The Deepening Divide: Inequality in the Information Society

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2:00-3:30 pm on Friday, March 30, 2007
Indiana University Bloomington, Herman B. Wells Library, Room LI001

Co-sponsored with the Telecommunications Department

Talk preceded by an informal gathering with cookies, tea, and coffee, available at 1:45pm.

Workshop with graduate students will be held 10-11:30 a.m. on Friday at 207 Ernie Pyle Hall, School of Journalism. Contact Chris Ogan for readings.

ABSTRACT

This lecture will consider the present state of the digital divide worldwide. It will do so by inventorying the achievements and shortcomings of five years of digital divide research (2000-2005). Achievements are classified under four successive types of access: motivational, physical, skills and usage. A shift of attention from physical access to skills and usage is observed. In terms of physical access the divide seems to be closing in the most developed countries. In contrast, in terms of digital skills and the use of applications, the divide persists and perhaps widens or deepens. Among the shortcomings of digital divide research are its lack of theory, conceptual definition, interdisciplinary approach, qualitative research and longitudinal research. The second part of the lecture will discuss more basic questions about inequality in the information society. The focus is on three questions: (1) To what type of inequality does the digital divide concept refer? (2) What is new about the inequality of access to and use of ICTs as compared to other scarce material and immaterial resources? (3) Do new types of inequality exist or rise in the information society?

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jan A.G.M. van Dijk is Professor of Communication Science at the University of Twente. He teaches and investigates the sociology of the Information Society, in particular the social-cultural, political, and organizational aspects. He is the author of The Network Society, Social Aspects of the New Media (1999, 2006), The Deepening Divide, Inequality in the Information Society (2005), co-editor of Digital Democracy: Issues of Theory and Practice (2000) and co-author of Information and Communication Technology in Organizations (2005), all Sage
publications. He serves as chair of the Communication and Technology Division of the International Communications Association. He is also an advisor for the European Commission and a number of Dutch ministries. See his web site for more information: http://www.gw.utwente.nl/vandijk