Preface

The subject area of youth and online social practices deals with research that concerns children and youth and their use of interactive media. This research consists of a broad range of different perspectives such as quantitative and descriptive studies of what goes on in the contemporary media landscape, psychological and sociological research on online social practices, pedagogical research on formal and non-formal learning strategies, to mention a few. The aim of the book is to outline this emerging research area, evolving around young people and contemporary digital arenas. The field is growing in size, shape and complexity and the need for study is urgent. This book is a valuable contributions by providing critical perspectives and a broad overview.

The book, Youth Culture and Net Culture: Online Social Practices, covers current areas of research on young people’s use of interactive media. The different chapters represent cutting edge research with a critical perspective as a common denominator. As editors we were pleased that our call for chapters had such good results. All authors were interested in the critical perspective that we emphasized in our call. So you will find chapters presenting novel ideas, different aspects of young people’s net cultures and ground-breaking research that will be of great value to the academic society as well as to policy makers. The book aims at providing relevant theoretical frameworks and the latest empirical research findings in the area.

The target audience of the book will be composed of students, professionals and researchers working in the field of young people and the internet in various disciplines (e.g., education, library and information science, psychology, sociology, computer science, linguistics, informatics, media and communication science). The book may serve as literature at an undergraduate level and provide an overview of the area for researchers, teachers, students and policy makers. It is written for professionals as well as students who want to improve their understanding of online social practices from a young people’s perspective. Youth Culture and Net Culture: Online Social Practices focuses on online social practices from a youth culture viewpoint. During our planning process we tried to find a way to involve young people in the making of the book. The aim was to make young people not only the objects of studies but also subjects. The idea was to find students who were willing to give their side of the story. This is not as easy as it may seem; we needed to find students who were sufficiently good at English, who were interested in reading a substantial amount of academic text and who had the time to go through a writing process together with us. And since the chapters from the adult authors were to be submitted in spring 2010, we had to ask the students to do this work during the busiest period of school. Luckily enough, there is an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in Umeå, Sweden, quite close to the university. Their English teacher Neil Duncan presented our idea to one of his classes and some of the students wanted to participate. The contributors are students in the IB1 class of the International Baccalaureate Diploma
Programme at Östra Gymnasiet in Umeå. All IB students have CAS – Creativity, Action, Service as part of their diploma, and these students volunteered their contributions here as Service – helping other people who need or ask for help – in this case by giving their time and sharing their ideas, opinions and experiences in print with us when editing this book. The students were first presented with the abstracts of every adult chapter. After reading through the abstracts some of the students wanted to read entire chapters, which at this stage were in the form of drafts. Our instructions for the writing were deliberately vague, because we wanted to avoid steering these young authors into writing in a traditional academic style. Even though there may be educational winnings from training young people in academic writing, we wanted their tone to be authentic since they were to write about their own thoughts and feelings. After the first reading of the adult chapters, we presented the students with questions like “What are your thoughts about this? Did anything particular catch your attention, either in a positive or a negative way? Do you have any ideas what to write about this?” We also pointed out that the students did not have to comment on the adults’ chapters, their chapters could just as well be separate texts. Today, we are very proud to present this way of getting young people’s views on research concerning the internet and we hope that the readers will appreciate this vantage point. We also encourage other editors and publishers to follow our example, since it has been a valuable experience for us and these students and hopefully beneficial to the book.

The contributors of, *Youth Culture and Net Culture: Online Social Practices* come from practically all over the world. In fact, the globalization that serves as a backdrop to research on contemporary media became almost too clear to us during the editing process. Two of the current international tragedies in 2010 affected authors in the book. First, there was the military coup in Nigeria in February 2010. Some of the authors in the book are researchers at Nigerian universities and their writing process was delayed for obvious reasons. Also, it became clear to us and the authors how much we have come to depend on the internet and that its services are always on. The Nigerian crisis affected infrastructure and there were a few weeks during which we could not communicate as planned. The second tragedy was the airplane crash in Russia in April 2010 when the Polish President died along with 100 other people, including the First Lady and many prominent Polish officials. The passengers were on their way to Smolensk in Western Russia to commemorate the massacre in Katyn during the Second World War. This accident had severe repercussions on Polish everyday life and our authors were naturally affected. We are grateful that the authors from Poland and Nigeria still had the strength to finalize their work.

