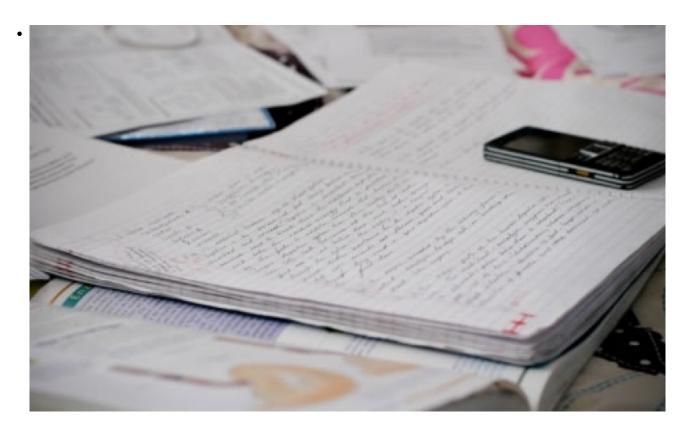# From digital volunteering to digitising volunteers

03/21/2017 - 10:46

What are we referring to when talking about digital volunteering? Could somebody spending 80% of his time in front of a computer and 20% in a hospital be a digital volunteer?

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Submitted by iwith.org on Tue, 03/21/2017 - 10:33
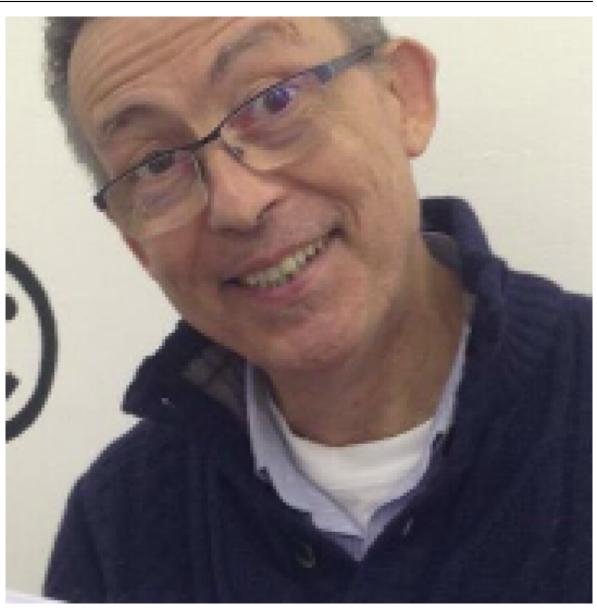**Description:**
Director of [iWith.org Foundation](https://iwith.org).

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New technologies are moving everything forward. If we pay attention to this phenomenon, we can see how Spotify, Amazon, Google, Airbnb, Uber and many other platforms have been following the trend of a collaborative economy that has been slowly emerging. In this sense, all aspects of technology seem to be following this direction.

Let's think for a second how the world would be without digital volunteers. One consequence, for example, would be not having Firefox. We wouldn't have operating systems such as Firefox either. Or...even worse: we would have to go back to the sixties to understand how the internet first appeared and how it was created.

This is not the case, so there is not cause for concern. Luckily, thousands of people have made great progress, offering their talent and time to society. What this means is that the internet now has a cautious and discreet digital volunteer, one which is very important.

If we return to our original question, the main benefit from volunteers is their **willingness to help** whereas the word "digital" only refers to the medium being used. **Digital volunteers** are moving in the same direction as society. When I say this, I am not only thinking of the volunteer who publishes a website or the one providing online translations. I am also thinking of those lending a hand to a patient in a hospital or those looking after a lost dog. With the last 20 years bringing great progress in this area, we must think that our next 20 years will continue to bring many important breakthroughs.

In my opinion, people that can see how the Internet is changing the rules also have the opportunity to bring to the volunteering field ideas such as **teleworking, co-working, video conferences, open knowledge and transparency**. All these tools have a positive effect: enlarging and empowering this Fourth Sector in which people are joining to create unclassifiable concepts.

Digital volunteering is positively influencing society but also chalenges old models such as the link from the volunteer to the cause, the essence of the **"free-of-charge"** concept or the need of a certain organisation to host volunteers. An example of digital volunteering is Help From Home, in England, proposing a change in the world your pyjamas on, meaning that it would be possible to give answers to society issues from the comfort of your own home.

In the United States we have the example of Goodwill Industries International, Inc., offering digital volunteering for volunteers to build skills and improve their CV. But we do not need to travel far to find inspiring examples. At home, we have got the project "Perros de La Floresta" (Dogs of La Floresta), where 25% of the people from the town collaborate in returning lost dogs, all without the assistance any organisation.

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