Social media is transforming the way people, especially young people, perceive the world, communicate and interact. To cite Danah Boyd’s latest publication on the topic, *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*, “As teens turn to and help create networked publics, they begin to imagine society and their place in it. Through social media, teens reveal their hopes, dreams, struggles and challenges.”

The GEI’s first Georg Arnhold Professor, M. Ayaz Naseem from Concordia University in Montreal, focused on social media and peace education during his tenure at the Georg Eckert Institute and devised the inaugural Arnhold Symposium on “Peace 2.0: Social Media as a Space for Peace Education”. The symposium is part of the GEI’s Georg Arnhold Program on Education for Sustainable Peace.

The 2014 Arnhold Symposium took place on 30 and 31 July, with experts from around the world gathering to discuss the potential of social media to act as an educational space for the development of peace. The central theme was the role of the new digital “educational space” in various regions of the world, including the Middle East and Africa. At the two-day symposium, sixteen academics from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and, along with early-career scholars and representatives of civil society, discussed the ways in which social media influence people’s and in particular young people’s engagement with their societies around the world and citizens’ participation in social and political processes. They also looked at how we might research the fundamental transformations taking place in the public sphere with the advent and advance of the digital age and the opportunities emerging from these transformations for formal and informal education. The symposium’s keynote speakers were Internet pioneer and author Howard Rheingold (via livestream) and Lynn Davies, an educationalist from the UK.

In his keynote address on the connection between young people, social media and civic engagement, Howard Rheingold highlighted that understanding how social networks work is part of “essential 21st-century literacy”. Calling on educators and those engaged in promoting peace education, he said, “Encourage young people to turn media production skills that they are naturally attracted to because they are experimenting with their identity, because they want to communicate with their peers [...] on issues that affect their lives and their communities, whatever they are. Don’t tell them, let them figure it out. Teach them about publics and public voice. Show them how young people in other places have exercised public voice and influenced public opinion.”
The presentations at the symposium cast light on the role of social media in specific countries and regions. They explored institutional and extra-institutional initiatives taking place in the digital sphere for education in the spirit of peace and democracy. In this context, Nelson De Luca Pretto from the Federal University of Bahia discussed social networks, activism and education in Brazil; Saila Lindroos from Finland spoke on changes in the communication landscape in Nairobi and the role of social media in the development of peace in the city. Eszter Hargittai’s presentation looked at young adults’ civic engagement on social media. Mohammed Ihahrine highlighted the influence of religious digital platforms on the spread of Islam and Mike Horsley provided Australian responses and observations on how social media can promote peace education and civic participation. Theo Dolan presented a project for peace media for young Iraqis, while Samuel Woolley from the University of Washington covered major debates over the use of social media during revolution, protest, elections and security crises.

Closing the symposium, Lynn Davies focused on the role social media can play in the exacerbation of divisions and the promotion of hate in her keynote address on “Unsocial Media: the battle for the message space”, which looked at the use of “unsocial media” by religious and religious/political extremist groups and at counter-messaging and its impact. She concluded with a discussion of how best to foster critical idealism through networking and the particular importance of a secular approach to combating religious extremism.

A peer-reviewed publication on social media and peace education, based on the proceedings of the 2014 Arnhold Symposium, will be published by the GEI in 2015; it will represent an important contribution to the field and to the Georg Arnhold Program on Education for Sustainable Peace.
SALAM SHABAB PEACE MEDIA FOR IRAQI YOUTH: THE CHALLENGES OF ENGAGING AND EDUCATING NEXT GENERATION PEACE BUILDERS
Theo Dolan, United States Institute of Peace, United States
The PeaceTech Initiative at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) has been working with partners in Iraq for the last five years to engage and educate the next generation of peace builders. Young people under the age of 30 comprise the majority of the population in Iraq and they also have the most potential for creating positive change. To reach youth with a peacebuilding message, USIP developed a reality television show called Salam Shabab (Peace Youth). In response to demand from local youth, USIP also built into the program a social media component that included a dedicated website, a Facebook fan page, a Twitter feed and other platforms. While research indicates that the Salam Shabab reality television program is impacting the knowledge and attitudes of its youth audience, young fans have sought a deeper level of interaction. Therefore, the television show became a springboard for the online community which enabled young people to engage with the program and with each other on peace-related topics. This article will explore the following questions: How are youth engaged and educated through Salam Shabab? How do Iraqi youth respond to Salam Shabab – online and offline? What are the challenges of obstacles to engaging and educating youth through social media?

