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**Religiosity and Techno-spiritual Practices of Young Adult Latter-day
Saints**

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Saints**

by

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this thesis to my mom, who would never write a thesis herself, but who constantly encouraged me to finish my own. Without her motivating phone calls and late-night pep talks throughout the entirety of my academic career, I would never have made it this far in school. Thanks, mom.

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Abstract

Religiosity and Techno-spiritual Practices of Young Adult Latter-day Saints

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This research examines the relationship between the use of communication technologies offered by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the religiosity of its young adult members by studying how young adult Latter-day Saints use the communication technologies offered by the Church, whether those communication technologies support or enhance the faith of those members, and what effects communication technologies have on religious beliefs or behaviors. Online survey results and follow-up interview responses indicate that with the exception of social media, active young adult members are utilizing the religious communication technologies offered by the Church, and they do so primarily to support and enhance their own religiosity. The ease of access to scripture and Church publications facilitates gospel learning and study, and the most common communication technologies used for this purpose are LDS.org, the official website of the Church, and the LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices. An overview of the communication technologies the Church offers is provided, and a discussion of Church direction regarding technology is given.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review	1
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	2
Two Waves of Research	2
Church Websites and Their Users.....	4
The Third Wave of Research	6
Chapter 2: Church Direction and Practice	8
Overview.....	8
The Fourfold Mission of the Church	11
Helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ.....	12
Gathering Israel through missionary work	13
Caring for the Poor and Needy	15
Enabling the Salvation of the Dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances.....	16
Praise and Caution	19
Chapter 3: Methodology	24
Research Questions	24
Overview of Method.....	24
Survey and Interview Design.....	25
Survey Questions	26
Interview Questions	27
Human Subject Interaction	28
Target Audience.....	28
Procedures for the recruitment of participants.....	28
Procedure for obtaining informed consent.....	29

Research protocol.....	30
Chapter 4: Results and Analysis	31
Overview	31
Survey	31
Religious and Spiritual Uses.....	31
<i>Religious and Spiritual Uses</i>	32
Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS	33
<i>Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS</i>	34
<i>Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS</i>	34
Direct Research Questions	36
<i>Direct Research Questions</i>	37
Demographics	38
<i>Demographics</i>	38
Follow-up Interview.....	39
What communication technologies of the Church do you use? How often do you use them, and what do you use them for?	40
<i>Communication Technologies, Comparison of Results</i>	41
Most Popular Communication Technologies.....	41
Social Media	43
Other Church Websites	45
Are there any other communication technologies from the Church you use?	46
Do you find that using these communication technologies is supportive of your faith?	47
Do you think there are any negative effects on your faith with the use of these communication technologies?	49
Digital vs. Physical Study	49
Challenges to Religious Authority.....	50
Do you think the Church should do more or less with communication technologies to reach out to people?	51

Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	54
Findings.....	54
Future Research	55
Appendices.....	56
Appendix 1: General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	57
Appendix 2: General Auxiliaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	58
Appendix 3: Websites	59
Appendix 4: Social Media	60
Appendix 5: Mobile Applications.....	62
Appendix 6: First Survey	64
Appendix 7: Second Survey.....	67
Appendix 8: Follow-up Interview.....	68
Appendix 9: Modified Follow-up Interview.....	69
Appendix 10: Recruitment Message.....	70
Appendix 11: Consent for Survey Participation	71
Appendix 12: Consent for Follow-up Interview Participation	72
Appendix 13: Survey Results.....	73
<i>Religious and Spiritual Uses</i>	73
<i>Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS</i>	74
<i>Direct Research Questions</i>	74
<i>Demographics</i>	75
<i>Opt In to Follow-up Interview</i>	75
Appendix 14: Follow-up Interview Results, Question 1	76
References.....	78

List of Tables

Table 1: Religious and Spiritual Uses. This table reports the percentages, in descending order, of young Latter-day Saints who have used technology for these purposes.	32
Table 2: Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS Community. Responses to each question are given as the number and percentage, respectively, of participants who selected each answer.	34
Table 3: Table 3: Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS Communication Technologies. Responses to each selection are given as the number and percentage, respectively and in descending order, of participants who selected them.....	34
Table 4: Direct Research Questions. Responses to each question are given as the number and percentage, respectively, of participants who selected each answer.	37
Table 5: Demographics. Responses to each question are given as the number and percentage, respectively, of participants who selected each answer.	38
Table 6: Communication Technologies, Comparison of Survey and Interview Results. This table displays the popularity of Church communication technologies by percentage of participants in the online survey and follow-up interview, respectively, who reported using them.	41

List of Figures

Figure 1: How People Watched or Listened to October 2012 General Conference (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, <i>Infographic: Mormon Leaders Speak</i>).....	10
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

National Public Radio recently chronicled the increase of religious “nones” in America, or those who identify as atheist, agnostic and “nothing in particular” (Glenn, 2013). The series, “Losing Our Religion,” focused on the youth of America and cites 2012 Pew research data, which shows that young adults are falling away from organized religion in large numbers (Glenn, 2013). While one in five adults has no religious affiliation, the number for young adults is higher: one in three adults under the age of 30 has no religious affiliation (The Pew Forum, 2012). Although young adults are increasingly leaving organized religion in general, however, young adults in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintain higher activity rates than any other Christian denomination, second to historically black churches. Compared to all other religious traditions that The Pew Forum surveyed, only Muslim young adults have a higher activity rate (Age Distribution of Religious Traditions, 2012).

In light of this decrease in religious affiliation and because young adults are typically seen as “tech-savvy,” the young adult population is a significant group to study within the similarly “tech-savvy” Mormon Church, which develops and publishes dozens of websites, social media profiles, and mobile applications. Young adults are largely the generation that has grown up hearing Church leaders speak about the benefits and warnings of technology. How, then, are these new communication technologies perceived by young adult members of the Church, and do they affect the religiosity of this demographic? This research examines these questions by more specifically studying how young adult Latter-day Saints use the communication technologies offered by the

Church, whether those communication technologies support or enhance the faith of young adult members, and what effects communication technologies have on religious beliefs or behaviors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two Waves of Research

In the mid-1990s, religion and the Internet became a topic of academic study. The idea of the Internet and its uses was still quite novel, and researchers speculated on the possibilities for religion and spirituality in this new medium. In “Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks,” Stephen D. O’Leary (1996) raised questions about how religious beliefs and practices might be mediated by new technologies. He was interested in the implications of moving religion from a real-world, physical space to an online, virtual space. Jeffrey Zaleski (1997) echoed O’Leary’s work, commenting on virtual religious rituals and online communities of followers in *The Soul of Cyberspace: How Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives*. Other research in this area of study followed suit; it generally concerned, as O’Leary put it, “the evolution of religion in what some choose to call the ‘postmodern’ age” (p. 783).

