

Mentorship, Fluency and a Good Space:

My Efforts in Cyberorganization

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Introduction

Cyberorganizing, like community organizing more generally, is not about creating organizations. Rather, it is about organizing communities so that they can meet their own needs. Cyberorganizing and popular interest in everyday heritage can come together in powerful ways.

(Lenstra 2014)

I entered this course somewhat apprehensive about what I would be exposed to and what I would learn. The idea of community or organizational informatics was completely new to me until I saw it as a concentration option for the information science major. The description read very well, and I felt it would provide a new depth to my skill set as a programmer. Although I had been exposed to many of the ideas or themes presented in this course, I enjoyed learning within the area of community informatics. I was pleasantly surprised with how the information was packaged and presented. It opened my mind to new ways of understanding and applying what was covered over the past several months. I learned new terms and new ways of thinking about familiar concepts, chief among them is Cyberorganizing. This term most adequately sums up what I aspire to do with an information science degree from UNCG. This appealed to me over the other project option to 'cyber-navigate' because it gave me more freedom to integrate design thinking, the digital divide and the inequalities that may exist within my given community.

My work as a pastor gives me unique advantages and sets me up well to do meaningful work as a cyberorganizer. These advantages include having an immediately serviceable community and infrastructure [physical building] to work with. I also have practical experience and formal education in information technology, systems thinking and design thinking. This to me was a great running start of sorts. Realizing the unique position, I was able to focus on what I should actually produce as a cyberorganizing minister to help combat the digital divide and the inequities it brings. I proposed in my letter of intent to facilitate a workshop for my congregation centered around smartphones. The original idea was to host a session which would:

1. present the smartphone as a gateway to modern technology,
2. give hands-on-training for a few important features and safe usage practices,
3. allow for Q&A,
4. breakout sessions similar to speed dating for 1-on-1 counsel,
5. facilitate interactions among participants.

I kept the original intent but shifted the approach. My main issue during the semester had been the reconstruction of my fellowship hall. It was the intended space to facilitate the workshop. It was to be completed before the course began, but the project took many months to complete beyond the expected date. I planned to have a curriculum ready before Thanksgiving and host the workshop before we returned to give our presentations to the class. We did not have internet service at the church before the start of the course, and the addition of high speed broadband was one of the plans that did thankfully happen as planned. For these reasons I refined my idea and settled upon gathering data from each member using their smartphones

via a simple questionnaire instead. I would then take their answers, analyze them, and use that information to build the content for a more edifying workshop. This was a better idea than the first because it allowed me to know what the intended audience really needed and showed me plainly what I should present instead of assuming what they should receive.

Any apprehension I may have had leading into the semester quickly dissipated into optimism after the first class session. Confidence ensued that right decision was made enrolling in the information science degree program and specifically this community informatics course. I saw a clear path to merge my experience, previous degree and social capital gained through pastoring to help my community get the most out of the technology they own.

Media Mentorship

The first few classes opened me up to the idea of media mentorship. I was excited to learn new technologies and new vocabulary to express what I have been doing and further seek to do. It also gave me the clarity to define my project's goal; cyberorganization through mentorship. Mentors versus Teachers was perhaps the first slide presented in class that really stuck out with me. It referenced Lisa Guernsey's *Guide to Media Mentorship* where she basically summarizes and reinforces the need for such a class of individuals able to help "guide us in understanding and evaluating our media environment". As Explained in class, the mentor works closely with one or a few people in order to be most effective. My church membership is small enough that I might be able to give each the individual attention they would need. The parallels can be clearly made between the work of a mentor and the work of a pastor. It is a natural fit, the only difference is media mentorship deals with technology and pastoring deals

with spirituality and holistic well-being. Media mentorship is the driving force to my project, and also the scope of which I understood subsequent lessons taught during the semester.

Though I did not realize it at the time the tech-help assignment was actually a trial run for my project. I was able to ask someone questions concerning their technology usage and understanding in order to gain real insights as to how one might be assisted in attaining higher tech agency. It allowed for moments of mentorship and assistance, and for a new level of trust and connection to be gained between interviewer (cyberorganizer) and interviewee (community).

Nearly every aspect of today's society interacts with the internet in some capacity. From everyday appliances – like lights and refrigerators – to complex health care systems and records, most North Carolinians encounter the internet daily. As opportunities created by the internet increase, so do inequities for those who do not have access to the technologies, tools and skills needed to participate in the increasingly digital world. The digital divide is the gap between those who have access to technology, the internet and digital literacy training and those who do not. It affects all generations – both rural and urban communities – and a wide variety of industries and sectors.

(www.ncbroadband.gov)

These connections reveal what inequalities or deficiencies may exist within tech literacy. I did not enter this program or course with the mind of being a librarian, nor did I have any thoughts about libraries. The presentation and instructions over the class sessions did focus heavily on the importance and opportunities libraries/librarians have to combat the digital divide. I would

usually view my church as a library and I the librarian given the usable space we have been reconstructing for practical use.