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PEACE IN NAIROBI
Saila Lindroos, Family Federation of Finland, Finland
The emergence of Web 2.0 and social media has changed the Kenyan communications landscape significantly. The monopoly of information that the traditional media held has broken down. Based on data collected in the spring of 2011, social media had both a negative and positive effect on peace. On the one hand, hate speech disseminated on social media polarized ethnic tensions during the 2007–2008 election violence. On the other hand, the election violence led to a growing awareness of the dangers of social media and resulted in emphasis of content more focused on peacebuilding. In addition, the value of social media was recognized by groups mobilizing for peace, peace education and accountability. The civil society utilized social media in the role as watchdog and perceived social media as a means for strengthening transparency. For these groups, social media was often the only means of directly engaging with the political elite and speaking about certain highly politicized issues freely and safely. As a result, social media has shifted power relations in favor of civil society, loosening the grip of the elite and the media it owns, on the sole source of information for the masses. This move from a vertical to a horizontal flow of information has had a democratizing effect on the Kenyan communications landscape.

YOUNG ADULTS’ CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA
Eszter Hargittai, Northwestern University, United States
With the increasing spread of social media, the barriers to sharing content about politics, current events and social causes have decreased considerably. Social media is especially popular among young adults, offering an opportunity to engage a population segment that has, traditionally, shown lower levels of political and civic engagement. Who is most likely to post political content on
sites like Facebook and Twitter? Do different young adults use these sites similarly or differently? How do such practices compare to posting other types of content such as jokes and celebrity news? This paper draws on unique survey data on a diverse group of young adults’ online experiences to examine whether certain user characteristics influence the types of political and other content people share online. Findings suggest that young adults are using these platforms for the sharing of politically-engaged content in a variety of ways. We also find that sharing practices are not randomly distributed. People’s background traits, online experiences and Internet skills are related to the types of content they share.

ISLAM AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS
Mohammed Ibahrine, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. It is especially popular among young people who are connected to social media platforms. Just like other regions, Muslim majority countries have witnessed a rapid diffusion and adoption of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in recent times. In the Arab world, Facebook is the leading social networking website, with 45,194,452 users. Twitter follows with 2,099,706 users. The Arab region is second to the U.S. when it comes to the number of YouTube daily views. With 90 million video views per day, Saudi Arabia has the world highest number of YouTube views per Internet user. This paper explores the various uses of social media and digital platforms by individuals and organizations for religious purposes. The focus is on the role that digital platforms play in disseminating the Islamic faith among social media adopters worldwide. I will explore how social digital platforms have markedly impacted the social life of Muslims, including their religious practices, their religiosity, their preaching, their issuing of fatwas and their building of virtual communities in the Muslim majority countries or in diasporas.

STANDING ON THE AUSTRALIAN BEACH AT THE EDGE OF MOORE’S LAW: SOCIAL MEDIA IN PEACE EDUCATION
Mike Horsley (and Matt Eliot), Central Queensland University, Australia

This presentation poses many questions in conceptualizing how social media can promote peace education and civic participation, providing some Australian responses and observations to this question from the context of Australian primary and secondary education and education systems generally. The space we explore relates to the ways in which we are adapting and using social media for Australia’s national (school) Harmony Day and for the peace, civic and global citizenship agendas that Australian schooling and curriculum promote and emphasize and teachers believe in. The presentation charts the use of social media for Harmony Day and explicates the use of the imagined peace communities that these uses of social media invoke and create; it reports on the ways in which existing pedagogies and resources have been enhanced by the use of social media to connect schools and communities, thus creating third spaces to promote peace and civic engagement and it also observes the power of social media – the sharing and collaborative knowledge-building in defined education spaces it enables and explores how it can expand these spaces.