HEARING LOSS, TECHNOLOGY and COMMUNITY AT THE START OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY.

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores ways in which technology is influencing the lives of hard of hearing people at the start of the 21st century. The thesis develops and is grounded in a distinction between people who referred to as ‘deaf’ and those who are referred to as ‘hard of hearing.’ It is argued that there is a lack of recognition of the special needs of hard of hearing people in deaf and disability discourses and more generally in everyday communication. This lack of recognition is analogous to the absence of women from many forms of social analysis until the latter part of the 20th century. In light of this clearer specification of the people under consideration, attention shifts to a consideration of the various technologies they can access. The context within which these technologies are used is one in which, unlike many deaf people who form an integrated community that is differentiated and separate from the general society, hard of hearing people have tended to become socially isolated within the hearing community. This understanding of the potential for social isolation allows the specific significance of generic computer technology for this group to come to the fore. As a consequence the thesis focuses upon a detailed examination of the place of a hard of hearing online real community in the lives of a number of hard of hearing people.
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