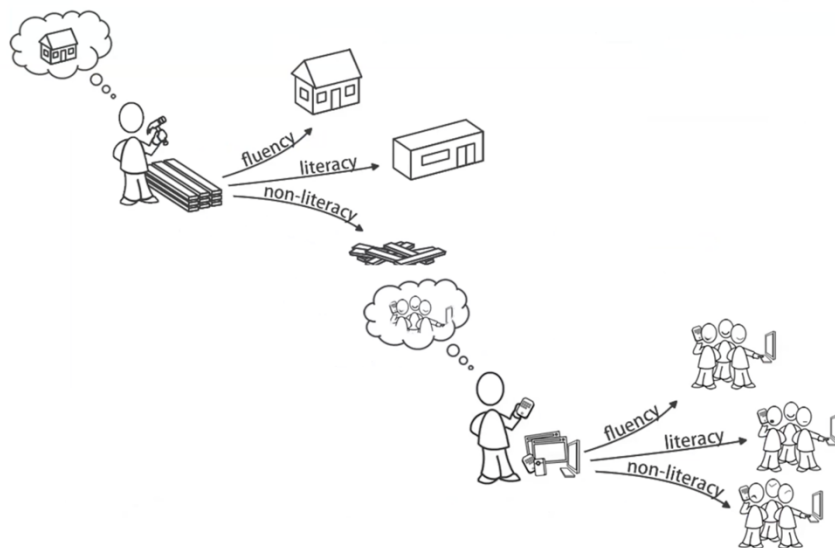
The tech help assignment led me to consider what the best approach would be to connect with my members. I am the youngest active adult member of my church and most of the members are closer to 70 than any other age. The church is in a rural area of North Carolina that boasts a population around 5,500 people. The congregation is African-American, and most have lived in that community their entire lives. This makes for a strong case that my church is on the wrong end of the divide even before issuing the questionnaire. I had already made a fair assessment based on plain observation but given there were surprises in the tech help assignment I was sure there would be more with my project. I reserved judgment and only made a hypothesis that responses would hold true to known statistics relative to demographics and the digital divide.

I did not want the process to seem overwhelming and cause others to be anxious, apprehensive, insecure or even offended due to not being tech savvy. I felt it best to position myself around my members personally, open up with them, and organically show the benefits of digital literacy rather than pontificate. I was able to do this and get everyone comfortable enough to participate in my project without any ill will or negative sentiments about the process. I spent months trying to wield influence through subtle examples and posturing to fulfilling ends. Time was also spent making sure I formulated the right questions, and they were generated based on what I observed from interacting directly with my members over the past few months. This was my idea of leading into cyberorganizing with my congregation.

Digital Fluency

Digital fluency is another prominent lesson I have appreciated very much. The subject surfaced later in the course and was as if a giant light bulb ignited over my head. What I have been referring to as digital literacy was actually digital fluency. In many cases the two could be interchangeable yet within the profession, a clearer distinction must be understood. Having a book is good, being able to read is better, being able to do something meaningful with what you have read is best. This is how I understand the progression from non-literacy to literacy to fluency. I used to understand digital literacy as fluency, and only thought of it binarily. I then realized that it is fluency which I hope to assist my members, and others attain through my mentorship.

Fluency and literacy



(a slide taken from class lecture)

My understanding of the concept became clear as soon as this graphic was introduced in class. I see some, if not most of my community lingering between literacy and non-literacy while a couple are between fluent and literate.

The project was equal parts assessing user's experience and abilities filling out the form, and their actual answers. I needed to see just how fluent the participants were, and just accessing the form from a text link was the first challenge. Given that it was to be taken on their smartphones a certain level of literacy would need to be utilized to fully participate. The form itself was in three parts; basic demographic information, identify 7 symbols, and checklist/short answer. The demographic information included short answers, calendar date input, and simple checkbox responses. The symbol identification was a basic multiple choice section with common symbols associated with smartphones like Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, QR code... The final part had a list of nearly 40 questions which I would analyze to better gauge their fluency. One would simply check all that apply, and then fill out the short answers. The entire questionnaire can be seen in the appendix section.

Notable Respondents

Here are the results from MH, the same individual used in the tech help assignment. MH was the highest point earner.

Main Checklist: 11 points/17 possible

I need to charge my phone multiple times per day. (0) Besides for personal use, I use my phone for work, school and or business. (1) I use email on my phone. (1) My phone is the most used

electronic device I own. (1) I do not know what my password is, or often forget it. (0) I know how to backup my phone. (1) I use Apple Pay/ Google Pay. (2) I am happy with my current cell phone wireless plan. 0 I am familiar with storage on my device. (1) I know what the 'cloud' is.

(0) I am someone that people might rely on for help with their phone. (2)

I am someone that would rather make calls than send texts. (0)

I have at least one social media account, and use it. (1) There is too much stuff on my phone. (0)

Apple is better. (0) I enjoy using video calling features like Duo or FaceTime. (1) I would like to get an updated phone soon. (0)

Expound on at least 3 questions above. Take just a few sentences for each explanation: 3 points/ 3 possible

1. I struggle with closing applications which results in low battery
2. I assist older members at my church who are not tech savvy .
3. I'm very happy with my cell phone service because it helped with me saving money.