Morten T. Højsgaard and Margit Warburg (2005) describe this period of study as the first wave of research on religion and cyberspace. In this first wave, “computers and the Internet could (and probably would) do almost anything. The Internet could create new religions existing only in cyberspace” (p. 8–9). The implication was that people would use the Internet to experience and perform religion online; the outlook was optimistic and nearly boundless.

Half a decade later, however, it was clear that people still largely practiced religion offline. Although the Internet was used for religious purposes, such as connecting with communities of followers or finding scripture and organizational information, it was generally not used as a virtual space where practitioners could participate in worship services. Findings at the Association for Computing Machinery's Human-Computer Interaction Conference in 2000 confirmed this. In a special interest group session entitled "Can We Have Spiritual Experiences Online?" the presenters concluded that we can, though it is not much different than the ways in which people already do:

Nearly all of us described our spiritual and religious experiences in terms of text, and most of us referred quite clearly to communications with other people. Despite the spectacular technologies that many of us use or create daily, it appears that the spiritually significant parts of our online lives continue to be, in a sense, traditional. (Muller, Christiansen, Nardi, & Dray, 2001, 82–83)

Research, then, moved from speculation to documentation and discussions of "the varying relationships between religion and cyberspace with special reference to the different religious usages of the Net such as mailing lists, message boards, and news groups" (Højsgaard & Warburg, 2005 p. 6). Højsgaard and Warburg called this shift in research the second wave. Indeed, their contribution to the study of religion and the Internet is situated in this second wave. Of their publication, *Religion and Cyberspace*, Højsgaard and Warburg state:

An important aim of this book is to document and discuss what kind of knowledge we *actually* have about the religious usage of the Internet. The far-reaching consequences predicted in the first wave will probably not all come true. However, now that the phenomenon of religious communication *in* cyberspace, *on* the Internet, or *through* computer-mediated communication systems has been with us for some years, new insight should be gained by researching the subject again. (p. 2)

Religion and Cyberspace—in addition to Jeffrey K. Hadden and Douglas E. Cowan’s earlier publication, *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises* (2000)—form the bulk of the second-wave research. The construction of religious identities and virtual communities are examined (Dawson, 2000; Lövheim & Linderman, 2005), and challenges to religious authority and control are described (Mayer, 2000; Barker, 2005). Three other important articles published during the second wave come from The Pew Internet & American Life Project, which reported on how congregations and leaders build and use their websites (Larsen, 2000) and how Americans pursue religion online (Larsen, 2001; Hoover, Clark & Rainie, 2004).

Church Websites and Their Users

Of particular relevance to this thesis, however, is how followers of various faith traditions use religious resources online and what their motives are for doing so. For her part, Sara Horsfall (2000) conducted a preliminary inquiry on how five specific religious groups use the Internet. The groups studied included The Roman Catholic Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Church of Scientology, The Unification Church, and Falun Gong, and Horsfall examined both official and unofficial websites for each group. Although she found differences in the official and unofficial Internet presences of each group, she also saw several similarities. Information sharing—including publication of religious texts and materials, study aids, genealogy records (in the case of the Latter-day Saints), and material available for sale—was common to all of the groups. Also common to all were various forms of external communication, including evangelical outreach, publicity and public relations, and directories, and contact information. Additionally, legitimization was an important function of external

communication; according to Horsfall, “groups have a chance to ‘set the record straight’ through the use of the Internet in a way that they cannot do elsewhere.” Even with the mere presence of a “sophisticated, extensive, and interesting” website, Horsfall explains, “the group’s existence can be legitimated in virtual space in a way that it never would be otherwise” (p. 175). Finally, each of the religious groups utilized internal communication for various purposes, including official dissemination of material (policy, directives, and doctrine), discussion groups, published testimonies, educational material for children, and directories and contact information.

In another study, Ken Bedell (2000) focused his research on how and why people use the Internet for religious purposes. After disseminating a questionnaire to nearly 600 mainline Protestants, he stated four conclusions:

1. People eagerly adopt Internet solutions to communication problems of religious interest.
2. People expect to find information about religious topics on the Internet.
3. People expect the Internet to play an important role in religious life in the future, and they have very specific ideas about ways the Internet should be used by religion.
4. There is no widespread use of the Internet to form new religious communities or to support new spiritual practices. (p. 201–202)

Finally, a study conducted by Michael J. Laney (2005) explicitly explores the motives and desires of religious website users. Laney surveyed nearly one thousand Christian web users to investigate what they thought about religious websites and what they “got” out of visiting them. He concluded that there appears to be “a relationship between seeking reinforcement for personal motives and desires and Christian website usage.” Additionally, Laney found that a key motive of the Christian Web users who responded to his survey “appears to be the value of the power of information coupled with the anonymity that the Internet provides, as well as the community of faith that

cyberspace potentially embraces.” “These users,” he states, “are motivated to actively select their choices of Christian websites and state that they intend to tell others about what they have experienced online” (p. 178).

The Third Wave of Research

Højsgaard and Warburg predicted that “because of its chaotic and complex development,” the study of religion and the Internet would continuously be an interdisciplinary one (p. 9). As such, they thought the topic was perhaps maturing into a third wave of research. Nearly a decade has passed, however, since the publication of *Religion and Cyberspace*, however, and not much additional research has been published—certainly not at the rate that Højsgaard and Warburg had hoped for. A search for “religion and the Internet” or “religion and technology” on a university’s library site or in Google Scholar largely returns results from the second wave of research, which ended around 2006 with Genevieve Bell’s “No More SMS from Jesus: Ubicomp, Religion and Techno-spiritual Practices.” Susan P. Wyche et al. (Wyche, 2008; Wyche, Arteaga, Caine, Grinter, & Davison, 2008) spent some time at the Georgia Institute of Technology designing technology that supported techno-spiritual practices, and there have been other academic articles published once in a while, but the rich field of study that the second wave of research seemed to promise did not seem to be fully realized.

In particular, Forrest A. Doddington (2007) notes that there is limited research in understanding the correlations between a user’s religious background and beliefs and his or her usage patterns (p. 2). He argues, “A complete and accurate analysis of how the Internet is being used and how it is changing our society cannot be constructed without sufficient research into religious use of the medium” (p. 4).

