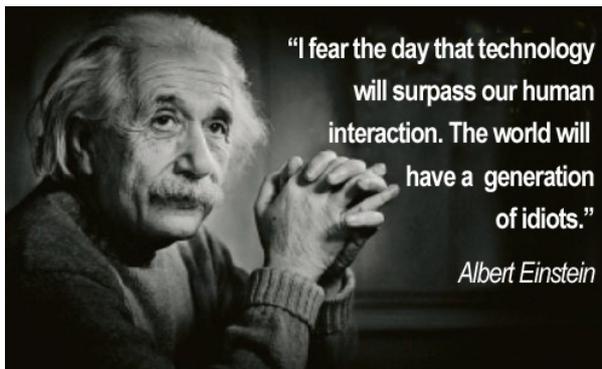


TASA celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2013



Applied Sociology Thematic Group For those who work outside University

Contact email December 2012



There are 7000 distinct languages in use today. My computer offers 18 different forms of English. Translating from one language to another is often not easy and sometimes impossible. Yet without good communication, humanity is nothing. Each day millions of words are distributed face to face, phone to phone, mobile to mobile, computer to computer. Yet it seems we still cannot agree what is best for the country or the world. This is because what message our words transmit is not composed of the words. Each word is there to help put out an idea, an opinion, a request, a demand for action and so on. What has changed is the speed that this can be done, the distance the message can travel and the difficulty of controlling the process.

Newspapers no longer control what is 'news', religions can be undermined by never previously allowed facts, the flaws in ideologies can be exposed as quickly as the ideology. But what is being lost. The picture on the right above was titled 'Friends meeting for coffee.' As one illustration among many showing how the internet can separate people as well as connect them.

One issue, raised in the Sydney Morning Herald (15 Dec 12), is the way work is being infiltrated into the home. Couples admit to being in bed with their partner and both working at their laptop but not talking to each other. A survey by Info-Security Europe, more than a third of people surveyed, and /or their partners, now continue their work, in bed, for at least two hours a night, and in New York, eight out of 10 young professionals feel compelled to do the same thing. Do they get paid for this?

The implications of these social changes have yet to be made clear. Whilst this trend underscores the operational needs of the profit based worldwide market, it does little or nothing for the inter-personal relationships that have always been important for humanity.

Perhaps, one research contribution applied sociologists can make, is to look at the impact of instant communication and social media in their workplace.