Do you have internet service at home? yes = 2 points, no = 0 points.

- yes 2 points/2 possible

Other Items Checklist: 8 points/ 10 Possible

Other smartphones 0/1 points

Smart TV 1/1 points

Computer 2/2 points

Tablet 1/1 point

Printer 2/2 points

Game Consoles like Xbox or Playstation 1/1 point

Any smart home device like Ring doorbell or a smart thermostat? 0/2 Points

Point System

The point system I devised gives some indication of fluency level. Questions valued at 0 were mere opinions or questions that did not require functional or operational knowledge of technology. 1 point questions required either functional or operational knowledge. 1 point was also given if questions were answered in the final tally. The few questions valued at 2 points would indicate a more advanced level of understanding and or application. This grade, 0-2 points, could correspond to the progression of digital fluency from illiterate to fluent. For instance, having a printer or computer are 2 point questions. The abilities of these devices are numerous compared to simply having a smart TV or a gaming console. Another few questions from the main checklist which valued 2 points included 'I am someone that others look to for help with their phone' and 'I use Apple Pay/Google Pay with my phone'. These are higher level services and functions that would indicate at very least, a strong digital literacy rate. MH answered both questions affirmatively. Anyone who answered more than one 2 point question scored well above average. There are those who did not answer any 2 point questions and their results fared average at best. These insights are a great first step for me to develop efficient mentorship programs for each individual and for the collective membership.

The North Carolina Department of Information Technology defines a digitally literate person with these 5 bullets.

- 1) Possesses the variety of skills – technical and cognitive – required to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information in a wide variety of formats
- 2) Can use diverse technologies appropriately and effectively to retrieve information, interpret results, and judge the quality of that information
- 3) Understands the relationship between technology, life-long learning, personal privacy, and stewardship of information
- 4) Uses these skills and the appropriate technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, colleagues, family, and on occasion, the general public
- 5) Uses these skills to actively participate in civic society and contribute to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community

Here are some answers to the lower point earner DG. They were technically the second lowest point earner but due to them attempting to answer all the short answer questions, their score was higher than the lowest respondent. DG actually represents the lowest level of literacy based on the responses given.

Main Checklist: 3points/17 possible

I often have trouble with my phone. (0) I do not know what my password is, or often forget it.

(0) I use Apple Pay/ Google Pay. (2) I do not know what a hot spot is, or how to set it up. (0) I

would like to understand how to get the most out of my phone. (1) I am someone that would

rather make calls than send texts. (0) I sleep with my phone. (0) I usually take my phone with me when I use the bathroom at home. (0)

Do you have internet service at home? yes = 2 points, no = 0 points.

- no 0/2 points

Device Checklist: 0 points/10 possible

Do you have any of these items at home? Check all that apply.

Other smartphones 0

Smart TV 0

Computer 0

Tablet 0

Printer 0

Game Consoles like Xbox or Playstation 0

Any smart home device like Ring doorbell or a smart thermostat? 0

DG does not have internet at home, is uncomfortable using their cell phone, is often confused on how to do simple things such as text or email. DG is able to make and receive calls well enough but needs help with most other functions of their phone. DG does not have home internet or any other smart devices. DG is older than the median age of my congregation and lives in a rural part of the state. I once assisted them to figure out their voicemail password (usually the last 4 digits of some other personal identification number associated with the

DIGITAL DEVICES, SKILLS & AFFORDABILITY



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) Microdata, National Skills Coalition

NCDIT

account) and helped them secure a new one. DG told me they did not really know how to text. I sat with them and figured out how text was configured on their device and gave DG a quick explanation. Their face lit up

when they discovered that texts were organized in threads, and the messaging application on their phone was not on the home screen. I moved it so it would no longer be hidden. I also showed DG how to text with vice. This gave them more confidence about using their phone and encouraged DG to discover other capabilities of his device. This encounter was the first major breakthrough I had bridging theory gained from class and experience applying it in the field. DG was my main inspiration to pursue media mentorship.

RG is another breakthrough example. RG is 70 years old and was never interested in using their cell phone let alone text messages. They were listed among individuals that needed to be called instead of texted/emailed if information needed to be disseminated throughout the membership. RG's scores were above average surprisingly, and I think they may have gotten help from their daughter (which is fine). My indirect influence led RG to become an iPhone user, and they switched their mobile service to my carrier. This showed me the power of listening and leading. I gave no direct order or suggestion to RG to switch cell phones or cell phone plans, I merely was seen this year being productive and efficient with my personal technology. Over the course of a few months, I noticed RG's interest level change and their

mind more open to consider doing something different. RG is also a breakthrough example because they would have been seen well left of the divide before I started this course. Their fluency increased the quickest out of everyone in my congregation simply from following my example. It is also because of RG we were able to fund the reconstruction project. They personally donated over \$40,000 to bring my vision of creating a good place for the community. I credit this mammoth contribution as a positive result of effective cyberorganization and media mentorship.

