Chapter 52
Using the Internet to Make Local Music More Available to the South Wales Community

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ABSTRACT

Wales is the "land of the poets so soothing to me," according to its national anthem. The political and economic landscape does not on the whole provide for the many creative people that are in Welsh communities. Social media Websites like MySpace and YouTube as well as Websites like MTV.com, eJay, and PeopleSound, whilst providing space for artists to share their works, but do not usually consider the needs of local markets, such as in relation to Welsh language provision through to acknowledgement of Welsh place names and Wales's status as a country. The chapter finds that there are distinct issues in relation to presenting information via the Web- or Tablet-based devises and suggests some of the considerations needed when designing multi-platform environments.

INTRODUCTION

There are literally thousands of people that want to make it in the music industry, as highlighted by the recent success of television programmes such as Pop Stars, Pop Idol and the X-Factor. Wales is a country known for its love of music in English or Welsh. Founders of Wales' two biggest Welsh language record labels are, however established in the Welsh language live music scene, which is not easily accessible to all (Edwards, 2011).

Since the creation of the World Wide Web, many Websites claiming to give musicians a better chance of getting a record deal have come online. In addition to these hundreds of commercial sites, the availability of Web site creation software has meant that musicians can create their own Web sites to showcase their work, though these often look unprofessional. The popular commercial Websites allow musicians to promote themselves to a large audience. However, these sites appear to be targeted mainly at artists of music, with the

consumer facing a complicated and difficult task to navigate each interface. Indeed, the number of people educated in Wales taking part in the music scene is a lot less than Scotland and England (Sturman, Rowe, Sainsbury, Wheater, & Kerr, 2012).

There are perhaps two main issues that put a barrier between people and information; access to it and the ability to access it. Information inequality is not a new phenomenon. This type of inequality has existed ever since the development of writing – and it will probably remain. Perhaps we will even have to accept that the fact that information inequality will increase in the network society (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2011; Van Dijk, 2005). An easy answer to removing this relatively new form of information inequality would be to give everyone access to an Internet-enabled device, but would people necessarily have the skills to use this technology? In the age of the iPad, iPhone, and affordable yet usable Android-based systems the answer is probably yes.

Minority Cultures and the Internet

Minority cultures are not often considered in relation to Website design, where are often unable to consider the individual needs or others. This can include misrepresentation such as when stereotypical, misleading or incorrect information is provided about a minority culture (Cunliffe, 2007). However, social network services such as Facebook might be important environments for minority language maintenance, as networks of strong ties may help speakers resist pressures towards language shift (Honeycutt & Cunliffe, 2010). Even so, it has been found that almost 90 per cent of the young people interviewed used Social networking services regularly, and the language they used on these sites reflected to a large extent the language they used with contacts in the real world (Morris, Cunliffe, & Prys, 2012).

Music and the Internet

The MP3 (MPEG-3) file format has become the standard for distributing near-CD quality music in a compact format (Brandenburg, 1999). The use of the format probably became more widespread due to the introduction of the free music sharing software know as Napster which was developed by Shawn Fanning in 1999 during his 'freshman' year at the North-eastern University (Fox, 2001). Napster's software application enables users to locate and share media files from one convenient, easy-to-use interface. It also provides media fans a forum to communicate their interests and tastes with one another via instant messaging, chat rooms, and Hot List user bookmarks. Although Napster provided an ideal way to distribute music, it caused problems as its users were exploiting the file-sharing facility to distribute music to those without licences. Had the system been used responsibly, it would have allowed holders of a legal CD to easily obtain an electronic version from anywhere in the world without having to take their CD with them.

PCs, Tablets, and Other Audio-Visual Media Services

The Internet has great potential for providing more exciting Interactive entertainment services, especially in relation to music accessed by using a tablet (Koskela, Julkunen, Keranen, Kostamo, & Ylianttila, 2009). Existing services such as Peoplesound.com demonstrate how easy it can be to find a piece of music from a particular genre to download. These services are often designed for access from PCs, which require a lot of experience to get used to using. Tablet devices, such as the Apple iPad, offer an ideal means to reduce the digital-divide, as the hardware is much easier to use than a personal computer meaning low skilled

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