Armfield and Holbert (2003) also recognized the lack of research in the effects of technology on religiosity and vice versa. In “The Relationship Between Religiosity and Internet Use,” they note that although there have been some exploratory studies on how and why individuals use religious Web sites, few studies have examined media effects on religious beliefs or behaviors (p. 131, 135). Horsfall, Bedell, and Laney began to uncover the hows and whys, but now, their studies are largely outdated. Research, then, on this topic should provide more insight into the relationship between religion and techno-spiritual practices. Put another way, it may be useful to ask, “How are religious groups utilizing communication technologies, and are their users finding them useful?”

Chapter 2: Church Direction and Practice

OVERVIEW

For her book *Mormons on the Internet: 2000–2001*, Lauramaery Gold interviewed Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles¹ of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with questions about the circumstances of the Church’s decision to create a Web site. The Church had published a site in 1996—about two years after the Internet boom—but at the time, it consisted of just one page with an image of Christ and a message that read:

Information concerning The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will appear on this home page at some time in the future.

When the home page is online, members of the Church and others will find official information regarding the Church, its doctrines, organization, and policies. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996)

“Why isn’t the Church’s Web site bigger than it is?” Gold asked Elder Holland (2000, p. 30). The apostle replied that the Church was making a modest, appropriate beginning:

¹ The general leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is comprised of general authorities and general auxiliaries. The general authorities include the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Presidency of the Seventy, the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. The general auxiliaries include the presidencies of the Relief Society, the Young Men, the Young Women, the Primary, and the Sunday School.

In order to capture what the general leadership of the Church has been regarding technology, I have quoted only general authorities and auxiliaries. For an official description of the organization of the Church, visit “Organization of the Church of Jesus Christ” (<http://www.lds.org/topics/church-organization?lang=eng>). For a current list of some of the general authorities and general auxiliaries—many of which I quote in this paper—see *Appendix 1: General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* and *Appendix 2: General Auxiliaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

We have not been casual, but we've approached it with caution and a sort of measured step. We're putting on line what seems of interest. As that world unfolds, we'll be making comparable developments. We just haven't had much incentive to put a whole host of things on line that wouldn't be of interest and wouldn't be of much help to people. But yes, you can expect to see more information in the future for the benefit of the members. If I use the word "research," that might be overstating it at present. But people will want to have more basic Church reference materials, and eventually they'll be able to find many of them there. (p. 31)

Little more than a decade has passed since that interview, but in that time, the Church's Web presence has grown to include six web sites, a YouTube Channel, an official Twitter feed, dozens of Facebook pages, a Google+ newsroom page, and a gospel library application for smartphones.

Perhaps one of the most popular and well-known LDS technologies, even outside of the Church and its members is FamilySearch, the largest genealogy organization in the world. The Church launched the site in May 1999; today, there are about 85,000 visitors per month (FamilySearch International, 2012).

Another popular Church site, which has received recognition and success in the marketing industry, is Mormon.org. This site features the well-known "I'm a Mormon" videos and profiles. The site welcome non-Mormons to explore these videos and profiles and offers a space where Mormons can create their own profiles and link to them from various social media sites, such as Facebook and Blogger.

Additionally, a review of the number of people who use the Internet to tune into the Church's biannual General Conference continues to rise, indicating that the church that started with a modest technological beginning has become an extremely tech-savvy organization. During the October 2012 General Conference, for example, there were 269,000 instances of live video streams of the conference online and nearly 93,000 total mobile connections. Following the event, the Church uploaded 102,000 audio and video

THE FOURFOLD MISSION OF THE CHURCH

With a presence in nearly every corner of the digital world, one might wonder how The Church determines what material to publish. In his interview with Gold in 2000, Elder Holland responded to that question:

We decided early on that we would begin with materials in two general divisions, divisions that were actually not unrelated. One would be a media guide of sorts, directed at journalists and newsmakers, people who wanted to know about the Church and wanted an easy, convenient way to find that information. We put up resource materials that would be of general use to them—basic policy statements, basic facts about the Church.

The other somewhat-related general division was material to serve the nonmember, investigators who didn't know about us, people who were inquiring. We wanted them to have accurate information. We were aware that there was a lot of inaccurate information being put out by others. We wanted to share our own story with inquiring people not of our faith who were interested in the Church. Those were the two general guidelines that established what we did first. (p. 29)

Those objectives—to offer basic facts about the Church and share general information to the non-Mormon—may have been the starting point for the Church's online presence, but it is obvious with sites such as FamilySearch.org and specific sub-pages on LDS.org (e.g., General Conference), The Church has expanded their goals for the technologies they develop and publish. Not only are these technologies directed toward people unfamiliar with the faith, they are directed to people who practice it as well.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints administers the gospel of Jesus Christ with one specific purpose: “to assist in [God's] work to bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of His children” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Overview of the New Handbooks*). On this doctrinal foundation rest four key responsibilities:

1. Helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Gathering Israel through missionary work.
3. Caring for the poor and needy.
4. Enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Overview of the New Handbooks*)

This fourfold mission is reflected in The Church's application of technology and in the guidelines given for the general use and approach to technology.

Helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ

Dieter F. Uchtdorf (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2008), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said that The Church Web sites can be used for “inspiration, help, and learning.” General Authority Kevin R. Duncan (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Our Very Survival*) explained that although members of The Church can use the Internet to find a wealth of information on any number of topics, they should “search out answers to [. . .] problems and questions by investigating what the Lord has revealed through His prophets,” and they can do precisely that by accessing the resources The Church has published online. Besides increasing their own knowledge and testimonies of the gospel, though, Church members are encouraged to strengthen others as well. Henry B. Eyring (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Help Them Aim High*), First Counselor in the First Presidency, stated that technology can be used as a means of communicating positive messages: “[N]ew communication technologies allow sharing messages of faith and hope across the miles that separate us, instantaneously and at little or no cost.” Speaking specifically to the young men of The Church, Adrián Ochoa, Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency, said the Internet, social media, and other technologies are tools the Lord extends to young men of The Church to help them “exercise [their]

priesthood duties and extend the influence of truth and virtue” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Aaronic Priesthood: Arise and Use the Power of God*).

Although Mormons and non-Mormons alike can access any one of the multiple Web sites the Church offers, LDS.org is mainly directed at members. It provides messages from Church leaders, resources for studying and preparing Sunday school lessons, full-text scriptures with footnotes, Church magazines, and a meetinghouse finder, among many other things. Additionally, much of this content is found in the mobile applications published by the Church. Scriptures, General Conference addresses, Sunday school manuals, hymnbooks, and Bible videos are just some of the resources members can use to help them learn and live the gospel.