A Good Space

The same lecture that turned me onto the distinction between literacy and fluency introduced me to another resonating lesson on good spaces. The reconstruction of our fellowship hall is my attempt to create a good space for my members and surrounding community. When I began pastoring my current congregation in June 2022, they informed me that the fellowship hall had not been used since pre-pandemic, and that it had been overcome with mold and other problems. They virtually abandoned the facility, and used it to store some items not frequently used. Our facility is small and has only the chapel and the fellowship hall for usable community space. I have a small study and there is another room of equal size designated for administrative work. It was imperative for me to do whatever I could to fix this problem. Every lecture highlighting the need or potential of libraries would cause me to consider my church as a viable candidate for community development and support.

People need good and safe places to go, and the church should be on the list. Both federal and state governments have issued and will continue to issue grants and other

initiatives to similar organizations to help combat the effects of the digital divide. The NCDIT (North Carolina Department of Information Technology) has issued many reports and webinars this year alone in an attempt to find solutions and partner with various stakeholders to address these issues. Public facilities like community centers, houses of worship, and libraries are commonly referenced together as target facilities to receive funding and support in order for them to provide much needed services to the public. I lead our reconstruction efforts with the idea of 'infinite functional usage potential'. The members responded well, backed my vision and we began to create a good space this summer.

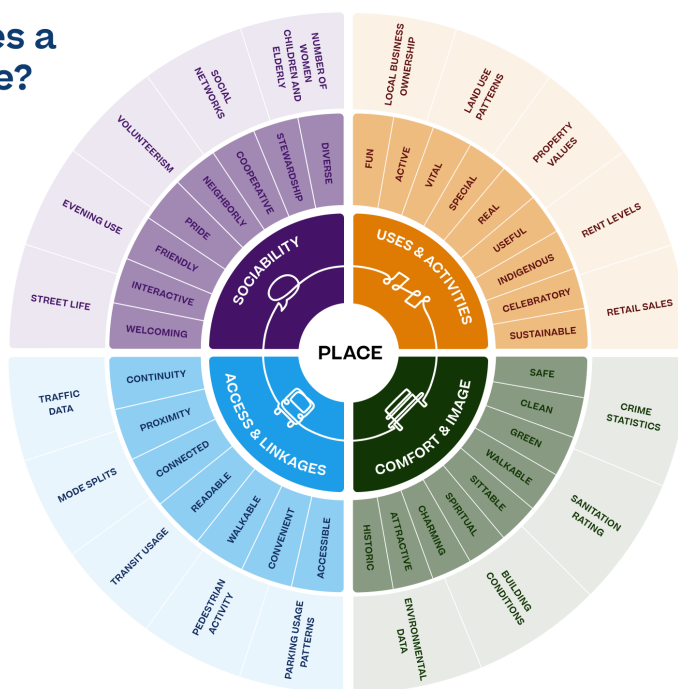
The push for internet access had been an issue since I arrived. It is one of the few completed tasks within the reconstruction project we have quickly benefitted from. One key example is Wi-Fi calling. Cellular service in our church is not good, and does not work at all downstairs in the fellowship hall. I showed everyone how to enable Wi-Fi calling on their phones and explained the feature; that they would not drop/miss another call or they would be able to surf the internet without worry of poor service quality. These incremental steps have proven to be greatly appreciated and beneficial to my members and have sparked greater interest in technology use. Even though construction is not yet complete, the facility is now

free of mold, safer, and more inviting to be used as-is. The PPS suggests the following makes a successful or good space,

In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, PPS has found that to be successful, they generally share the following four qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; and

finally, it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.

What Makes a Great Place?



Project for Public Spaces

<https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat>

There have been other improvements to the edifice which has helped refine the 'space as good'. Both offices have been painted, new flooring, painted/replastered walls, new doors, new lighting and updated outlets to include USB, coaxial cables and ethernet connections, and crawl space doors on the outside have been replaced and updated with locks. Plumbing has been overhauled, HVAC system tweaked, and the entire church has been waterproofed.

During the course of taking this class I was able to apply my new knowledge to help subtly influence others to take more ownership and active stake in the process to make an even better space. Many of the improvements made or planned to be made happened within the past 2 months in major part from the idea that more technology should be implemented throughout the church. This is a cause of the reconstruction effort being prolonged, but this is a good delay.

The church well situated to be of service not only to the existing membership, but the neighborhood which envelops it. Our thoughts are not for ourselves only but to build a space good enough to attract those who need what we can provide.

Conclusion

My eyes have been opened a little larger and my mind a little deeper. The information shared in this class has been indispensable. I have already put my new community informatics skills to meaningful use. My existing skills as a leader and community organizer have been refined and given more definition. Cyberorganization through mentorship has given awareness and elevated the technical literacy of my community. I have even noticed a higher level of fluency through working throughout this course. I will continue to analyze data and consider the best questions to ask. This project is not complete, and will never be. It is an ongoing process of refining thinking and technical skills, community development and curating good spaces to help people live more edifying lives. Challenges will always exist, yet I take pleasure knowing they have not derailed my learning or hindered my ability to provide quality service to my members. I persisted and was able to produce a quality product in light of many

responsibilities that made it difficult to manage my time. I will continue to educate myself and always look for ways to improve. My community has benefited from my work, and I have benefited from serving them.