The present volume is dedicated to research on young people’s social activities online. There is a focus on generational aspects of online social practices, as the reader will notice, but there are also other facets, such as gender and social class. As mentioned above, globalization is an inevitable theme in many of the chapters. When we say inevitable we mean it both because the subject of the internet is global in itself but also because this book has attracted authors from many parts of our world. This richness in approaches provides us with valuable knowledge in a time when the educational system, policy makers and non-governmental organizations call for this knowledge. Thus we let *Youth Culture and Net Culture: Online Social Practices* start out with young people’s own views of their online social practices.

In the first section of this book the young authors from a Swedish upper secondary school describe and discuss their own and their peers’ online activities. They write about differences between generations, their own and others’ blogging and creativity.

In the second section the context is in focus; how can we describe the setting in which the online social practices take place? What does this world look like and what approaches can we develop? The opening chapter of this section is the editors’ own, *Young People and Online Risk*. The chapter problematizes
online risk and questions safety measures that often follow discussions of online risk. The chapter also aims at initiating a discussion on how we approach risk in a general sense. In the next chapter, *Youth and Online Social Networking: From Local Experiences to Public Discourses* Malene Charlotte Larsen and Thomas Ryberg present the results of a study of Danish young people’s internet use. The authors discuss how young people construct themselves as users of social network sites both in relation to concrete and local experiences and in relation to mediated discourses. To sum up the first section, Håkan Selg’s chapter *Swedish Students Online: An Inquiry into Differing Cultures on the Internet*, presents the results from a major survey among Swedish university students regarding their internet use. Selg concludes that the study does not support earlier claims of a net generation or digital natives. Instead, Selg points out that the adaption of internet use is far more complex than a generations approach suggests.

The third section focuses on identity. From various vantage points the different chapters address questions pertaining to identity construction in a contemporary media landscape. The opening chapter in this section is Ann-Charlotte Palmgren’s chapter *Fat Talk, Constructing the Body Through Eating Disorders Online among Swedish Girls*. The chapter explores how young women construct their body by writing about eating disorders in blogs. Palmgren uses blog entries from a Swedish net community to study the construction of girlhood through the construction of the ideal body online. In the next chapter, *To be Continued ... Fan fiction and the Constructing of Identity*, Patrik Wikström and Christina Olin-Scheller report the findings from a study on fan fiction in a Swedish context. The authors contextualize the fan fiction phenomenon as a part of a larger change where media consumers’ role as collaborative cultural producers grows ever stronger. In *Digital Neighbourhoods – A Sociological Perspective on the Forming of Self-feeling Online*, Ulrik Lögdlund and Marcin de Kaminski discuss how young people in Sweden relate to the internet. The authors report findings from a study revolving around the notion of self-feeling in relation to how young people develop and maintain relations online. *The Use of Interactive Media in Identity Construction by Female Undergraduates in a Nigerian University* by Oyewole Jaiyeola Aramide examines how interactive media is used in identity construction processes by female undergraduates. This chapter concludes that the use of the internet for identity construction cannot be ignored and that it is unavoidable for youths to employ the internet for self gratification, considering its advantages. The next chapter, *The Representation of Female Friendships on Young Women’s MySpace Profiles: the All-female World and the Feminine ‘Other’* by Amy Shields Dobson presents the results of a study of MySpace profiles owned by young Australian women. With this data as a starting point Dobson discusses constructions of female friendship and points out the complexity of female self-representation in a contemporary media landscape. S. Faye Hendrick’s and Simon Lindgren’s chapter is called *YouTube as a Performative Arena – How Swedish Youth are Negotiating Space, Community Membership, and Gender Identities Through the art of Parkour*. The authors explore how Swedish youth involved in urban sport activities, parkour, use the video sharing site Youtube as a performative arena. They present the results of a case study of communities on YouTube, using a variety of on- and offline ethnographic data.