Gathering Israel through missionary work

Just as Church members are encouraged to strengthen other members by sharing positive messages, they are also encouraged to share such messages with those who are not Mormon. In particular, they are directed to share the gospel. In 2001, the Church published a Web site specifically for this purpose. Soon after its publication, Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church, spoke of how members could use this technology to share the gospel:

The Church has just announced another way to share the gospel, worldwide, on the Internet. In its potential, this new initiative is as exciting as the publishing of written tracts in the 19th century and our use of radio, television, and film in the 20th. The Church has activated a new Internet site to which we may refer persons interested in obtaining information about the Church and its doctrine and how they can find a place to worship with us. Its address is www.mormon.org. For missionaries, the value and use of this new resource will emerge with experience. For members of the Church, it will help us answer the questions of friends directly or by referring them to the site. It will also allow us to send our friends electronic greeting cards that include gospel messages and invitations. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001, *Sharing the Gospel*)

Since that time, Mormon.org has been updated several times and new resources have been added to the site, but its intended goal as a missionary tool has remained the same. The “About Us” page clearly states this goal:

This site is meant to introduce our Church to the world. Through these pages we hope to answer your questions, give accurate information, and provide ways to learn more. The "Our People" page introduces its readers to Mormons who tell their own stories about how the Gospel of Jesus Christ has blessed their lives. "Our Values" highlights some of the cultural priorities of Mormons, such as strong families, service and good citizenship. And we present the core doctrines that underpin our beliefs in the "Our Faith" section. We hope this site will be a good beginning to your investigation of our faith, furthered by contact with the missionaries and visits to our Church services. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013, *About Us*)

In the last few years, “Our People” has been particularly emphasized. Along with the “I’m a Mormon” campaign, which highlights various Mormons throughout the world, members are encouraged by Church leaders to create their own profiles on the site. In 2010, Russell M. Nelson, another member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, suggested ways for members to use Mormon.org and specifically focused on creating profiles:

Now in this day of the Internet, there are new and exciting ways you can do missionary work. You can invite friends and neighbors to visit the new mormon.org Web site. If you have blogs and online social networks, you could link your sites to mormon.org. And there you can create your own personal profile. Each profile includes an expression of belief, an experience, and a testimony. Because this is a new feature, most of these profiles are available in English. Profiles in other languages will follow. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Be Thou an Example of the Believers*)

He continued to say that the profiles “can have a profound influence for good,” citing a specific example of a young man in Louisiana who was baptized because of a television ad for Mormon.org and the profiles of Church members published there.

In the most recent General Conference, Apostle Neil L. Andersen suggested that Church members use more technologies than just Mormon.org to do missionary work. Instead he said, “Let’s make sharing our faith online more a part of our daily life. LDS.org, Mormon.org, Facebook, Twitter—all provide opportunities” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013, *It’s a Miracle*).

Caring for the Poor and Needy

Most Christians strive to care for the poor and needy, as Jesus taught; Latter-day Saints are no different. Church leaders continually emphasize the importance of charity. Service, in fact, is a commandment (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011, *The Essence of Discipleship*). Although there have been numerous speeches on this topic during General Conference, there is only one instance in which a Church leader specifically recommended the use of a Church technology to help members follow the commandment to serve. In 2011, Dieter F. Uchtdorf told members to “take advantage of the Internet website providentliving.org” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011, *Providing in the Lord’s Way*).

Providentliving.org connects Church members to information about local service opportunities and worldwide humanitarian efforts. It also provides local Church leaders with a variety of resources they may need when helping members of their congregations.

The site, however, is not only an information repository for Church members who want to help others; it is also a place for anyone who seeks help. On the site, Mormons and non-Mormons alike can find information about employment opportunities, finances, food storage, emergency preparedness, gardening, physical health, and education.

Additionally, providentliving.org is an online space for the Church to publish information about its humanitarian efforts and philanthropic donations.

Enabling the Salvation of the Dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances

Latter-day Saints believe the family is central to God's plan of salvation and exaltation (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995). As such, members of the Church are commanded to learn about their deceased ancestors. They are also commanded to perform ordinances, such as baptism and confirmation, vicariously, if their ancestors died without having the opportunity to perform the ordinances themselves. This work is brought to pass through family history research. Until the age of computers, personal family history was painstakingly recorded on paper and saved in heavy legal-sized books. As early as the late 1930s, however, the genealogical arm of the Church, Genealogical Society of Utah (or FamilySearch), began to transfer genealogical records to microfilm. In 1998, it then began digitizing records, and in 1999, the Church opened FamilySearch.org to the public.

In regard to family history, then, the Church has always been in favor of using technology to assist in research. Family history could perhaps even be regarded as the priority for the Church's application of digital advancement. While the Church only published a single page as its official website in 1996, it published FamilySearch.org only three years later and surpassed 1.5 billion hits by the end of its first six months. Again, while LDS.org was slowly expanded in 2000, plans were already being made to re-design FamilySearch.org.

In 2001, James E. Faust, then a member of the First Presidency of the Church, said concerning the online genealogical tool, "At great expense and effort the Church is now the custodian of the greatest treasure of family records in the world. The Church now has 660 million names on the FamilySearch Internet Web site. These records are freely shared with anyone who wishes to research them" (The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, 2001, *Born Again*). Two years later, he spoke of FamilySearch.org again:

If you have access to a computer, you can put your computer skills to work and log on to the Church's FamilySearch.org Web site. Family history has become a sophisticated activity where computers provide immense resources for your search. You can easily access a vast collection of family history records using the Internet on your home computer or at your nearest family history center. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003)

After the re-designed FamilySearch.org was published in the late 2000s, Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about the importance of family history research and of the new technology that makes such research easy:

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead." New technology makes it easier than ever to fulfill that responsibility. Temple and family history work is now facilitated by a system known as the "new FamilySearch." This Internet-based system helps members identify their ancestors, determine what ordinance work needs to be done for them, and prepare their names for the temple. It can be accessed from home, a family history center, or wherever the Internet is available. The steps are easy to follow. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Generations Linked in Love*)

In that same speech, Nelson specifically directs the youth of the Church to help older generations work with computers. Many Church leaders have echoed this encouragement when speaking to the youth. In 2011, Apostle David A. Bednar in particular addressed the youth and young people of the Church:

The Lord has made available in our day remarkable resources that enable you to learn about and love this work that is sparked by the Spirit of Elijah. For example, FamilySearch is a collection of records, resources, and services easily accessible with personal computers and a variety of handheld devices, designed to help people discover and document their family history. These resources also are available in the family history centers located in many of our Church buildings throughout the world.

