­­­­

SARA NEVAY

TEXTILE CONNECTIONS: E-textiles as catalysts for social connectedness

Keywords: textiles; e-textiles; social; connectedness

[s.nevay@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:s.nevay@dundee.ac.uk)

University of Dundee

Bio

Sara has a background in textile design, service and co-design. Her PhD research explores e-textiles as catalysts for social connection for older adults who may be vulnerable to loneliness. Her research interests lie in co-design, craft, textiles, e-textiles and ageing.

Research summary

Staying connected to family, peers and the wider community can be challenging for older adults experiencing life-changing transitions such as bereavement, retirement or illness. Indeed 17% of individuals aged 75 years and over have contact with their families less than once per week and two fifths name television as their primary source of company. Despite advancements in communication technologies, loneliness is a growing endemic social condition impacting heavily on health and wellbeing, thereby causing greater risk of cognitive decline, onset disability, depression and feelings of loss of self.

Among older people, ill fitting, aesthetically unappealing design and lack of confidence are some of the factors associated with low adoption of communication technologies. Research related to smartphones and tablets in particular has also highlighted older users’ concerns in terms of navigating complicated screens, small print and the misunderstanding of technical jargon. With research advocating internet-enabled objects in improving feelings of social connectedness, which is key to preventing or overcoming loneliness, this paper proposes that e-textiles (inherently electronic materials or electronic devices with more familiar textile components) is poised as one of the next possible frontiers for enabling communications.

Questions for Heroes

Advice for design research PhD students in final write-up stage:

How to remain engaged with writing process without further practical development?

How to prepare for VIVA and recommendations for presenting physical artefacts as part of this?