

Factors Associated with Digital Readiness in Rural Communities in Israel

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Abstract

In the age of the information and knowledge society, digital readiness has become an important element of economical and social development.

Purpose of the study: to assess the level of "digital readiness" in rural communities in Israel and to find factors associated with it.

Research procedure: a closed questionnaire designed to measure six different aspects of digital readiness was filled out by a representative sample of 200 people living in four rural settlements. A digital readiness index was composed of these six measures. Additionally, an open questionnaire was rendered to each governing council representative in the studied communities, aiming to determine two measures of community digital readiness: activity and infrastructure for community development through the internet and their view of the internet as a community development tool.

Main findings: The reported rate of domestic internet connection and use (60%) was lower than the national average, probably due to a combination of two factors, known in the literature as deterrents of technological progress, namely, the rural nature of the settlements and their remoteness from the center and the unique religious character of the residents.

Demographic features found to be associated to at least three measures of digital readiness were: age group, income, education and level of religion observance.

Contrary to expectations, our findings did not reveal a direct link between religious level and digital readiness. However, respondents who defined themselves as ultra-orthodox were found at the lowest level of digital readiness. This interesting finding may be attributed to the relatively better adaptation of the modern orthodox sector to the internet, unlike the ultra-orthodox one.

Keywords: Digital Readiness; Rural Communities; Israel

Biographies



Moshe Yitzhaki was born in Israel in 1940. Undergraduate studies at Bar-Ilan University (economics and biblical studies) and Master degree in biblical studies there. MLS and PhD studies in Information and Library studies at Rutgers University, New Jersey. From 1980 to 2009 full-time position at Bar-Ilan Department of Information studies and director of the Jewish Studies Library. Senior lecturer (1988) and Associate Professor (2006). Research areas: scholarly communication, information storage and retrieval, bibliometrics/informetrics, digital readiness and development, school media centers, censorship in libraries, biblical exegesis.



Simha Djuraev was born in Israel in 1983. Undergraduate studies at Givat-Washington Teachers College. Master degree in Information Science from Bar-Ilan University. Currently a doctoral student at the Department of Information Studies at Bar-Ilan University. Areas of interest: Digital readiness and development, censorship in libraries, philosophical and ethical aspects of LIS.