It is no coincidence that FamilySearch and other tools have come forth at a time when young people are so familiar with a wide range of information and communication technologies. Your fingers have been trained to text and tweet to accelerate and advance the work of the Lord—not just to communicate quickly with your friends. The skills and aptitude evident among many young people today are a preparation to contribute to the work of salvation. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011, *The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn*)

In his message, Bednar added weight to encouragement by referencing the Spirit of Elijah. This concept provides a means of translating specific uses of technology into spiritually efficacious actions in a specific area of faith, such as the commandment to research family history. Indeed, Latter-day Saints believe the Spirit of Elijah is largely what guides family history and genealogical work. Russell M. Nelson defines the Spirit of Elijah as “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family.” He explains it is that spirit which causes “people throughout the world, regardless of religious affiliation [to gather] records of deceased relatives at an ever-increasing rate” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998). Again, Bednar echoed this sentiment, saying, “This distinctive influence of the Holy Ghost draws people to identify, document, and cherish their ancestors—both past and present” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011, *The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn*). The Church and its members, then, view technological advancement as something that is inspired by God to fulfill his purposes, one of which is to help families learn about and feel connected to their ancestors. Seen in this light, the transfer of genealogical records to microfilm in the 1930s, for example, was not a surprising development in Church record-keeping, nor was it an accident that helped establish the Church as a tech-savvy organization. Rather, it was an instance of inspiration—the beginning of using Internet technology for holy purposes.

In addition to guidance about online genealogical tools themselves, the Church has devoted space on LDS.org to help its members learn how to use the tools. One section is intended for use by anyone wishing to use FamilySearch.org and includes information on why family history is so important. A second section of the website is specifically designed for the youth of the Church. It includes testimonials from youth about their experiences in family history research and explains how easy it is to use FamilySearch.org.

PRAISE AND CAUTION

In my approach to the review of Church literature regarding technology, I searched all General Conference and Church Educational System addresses archived on LDS.org, citing only those addresses given by general authorities and auxiliaries of the Church. These addresses contain both support and criticism regarding the value of technology to the church.

On several occasions, Thomas S. Monson, President of The Church, has enthusiastically expressed gratitude for living in a world where advanced technology abounds. Just one example comes from his welcome address of the October 2009 General Conference:

How grateful I am for the age in which we live—an age of such advanced technology that we are able to address you across the world. As the General Authorities and auxiliary leaders stand here in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, our voices will be reaching you by various means, including radio, television, satellite transmission, and the Internet. Although we will be speaking to you in English, you will be hearing us in some 92 languages. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009)

Indeed, technology and its uses are praised by many Church leaders. Many express extremely positive sentiments with regard to technology. Again, Dieter F.

Uchtdorf, said the Church Web sites could be used for “inspiration, help, and learning” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2008). In the April 2012 General Conference, Ann Dibb, Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency encouraged young women to “spend time on the Church’s official website, LDS.org, to find answers” to questions (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Arise and Shine Forth*). In that same conference, Adrián Ochoa, Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency, said “the Internet, social media, and other technologies are tools the Lord has placed in [young men’s] hands to help them exercise [their] priesthood duties and extend the influence of truth and virtue” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Aaronic Priesthood: Arise and Use the Power of God*). Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, also remarked during that conference that technology can be used as a means of communicating positive messages and connecting with loved ones. “[N]ew communication technologies,” he said, “allow sharing messages of faith and hope across the miles that separate us, instantaneously and at little or no cost” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Help Them Aim High*).

Such messages and the uses of technology highlighted in the previous section are high praise for technology and its applications. They especially seem to help Church members live the gospel of Jesus Christ by increasing their knowledge and bringing them closer to friends and family.

In that same General Conference, however, there were several Church leaders who expressed caution for technology. Dieter F. Uchtdorf warned against using the Internet too often to connect with people:

In our day it is easy to merely pretend to spend time with others. With the click of a mouse, we can “connect” with thousands of “friends” without ever having to

face a single one of them. Technology can be a wonderful thing, and it is very useful when we cannot be near our loved ones. My wife and I live far away from precious family members; we know how that is. However, I believe that we are not headed in the right direction, individually and as a society, when we connect with family or friends mostly by reposting humorous pictures, forwarding trivial things, or linking our loved ones to sites on the Internet. I suppose there is a place for this kind of activity, but how much time are we willing to spend on it? If we fail to give our best personal self and undivided time to those who are truly important to us, one day we will regret it. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Of Regrets and Resolutions*)

In a similar vein, Mary N. Cook, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, spoke about finding balance when using technology: “With technology you are witnessing an explosion of knowledge. You are constantly bombarded by sound, video, and networking. Be selective and don’t allow this surge of information to distract you or slow your progress” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Seek Learning: You Have a Work to Do*). Walter F. González of the Presidency of the Seventy said, “It is important to take time to be still [. . .] When we do this, we will ‘feel and see’ things that cannot be learned with modern technology” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, *Learning with Our Hearts*).

Perhaps the strongest caution against technology, particularly the Internet, comes from David A. Bednar, in a Church Educational System fireside address delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho in 2009 (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Things as They Really Are*). What Uchtdorf, Cook, and González only touched on in 2012—virtual and real world balance—Bednar expounded in a thirty-five-minute address. He stressed the importance of physical bodies and cautioned against living a virtual reality:

Please be careful of becoming so immersed and engrossed in pixels, texting, earbuds, twittering, online social networking, and potentially addictive uses of media and the Internet that you fail to recognize the importance of your physical

body and miss the richness of person-to-person communication. Beware of digital displays and data in many forms of computer-mediated interaction that can displace the full range of physical capacity and experience. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Things as They Really Are*)

Bednar, however, recognizes the benefits of technology, and he is quick to point them out. He also makes it clear that he is not indicting technology itself:

Brothers and sisters, please understand. I am not suggesting all technology is inherently bad; it is not. Nor am I saying we should not use its many capabilities in appropriate ways to learn, to communicate, to lift and brighten lives, and to build and strengthen the Church; of course we should. But I am raising a warning voice that we should not squander and damage authentic relationships by obsessing over contrived ones. [...] Let me say again: neither technology nor rapid change in or of itself is good or evil; the real challenge is to understand both within the context of the eternal plan of happiness. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Things as They Really Are*)

That seems to be just what the Church is doing—understanding both technology and change in the context of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While leaders express concern and caution over the negative and even destructive uses of technology, they also recognize that technology is useful—in strengthening its members, doing missionary work, finding opportunities to serve, and connecting families. Even since the most recent General Conference in April 2013, the Church has published several new websites, released new versions of the LDS Gospel Library mobile application, expanded its broadcast coverage of General Conference, and created Facebook pages for all twelve apostles.