The fourth section is a variation on the third; it details sexuality as one aspect if identity. The first chapter in this section is *Young People and Cybersex in a Sexually Conservative Society: A Case Study from Mauritius* by Komalsingh Rambaree. The author discusses the process, aspects and experiences of cybersex in Mauritius, a country which is transforming into a cyber-island and at the same time still wants to preserve its views on young people’s sexuality. The second chapter is Kristian Daneback’s and Cecilia Löfberg’s *Youth, Sexuality and the Internet - Young People’s Use of the Internet to Learn about Sexuality*. The chapter discusses how young people use the internet to learn about and understand more about sex and sexuality. The authors conclude that the internet is an important arena for discussing
sexual matters and that this arena in many ways differs from offline arenas. Olugbenga David Ojo’s chapter *Adolescents and Online Dating Attitudes* deals with the attitudes of adolescents with an African background in relation to online dating. Ojo contextualizes young people’s online dating in relation to African culture and tradition and describes that parents in general see adolescents as being too young for sexual activities. Further, Ojo accounts for some coping strategies that the adolescents undertake. Avi Marciano’s chapter *The Role of Internet Newsgroups in the Coming-Out Process of Gay Male Youth: an Israeli Case Study* examines the role of the internet in the complex coming-out process of gay male youth. The findings indicate that the internet can serve as a social arena where the informants for the first time in their lives are free of moral judgment on their sexuality.

In the fifth and closing section of *Youth Culture and Net Culture: Online Social Practices* we want to focus on contemporary challenges; chapters that draw trajectories into the future. These chapters present challenges that come from the fact that our world is a changing place and that we are in the middle of a great shift or a minor turn, depending on how much importance you place in the changing media landscape. Opening this section, *The Competent Youth’s Exposure of Teachers at YouTube.se* by Marcus Samuelsson takes its starting point in movies of exposed Swedish teachers on YouTube. The chapter investigates how adults react when youth use their knowledge of the internet to expose what they have experienced in school. In their chapter *Moving from Cyber-bullying to Cyber-kindness: What do Students, Educators and Parents say?* Wanda Cassidy, Karen Brown and Margaret Jackson explore cyber-bullying and its opposite cyber-kindness from the views of students, teachers and parents. The authors present the results of two studies carried out in British Columbia, Canada and conclude that much of the cyber-bullying is, as the authors put it, “happening under the radar of school staff and parents”. On the same subject, cyber-bullying, Jacek Pyżalski problematizes aggression on the internet in his chapter *Electronic Aggression among Adolescents: an Old House with a New Facade (Or Even a Number of Houses)*. As the title suggests, he looks into differences between electronic and traditional aggression and describes the diversity of electronic aggression. Furthermore, he introduces a model for comparing electronic and traditional aggression, the ABACUS model. Yet another contemporary challenge is presented by the following chapter, *Ways of ICT Usage Among Mildly Intellectually Disabled Adolescents – Potential Risks and Advantages* by Piotr Plichta. This chapter explores patterns of ICT usage among mildly intellectually disabled adolescents. Plichta stresses the importance of leisure activities to, and rehabilitation of the disabled, as well as the risk of digital exclusion. Violent content in video games is the theme of Eva-Maria Schiller’s, Marie-Thérèse Schultes’, Dagmar Strohmeyer’s and Christiane Spiel’s chapter *Gaming and Aggression: The Importance of Age-Appropriateness in Violent Video Games*. The authors present a study on pre-adolescents in which violent content of games was categorized based on Pan European Game Information (PEGI) descriptors. Furthermore, practical implications for adolescents and for parents are discussed. The next chapter is Kareena McAloney’s and Joanne Wilson’s *Young People, Sexual Content and Solicitation Online*. The chapter provides an up to date overview of knowledge regarding young people’s exposure to and experiences of sexual material and sexual predators online. The authors also address current mechanisms designed to protect children and young people as they engage in online activities. Closing this section and the entire book, we find *Spirituality in Cybercrime (YahooYahoo) Activities among Youths in South West Nigeria* by Agunbiade Ojo Melvin and Titilayo Ayotunde. The chapter provides a socio-cultural analysis of the relevance of spirituality among Nigerian youths in relation to cybercrime.
All these chapters pose questions that we, the editors and the authors, hope that the reader will be eager to further explore after reading this book. So please follow us to the engaging, entertaining, worrying, sad and joyful youth culture of today.

Elza Dunkels
Umeå University, Sweden

Gun-Marie Frånberg
Umeå University, Sweden

Camilla Häggren
Umeå University, Sweden