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<https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat>

Appendix A

This is the first section of the questionnaire. It has a mix of multiple choice questions, short answers, and a date input. Different devices render differently, and it was my goal to have a good mix of input types just to see how well each respondent could navigate around the form. Points were given for each question answered, and two points if they submitted their email twice. After completing the form, I noticed I asked for the email address twice, but this was by mistake. Google automatically requested this information, but it was required. Everyone who reported needing help had trouble throughout the form. Other than quantifiable data, I was surprised to learn that most had trouble navigating around this form which I thought was very simple. Upon reflection I noticed that many did not report using their phone for much productivity or work related functions. A majority used their phone to be entertained with a few apps or make calls.


This form is used to generate information which will help guide the development of a tech workshop centered around smartphone usage.

Email *

Valid email

This form is collecting emails. [Change settings](#)

Birthdate

Month, day, year 

What is your email address? If you do not have an email address or do not use one, type 'none'.

Short answer text

What is your cell number?

Short answer text

Zipcode

Short answer text

What type of smartphone do you have? Check all that apply.

iPhone

Android

Other...

Are you completing this form with assistance from someone? *

No

Yes

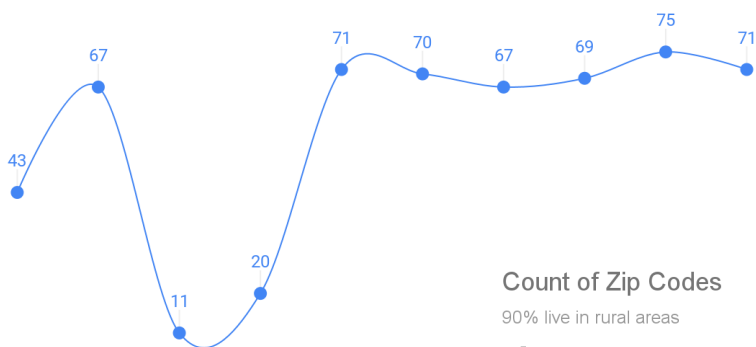
Yes, but with limited assistance.

Other...

The demographic data alone might lead one to believe the group polled is on the wrong end of the digital divide. Half declared needing help filling out the form, 80% of those taking the survey are over the age of 40 with a median age being 68. half the respondents live in the same zip code, and all but 1 live in a rural area of North Carolina.

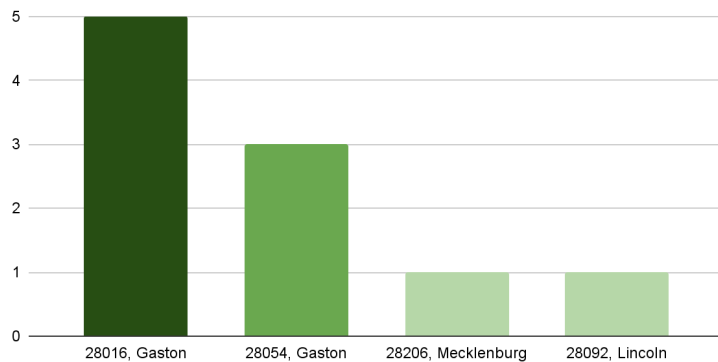
Age

Range: 64 years (11-75) | Median age: 68 | 80% over 40 years old



Count of Zip Codes

90% live in rural areas




Those declaring need of help filling out the form.




Appendix B

Identify this icon.




Wifi
 Signal
 Bluetooth
 Internet

Identify this icon.




Bluetooth
 Wifi
 Flight Plan
 Airplane Mode

Identify this symbol.

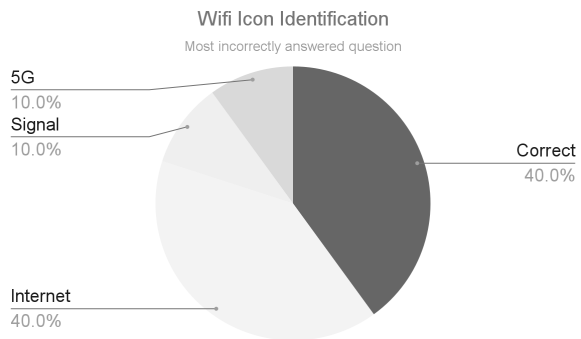
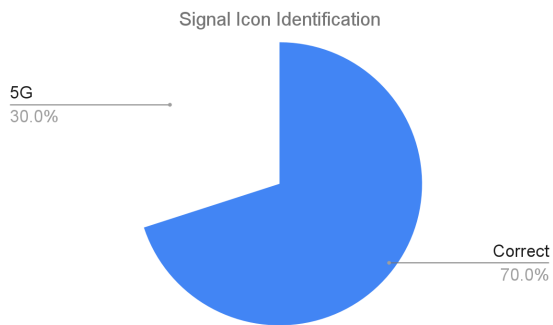
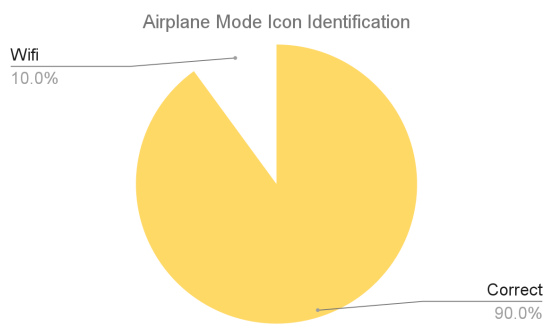
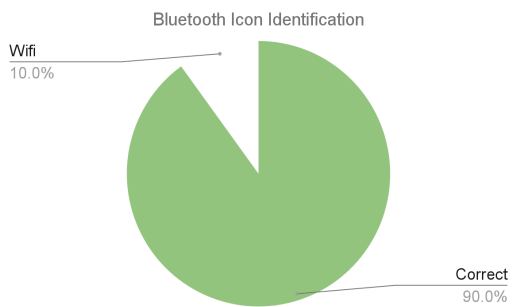


