

**Events**[Current Events](#)[Lectures](#)[Events Archive](#)

## AVATAR Lecture Series

**New Media and Social Networks in the Parochial and Public Realms:  
Building Community in Place****Keith N. Hampton, University of Pennsylvania**

Assistant Professor, Annenberg School for Communication

Manship School of Mass Communications D. Jensen Holliday Forum  
April 16, 2008 - 10:00 am**Abstract:**

New information and communication technologies, as part of a rebuilt or renewed urban infrastructure, provide opportunity and risk in their ability to support community. There is increasing evidence that Internet use can increase the size of social networks and communication with social ties. However, there is also evidence that Internet use systematically displaces social ties in the public and parochial realms; ties that enable the formation of diverse networks, collective action, and play an important role in opinion formation and democratic participation. This presentation provides an overview of a series of quantitative and qualitative studies of how new media can support or detract from the formation of social networks in neighborhoods and public spaces. Studies at the neighborhood level include "Netville," a case study of Internet use in a new suburban development, "e-Neighbors," a 3-year quasi-experimental study of four contrasting neighborhoods in the Boston area, and "i-neighbors.org," a 3-year naturalistic experiment that explored the impact of local uses of the Internet on collective efficacy in 6,000 neighborhoods across the United States. Examples of how the Internet can transform interactions in public spaces include a study of wireless Internet use in four coffee shops in Boston and Seattle, and a study of how municipal and community Wi-Fi projects in New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Toronto influenced sociability in public parks, plazas and markets, as well as the overall structure of people's social networks.

**Speaker's Bio:**

Keith N. Hampton is an assistant professor in the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. He received his Ph.D. and M.A. from the University of Toronto in sociology, and a B.A. in sociology from the University of Calgary. His research interests focus on the relationship between new information and communication technologies, social networks, and the urban environment.

