



TelSoc

Telecommunications & the Digital Economy

Published on *TelSoc* (<https://telsoc.org>)

Home > eLaunceston Revisited – A Novel Regional Research Project from 1999

eLaunceston Revisited – A Novel Regional Research Project from 1999

[Simon Moorhead](#) ^[1]

Telecommunications Association

JTDE - Vol 9, No 2 - June 2021 ^[2]

^[3]

☆ 78 ^[4]

Abstract

An historical paper from 1999 is republished because of its relevance to using digital communications to boost regional communities and their digital economies. Telstra Research Laboratories created a community website for Launceston Tasmania, with local stakeholder oversight, to test whether locally oriented information can increase the value of the Internet to existing users and make digital access more attractive to non-users.

Introduction

This historic paper ([Jenkins & Dragun, 1999](#) ^[5]) describes a social engineering project undertaken by the Telstra Research Laboratories (TRL), to test whether the use of a website focussed on the local community and local businesses would increase local use of the Internet.

Launceston in Tasmania was selected as a regional centre for the establishment of an Internet Portal. The TRL team worked at the grass-roots level with Launceston stakeholders to develop a project that not only met the expectations of Telstra but could make a substantial contribution to the local community.

The reader needs to be aware that, in 1999, access to the Internet in Australia was typically achieved via dial-up modems with maximum speeds of around 56 kbit/sec. In the eLaunceston project, Telstra offered subsidised ADSL connections with speeds around 100 times faster than dial-up.

This regional Portal provided an ideal environment to test the hypothesis that localised content and applications would stimulate greater Internet usage and take-up. A collaborative approach was adopted to identify community stakeholders and undertake workshops with these stakeholders.

Broader community consultation and focus groups were established to understand local Internet usage and identify wants and needs. Collaborative design workshops were then undertaken to convert those community needs and wants into Portal features and functionalities. Finally, the Portal was tested and deployed with further development and evaluation.

As the paper notes, the “project has generated significant interest both within Telstra and in the wider community” (p. 83) and the “consolidation of local information in one place within a Regional Portal has been noted as providing a valuable service to the community” (p. 83).

Reading the paper through a contemporary lens, one cannot help but notice the hints at the possibility of social media platforms, almost ten years before Facebook became the world’s most popular social media web site.

Reference

Jenkins, A., & Dragun, N. (1999). eLaunceston – A Novel Regional Portal Research Project, *Telecommunication Journal of Australia*, 49(2), 79-83.

Please refer to PDF download for the full paper, including the historical reprint.

Article PDF:

419-article_text-3645-1-11-20210629.pdf ^[6]

Copyright notice:

Copyright is held by the Authors subject to the Journal Copyright notice. ^[7]

Cite this article as:

Simon Moorhead. 2021. *eLaunceston Revisited – A Novel Regional Research Project from 1999* JTDE, Vol 9, No 2, Article 419. <http://doi.org/10.18080/JTDE.v9n2.419> ^[8]. Published by Telecommunications Association Inc. ABN 34 732 327 053. <https://telsoc.org> ^[9]

Source URL: <https://telsoc.org/journal/jtde-v9-n2/a419>

Links

[1] <https://telsoc.org/journal/author/simon-moorhead> [2] <https://telsoc.org/journal/jtde-v9-n2> [3] <https://www.addtoany.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftelsoc.org%2Fjournal%2Fjtde-v9-n2%2Fa419&title=eLaunceston%20Revisited%20%E2%80%93%20A%20Novel%20Regional%20Research%20Project%20from%201999> [4] <https://telsoc.org/printpdf/3217?rate=6vD6uctXHkE--oj1vmK1RJTIBllsJGlc5bp1dGL6rAM> [5] https://telsoc.org/journal/jtde-v9-n2/a419#Jenkins_Dragun_1999 [6] https://telsoc.org/sites/default/files/journal_article/419-article_text-3645-1-11-20210629.pdf [7] <https://telsoc.org/copyright> [8] <http://doi.org/10.18080/jtde.v9n2.419> [9] <https://telsoc.org>