How are such technologies perceived by members of the faith? What is the relationship between Latter-day Saints and the techno-spiritual applications the Church is developing? In particular, how are the youth and young adult members of the Church utilizing these technologies? They are largely the generation that has grown up hearing

Church leaders speak about the benefits and warnings of technology. Again, how are they using the technological offerings of the Church? And are they finding them useful?

Chapter 3: Methodology

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are young adult Latter-day Saints using the communication technologies offered by the Church?
2. Do these communication technologies support or enhance the faith of young adult members?
3. What, if any, are the effects of communication technologies on the religious beliefs or behaviors of young adult members?

OVERVIEW OF METHOD

This ethnographic study was designed in two parts: two surveys and a follow-up interview. (See *Appendix 6: First Survey*, *Appendix 7: Second Survey*, and *Appendix 8: Follow-Up Interview*.) The surveys were administered online via SurveyMonkey.com. At the end of the first survey, the participant was directed to a second survey and asked whether he or she would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview, which was administered via phone. To opt in to the interview, the participant provided an e-mail address as contact information, which I used to schedule the phone interview.

The follow-up interview was semi-structured and further explored the questions from the survey. There were five prepared questions, though some related questions were asked, however, depending on the respondent's answers. For example, if they said they used “The Mormon Channel on YouTube” and “LDS Gospel Library” as Latter-day Saint communication technologies, then a related question might have been whether they felt that either of those technologies enhanced their faith. The goal of the follow-up

interview was to clarify some of the survey questions in a more personal way than the online survey permitted.

Basic descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey data. Analysis of the free-text responses garnered in the follow-up interview was applied using a grounded theory approach, specifically open coding.

SURVEY AND INTERVIEW DESIGN

Bainbridge (2000) concluded that while observational ethnography is useful as a theoretical approach to the study of religion and technology and techno-spiritual practices, “informant ethnography, in the form of Web-based qualitative questionnaires, can provide the material for new measurement scales that can be incorporated in conventional surveys” (p. 75). Although most published books and articles on techno-spiritual practices and religion and technology rely on such observational ethnography—primarily by content analysis of various church websites (Hadden & Cowan, 2000; Mayer, 2000; Sturgill, 2004)—several studies have been based on the results of Web-based surveys, as Bainbridge predicted (Bedell, 2000; Hoover, Clark, & Rainie, 2004; Laney, 2005). One limitation of online surveys, however, is that they capture data from participants who are likely situated in the upper bounds of technology use—those who have access to a computer and stable Internet connection. It is also likely that these early adopters are at the top of what Hadden and Cowan (2000) call the “hierarchy of access” (p.13). In a worldwide church of 15 million (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013, *Facts and Statistics*), it is probable that there are a significant number of young adult members who are not early adopters of every communication technology the Church provides. A survey administered through a Web-based tool, then, is biased toward those members who are early adopters of technology. Because this study

concerns the dimension of technology use, though, and for recruitment purposes, I used a Web-based tool for the survey portion of the study. Consequently, the survey captures responses of participants who are likely to use communication technologies in general, whether for religious purposes or not.

Two researchers utilized informant ethnography more particularly by conducting interviews with participants (Bedell, 2000; Horsfall, 2000). Their results reflected a more detailed and nuanced account of how and why their participants used the Internet for religious purposes. For my study, then, and because I do not intend to discuss techno-spiritual practices from a theoretical perspective, I used both approaches to informant ethnography—Web-based surveys and interviews. From the general questions asked in the online survey, I was able to ask more nuanced questions in the semi-structured follow-up interview.

Ideally, I would conduct a concurrent in-person survey to gather data from Church members in the lower bounds of technology use to uncover any systematic differences in responses. (Specifically, those members in the lower bounds are those who would not access the online survey through the Facebook posting. See *Procedures for the recruitment of the participants.*) Due to limited time, however, I utilized only the online survey and interview for this study.

Survey Questions

I drew heavily on The Pew Internet Report *Faith Online* (Hoover, Clark, & Rainie, 2004) to design the first nine survey questions. These questions were meant to gather basic religious and spiritual usage patterns of participants—what kind of technologies they used and whether they used them for religious purposes. Questions 10–12 garnered similar information but were specific to the Latter-day Saint faith.

Questions 13 and 14 were questions directly related to the purpose of this study and specifically echo a question Michael J. Laney (2005) used in the online survey for his research *Christian Web Usage*. In his survey, he asked participants to agree or disagree with the statement “I am motivated to visit a religious website because this website provides reinforcement and strengthens my spiritual beliefs” (p. 171). Questions 15–18 covered demographics, and question 19 asked whether participants would be willing to participate in the follow-up interview as well. The second survey then asked participants to provide contact information for the follow-up interview. (See *Appendix 6: First Survey* and *Appendix 7: Second Survey*.)

Interview Questions

The five follow-up interview questions were designed to gather specifics about how participants used the various information technologies listed in question 12 of the online survey and again, to directly comment on the purpose of this study—that is, whether they found the Church’s technologies enhanced and were supportive of their faith. One interview question gave them the opportunity to express whether there were any negative effects of using the Church’s technologies, and the final question addressed whether they thought the Church should do anything more or less with their use of technology. These interview questions, of course, were meant as a semi-structure to the larger interview discussion, in which the participant was encouraged to express any opinion whatsoever on the topic of religion and technology, as it related to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (See *Appendix 8: Follow-Up Interview*.)

HUMAN SUBJECT INTERACTION

Target Audience

Because this research examines the relationship between the religiosity of young adult Latter-day Saints and their use of communication technologies, the target audience for this study was the young adult subpopulation of the Church. Based on this target audience, I determined three criteria for inclusion in this study:

1. Membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. 18–31 years of age.²
3. Ability to access and take an online survey.

Sex, ethnic background, and health status were irrelevant to the study, and were not taken into consideration during the analysis of results.

Procedures for the recruitment of participants

Because I, myself, am an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and have been a member of several young single adult congregations,³ I know that most young single adult Latter-day Saint groups in any given geographic location create unofficial Facebook pages. On such pages, they post housing needs, job and service opportunities, and information about upcoming social events. Such groups can include dozens or even hundreds of members.

