Media Access

MEDIA ACCESS

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS
OF NEW TECHNOLOGY USE

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This study assembles and presents, as an integrated whole, the cross-disciplinary research being conducted on access to new technology. It departs from popular understandings of new technology use by recognizing the distinction between having access to the Internet as a technology and being able to access the content that resides on it. While much research attention and policy discussion remains focused on physical access to information technology, profitable use of new media actually hinges on the motivations, characteristics, and abilities of individual users - dimensions of access that have thus far received only scant attention by researchers and policymakers. The book explains the "digital divide" based on education, income, gender, geography and other demographic characteristics that we now face. Multidisciplinary in scope, this book represents the work of scholars across an array of fields, including journalism and mass communication, telecommunications, information studies, human-computer interaction, policy analysis, media sociology, and political science. The varied conceptual and methodological approaches originate from large-scale survey data, cultural explanations derived from depth interviews, and ethnographic methods and psychological explanations inferred from experimental data. "Media Access" is organized into three parts. Part I investigates questions pertaining to online content and computer avoidance, focusing on the psychological criteria of technology use and the role of education in facilitating cognitive access to new and traditional media. Part II compares social access to new technology among traditionally disadvantaged communities in disparate regions of the United States. Part III offers another level of analysis examining media access to the public sphere. This book is intended for professors and graduate students, as well as members of the policy community interested in media and information technology research.

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