5G
 Wifi
 Internet
 Signal

Identify this icon



Signal
 Internet
 5G
 Wifi

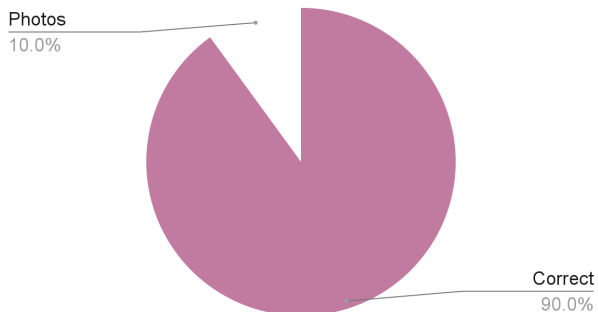


What application might use this icon most?



- Map
- Clock
- Music
- Photos

Location Icon Identification

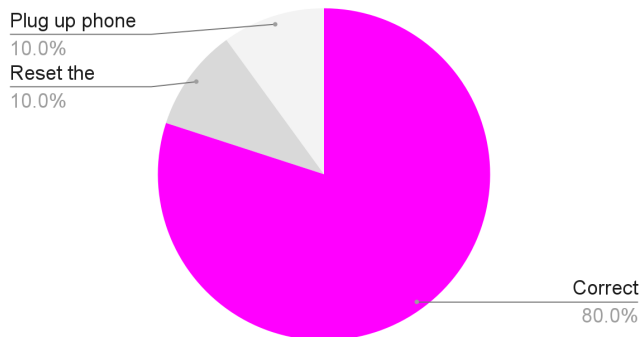


What should one think when seeing this?



- Scan
- Plug up phone
- Turn down brightness
- Reset the phone

QR Code Identification

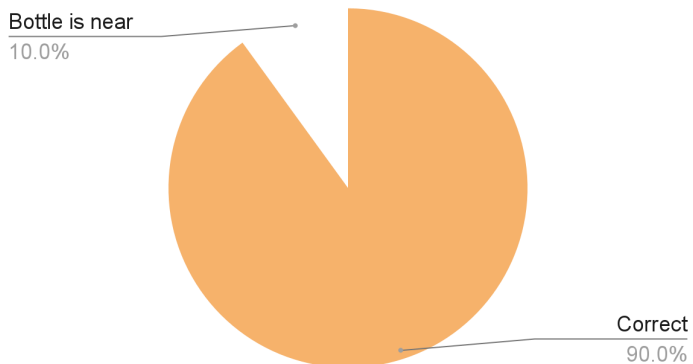


What could this icon mean?



- Power Indicator
- Almost East
- Bottle is near empty
- Light is off

Battery Icon Identification



The results of the 7 icon identification quiz were not shocking. It was interesting to see that the Wi-Fi icon was the most missed question, with only 4/10 answering correctly. Other common mistakes were identifying cell signal as 5G or Wi-Fi. Those who declared they needed help in the previous section averaged 68% correct vs 91% that claimed they did not need assistance filling out the form.