Participants for this study, then, were recruited from a convenience sample of Latter-day Saint young adults in the Austin, Texas and Atlanta, Georgia areas by e-

² “Young adults” as defined by the Church are men and women between the ages of 18–31 years.

³ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints organizes its wards, or congregations, geographically. Some wards, however, are organized especially for university students or young single adults, ages 18–31. The goal of such wards is to provide opportunities for students and young single adults to meet each other and give them opportunities to teach, lead, and serve.

mailing and posting a recruitment message to the unofficial Latter-day Saint young adult Facebook pages in those areas. (See *Appendix 10: Recruitment Message*.) At the end of the survey, subjects were asked to recruit future subjects from among their friends—utilizing snowball sampling—by e-mailing the study information to them. The aim was to survey and interview as many young adults as possible, with an expectation of 50 participants.

It is important to note that because participants were primarily recruited via Facebook, participation in the study was self-selected and as with the limitation of Web-based surveys, most likely composed of early adopters of technology. This convenience sample means that much stronger claims can be made about the upper bounds of technology use, since the participants sampled are most likely to use technologies or at least be tech-savvy. It is unlikely that technology use in the population as a whole is larger than what is reported by the participants in this study. On the other hand, much weaker claims about lower bounds can be made. Since it is expected that technology use is lower among those not on Facebook or at least among those not connected with someone who uses one of the two Facebook groups where the recruitment message was posted, it is likely that within the lower bounds, technology use is even lower than what is reported by the participants in this study. The study sample is therefore not representative of all Church members. In the discussion below, I will highlight how these limitations affect the claims I make.

Procedure for obtaining informed consent

Participants were asked to give consent, and their participation in the survey or follow-up interview indicated such. (See *Appendix 11: Consent for Survey Participation* and *Appendix 12: Consent for Follow-Up Interview Participation*.) For the survey, the

information about consent was displayed on the first page, before the subject began the survey. They had two options (buttons) to click: “Okay, I understand,” and “No, I do not want to participate in this research.” The first option continued to the list of survey questions, and the second option ended the survey.

Participation in the follow-up interview was also voluntary. At the end of the online survey, participants had the option to participate in the follow-up interview or not.

Research protocol

Participants were asked to complete a 10- to 15-minute online survey (See *Appendix 6: First Survey*.) and a second, 1-minute online survey that allowed them to opt in to the follow-up interview (See *Appendix 7: Second Survey*.). The follow-up interview was conducted via phone and lasted up to 30 minutes. (See *Appendix 8: Follow-Up Interview*.)

There was no set location where the surveys and interview had to be administered. Because the surveys were administered online and were not limited by time constraints, participants completed them virtually anywhere with Internet access and at any time of day. If they opted in to the follow-up interview, they completed the interview anywhere they chose, as long as there was phone access.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

OVERVIEW

A total of 129 people participated in the online survey, though the responses for six participants had to be thrown out, as they said they did not meet the requirements of the study. (Questions 17 and 18: One participant was not a Latter-day Saint, one was younger than the required age range, and four were older.) Although 62 respondents, or about half (50.4%), said they would be willing to participate in the follow-up interview, only 38 respondents actually submitted their contact information. Of the 38 respondents, 18 (47.4%) scheduled and completed the follow-up interview. While the number of follow-up interviews, then, constitutes only 14.6% of the total number of initial survey participants, the open-ended responses provide context for many of the survey questions and indicate areas where more research is needed.

For the complete table of survey results, see *Appendix 13: Survey Results*.

SURVEY

Religious and Spiritual Uses

Compared to the respondents of the Pew Internet survey reported in *Faith Online* (Hoover, Clark, & Rainie, 2004), young Latter-day Saints turn to the Internet more for religious and spiritual purposes. This most likely reflects an increase in Internet usage in general since 2004. It was expected, then, that the percentages for all religious and spiritual uses would increase; this was not the case, however, for one of the stated uses: sending an online greeting card for a religious holiday. All other religious and spiritual use for the Internet and communication technologies has increased. See *Table 1: Religious and Spiritual Uses*.

<i>RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL USES</i>	
Seek information about their own religious tradition	94.3%
Download or watch online videos with religious or spiritual themes	93.4%
Seek information online about the religious traditions of others	86.2%
Download or listen to online music with religious or spiritual themes	80.5%
Share information online about their own religious tradition	78.9%
Express personal faith and spirituality	76.4%
Send, receive, or forward e-mail with religious or spiritual content	70.7%
Share information online about the religious traditions of others	31.7%
Send an online greeting card for a religious holiday, such as Christmas or Easter	25.2%

Table 1: Religious and Spiritual Uses. This table reports the percentages, in descending order, of young Latter-day Saints who have used technology for these purposes.

Of particular note is the percentage of participants who use the Internet to seek information online about the religious traditions of others. While the percentage of participants who seek information about their own religious tradition is higher, it is higher only by 8.1%. In fact, seeking information about the religious traditions of others is the third most-common reason for using the Internet. *Sharing* this information, however, is not as common. While only 31.7% of participants reported sharing information online about the religious traditions of others, more than twice that amount of participants (78.9%) shared information about their own faith. This result could indicate what Hoover, Clark, and Rainie (2004) found in *Faith Online*: Most of the online faithful seek information about the religious faith of others out of curiosity (p. ii). In a follow-up question about the motives of respondents who sought information about others, 51% said they did so “just to find out about others’ beliefs,” 13% said it was “for [their] own spiritual or religious growth,” and 31% said it was for both of those reasons (Hoover, Clark, & Rainie, 2003).

Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS

In her research, Lauramaery Gold (2000) found that Latter-day Saints largely turned to the Internet to connect with others of their faith. The Latter-day Saints she interviewed described sixteen uses for the Internet, half of which were social: to participate in a community, to share the gospel, to renew friendships, to make new friends, to discuss ideas, to keep in touch, and to better understand other members (p. 11–23).

I wanted to find out whether this sense of community held true for young adult Latter-day Saints today; see *Table 2: Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS, Community*. Question 10 of the survey indicates that this demographic does feel a sense of community with other Latter-day Saints and sees communication technologies as a way to connect with them. They also use communication technologies to connect to the larger community of non-Mormons as well, though the percentage of participants who indicated this is 31.7% less. Taken with Question 6 (“Do you use the Internet to share information online about your own religious tradition?”), which 78.9% of respondents responded positively to, this question warrants further study. Perhaps rather than think of online sharing of information as missionary work, young adult Latter-day Saints prefer to think of it as just that—sharing. In this way, they may not be explicitly inviting others to accept their religious tradition; instead, they are putting into practice what Apostle Neil L. Andersen suggested: “Let’s make sharing our faith online more a part of our daily life. LDS.org, Mormon.org, Facebook, Twitter—all provide opportunities” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013, *It’s a Miracle*).

