHAN?

Amy Mahan (1961-2009) was an information and communication specialist who died of cancer at the peak of her professional career. Mahan's career was marked by a commitment to action research and its effective dissemination to improve the communication opportunities of the disadvantaged. The focus of much of her work was on telecommunication reform and information and communication technology (ICT) policies, particularly with respect to developing countries. The Amy Mahan Fellowships were named in her honour.



ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Steven Pace is a Senior Lecturer in Multimedia within the School of Creative and Performing Arts at the Mackay campus of CQUniversity. His primary research interests are in the field of human-computer interaction (HCI), which is about the psychology of how people interact with computers and other digital devices. HCI is a broad field of research and practice that encompasses many aspects of the user experience such as usability, emotion and aesthetics. Steven enjoys using qualitative methods such as grounded theory and autoethnography in his research.