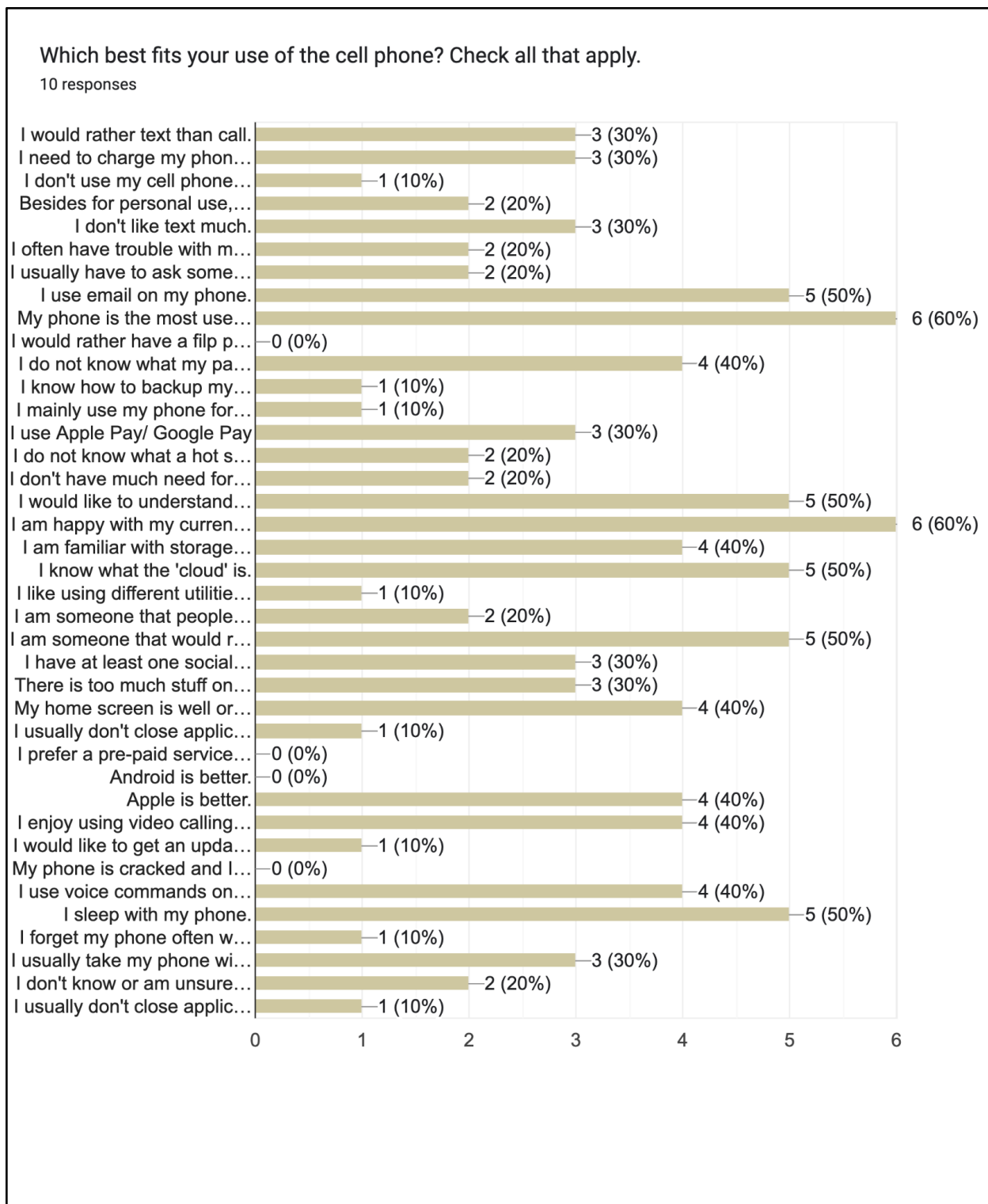
I tried asking the question differently to see if it would have any bearing on the responses. I expected these questions to be answered incorrectly more than what was actually answered. Generally speaking the group did well identifying these questions. It would indicate from the form so far that the congregation is leaning towards digital literacy.

Appendix C

Checkboxes and Final Short Answers. Point values are indicated right of the question. Some analysis is supplied after the diagram on page 15.

1. *I would rather text than call.* 1
2. *I need to charge my phone multiple times per day.* 0
3. *I don't use my cell phone much.* 0
4. *Besides for personal use, I use my phone for work, school and or business.* 1
5. *I don't like text much.* 0
6. *I often have trouble with my phone.* 0
7. *I usually have to ask someone to help me fix or find something on my phone.* 0
8. *I use email on my phone.* 1
9. *My phone is the most used electronic device I own.* 1
10. *I would rather have a flip phone, or a phone with buttons.* 0
11. *I do not know what my password is, or often forget it.* 0
12. *I know how to backup my phone.* 1
13. *I mainly use my phone for entertainment.* 0
14. *I use Apple Pay/ Google Pay.* 2
15. *I do not know what a hot spot is, or how to set it up.* 0
16. *I don't have much need for apps, I just make calls and send a few texts.* 0
17. *I would like to understand how to get the most out of my phone.* 1
18. *I am happy with my current cell phone wireless plan.* 0
19. *I am familiar with storage on my device.* 1

20. *I know what the 'cloud' is.* 1
21. *I like using different utilities on my phone.* 1
22. *I am someone that people might rely on for help with their phone.* 2
23. *I am someone that would rather make calls than send texts.* 0
24. *I have at least one social media account, and use it.* 1
25. *There is too much stuff on my phone.* 0
26. *My home screen is well organized.* 1
27. *I usually don't close applications once I am done, I just exit to the home screen or turn off the phone.* 0
28. *I prefer a pre-paid service plan.* 0
29. *Android is better.* 0
30. *Apple is better.* 0
31. *I enjoy using video calling features like Duo or FaceTime.* 1
32. *I would like to get an updated phone soon.* 0
33. *My phone is cracked and I do not care.* 0
34. *I use voice commands on my phone (Siri/Alexa).* 1
35. *I sleep with my phone.* 0
36. *I forget my phone often when I leave the house.* 0
37. *I usually take my phone with me when I use the bathroom at home.* 0
38. *I don't know or am unsure how to manage notifications well.* 0



As mentioned before, the main question answered affirmatively was concerning the cellphone as the most used piece of technology. It ties with 'I am happy with my cell phone

service' at 6/10 responding. It is interesting to note the next responses sharing third place at 50%. Those who answered these questions all scored high in the other sections and I would consider them to be fluent-leaning:

- I use email on my cell phone 1,
- I would like to understand most out of my phone 1,
- I know what the 'cloud' is 1,
- I am someone that would rather call than text 0,
- I sleep with my phone 0

Some questions were just there to make one think, and others were there to throw off. The following short answer section was available for each member to qualify at least 3 of their responses with short answers. Not everyone answered, and not everyone that answered supplied at least three examples. Those who responded completely scored high in all sections and I would deem fluent-leaning. Those who were able to complete the other short answer questions generally scored high and would be considered fluent-leaning.

Short Answer: 0 - 7 Points

39. Expound on at least 3 questions above. Take just a few sentences for each explanation. 0-3 points

40. How many applications do you have running on your phone right now? If you are not sure how to check, write 'I don't know how to check'. 1 point

41. Do you have any thoughts on the digital divide? 1 point

42. Do you have internet service at home? yes = 2 points, no = 0 points

Device Checklist: 0 - 10 Points

Do you have any of these items at home? Check all that apply.

Other smartphones 1

Smart TV 1

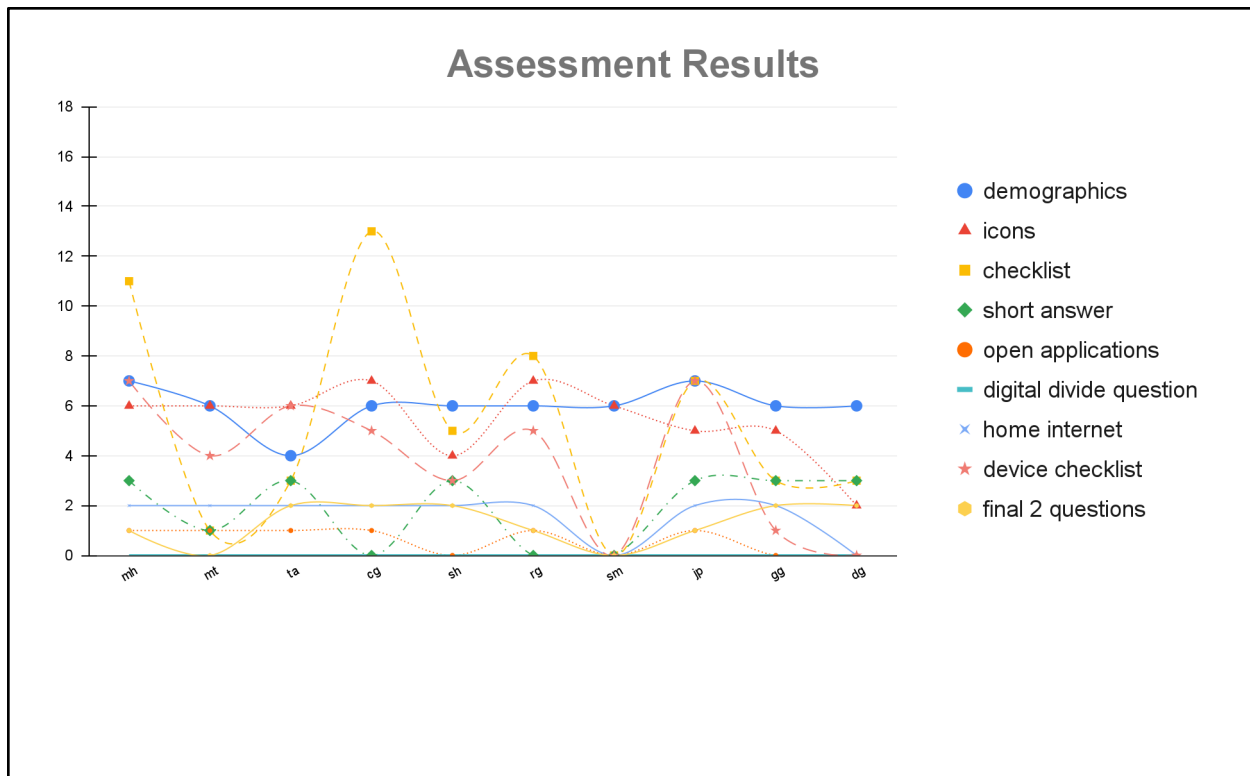
Computer 2

Tablet 1

Printer 2

Game Consoles like Xbox or Playstation 1

Any smart home devices like a Ring doorbell or a smart thermostat? 2



The graph above shows the results of the ten members that took the assessment. Every question on the form had a point value I associated between 0, 1 and 2. Being able to visualize data helps to understand things easily. This graph looks a little busy, but it is not. Of the ten, neither had an answer for the question concerning the digital divide. No one was familiar with it and did not supply any thoughts about it. This question in the short answer section was specifically asked for follow up purposes and to educate everyone on what my project was about.