<i>RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL USES SPECIFIC TO LDS</i>		
10. Do you use communication technologies to connect to other Latter-day Saints?		
Yes	111	90.2%
No	12	9.8%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
11. Do you use communication technologies for missionary purposes?		
Yes	72	58.5%
No	50	40.7%
Prefer not to respond	1	0.8%

Table 2: Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS Community. Responses to each question are given as the number and percentage, respectively, of participants who selected each answer.

Question 12 of the survey indicates which of the major Church communication technologies are predominantly used; see *Table 3: Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS Communication Technologies*. (For a complete list of technologies offered by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, see *Appendix 3: Websites*, *Appendix 4: Social Media*, and *Appendix 5: Mobile Applications*.) The Church does not require the use of these technologies in order for its members to participate in any church service, so the numbers indicated for Question 12 reflect completely voluntary use.

<i>RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL USES SPECIFIC TO LDS</i>		
LDS.org	118	99.1%
LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices	94	79%
The Mormon Channel on YouTube	86	72.3%
Mormon.org	79	66.4%
FamilySearch.org	69	58%
MormonNewsroom.org	52	43.7%
The LDS Church on Facebook	38	31.9%
The LDS Church on Twitter	20	16.8%
LDS Newsroom on Google+	6	5%

Table 3: Table 3: Religious and Spiritual Uses Specific to LDS Communication Technologies. Responses to each selection are given as the number and percentage, respectively and in descending order, of participants who selected them.

Of the nine listed communication technologies offered by the Church, the most commonly used is LDS.org, the official website of the Church. This is not surprising, as the site contains the faith's entire scriptural canon, every General Conference address since 1971, an archive of all Church print publications, a church locator, videos and other media, and links to download mobile applications. Nearly any piece of information about the Church—its history, doctrine, or organization—can be found on LDS.org, and the site features a robust search feature that utilizes the power of Google Search (West, 2013). What is more surprising is the popularity of the LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices, which ranks second to the use of LDS.org. The mobile application features much of the same gospel content as the official website, including scriptures, general conference talks, manuals, music, and media. Although the use of mobile applications is not unexpected in today's world of smartphone ubiquity, it is remarkable that young adults are using their phones to access tools, resources, and information about their faith. It is likely that the other communication technologies listed in Question 12, such as the websites and YouTube channel, are also accessed via mobile device.

Another surprising result from Question 12 was the minor usage of social media sites. Although the Church's Facebook pages are used a fair amount (31.9%), they are still used much less than the main websites and the application for mobile devices. The Church's pages on Twitter and Google+ are used even less than the Facebook pages (16.8% and 5%, respectively). These figures likely represent the upper bounds of technology usage. That is, usage of the Church's Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ pages is unlikely to be higher than 53.7%, but it may be lower.

Finally, considering the strict command that Latter-day Saints have regarding family history research, I expected more than 58% of participants to indicate use of FamilySearch.org. Of all the uses of technology that the general authorities mention,

family history work is the most direct. This work is considered essential to salvation, and FamilySearch.org was explicitly developed to help members accomplish it. In a 2010 General Conference, Elder Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said:

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead.” New technology makes it easier than ever to fulfill that responsibility. Temple and family history work is now facilitated by a system known as the “new FamilySearch.” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Generations Linked in Love*)

In light of Nelson’s conference address, which he gave more than two years ago, it seems that FamilySearch.org would be used by much more than half of the survey respondents. A re-designed FamilySearch.org was launched in April 2013, however; perhaps young adult Church members are not yet familiar with the new site or do not even know it has an updated design. They may also view family history as primarily an activity of older members of the Church. Further research or possible usability studies of the website could uncover why the percentage of use is not much higher than half.

Direct Research Questions

With this research, I attempted to discover which of the many communication technologies offered by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are being used by its young adult members. The overarching research question, however, was whether these technologies had any effect on the practice of one’s faith. Question 13 of the survey addressed this question directly, and Question 14 addressed this question in regard to communication technologies in a general religious context. See *Table 4: Direct Research Questions*.

<i>DIRECT RESEARCH QUESTIONS</i>		
13. Do you feel that using the LDS Church’s official communication technologies enhance your faith?		
Yes	98	79.7%
No	23	18.7%
Prefer not to respond	2	1.6%
14. Do you feel that using communication technologies in a religious context in general enhances your faith?		
Yes	89	74.2%
No	28	23.3%
Prefer not to respond	3	2.5%

Table 4: Direct Research Questions. Responses to each question are given as the number and percentage, respectively, of participants who selected each answer.

Although 79.7% of participants feel that using the LDS Church’s official communication technologies enhances their faith, 74.2% of participants feel that communication technologies in a religious context in general enhance their faith as well. There does not, then, appear to be much of a difference between the effect of official Church communication technologies and communication technologies in general. The high positive response to these two questions, however, validates one of the implications from Question 12; that is, young adults are using their computers and mobile devices to access tools, resources, and information about their faith.

At least 18% of participants feel that neither general nor LDS-specific communication technologies enhances their faith, though the percentage for LDS-specific communication technologies was slightly lower at 18.7% (as compared to 23.3%). A small percentage of participants preferred not to respond to Questions 13 and 14 (1.6% and 2.5%, respectively). Although 15 of the 19 questions on the first survey included the option “prefer not to respond,” Questions 13 and 14 had the highest percentage of non-response (a total of 4.1%), which may mean that this question was confusing or that the answer was more complex than a “yes” or “no” answer would indicate.

These direct research questions were discussed in more depth in the follow-up interviews.

Demographics

Questions 15–18 of the survey concerned the demographic information of the participants. Besides being used to determine eligibility for the study, the demographic questions were included to determine the activity level of the participants and the priority they place on religion. See *Table 5: Demographics*.

<i>DEMOGRAPHICS</i>		
15. How often do you attend Sunday church services?		
Three or four times a month	114	92.7%
Two times a month	2	1.6%
Once a month	2	1.6%
A few times a year	1	0.8%
Seldom	0	0%
Never	4	3.3%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
16. How important is religion in your life?		
Very important	107	87%
Somewhat important	11	8.9%
Not too important	1	0.8%
Not at all important	4	3.3%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
17. This survey is intended to examine the responses of young adults aged 18–31. Do you fit into this age range?		
Yes, I fall within that age range.	123	100%
18. Are you a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?		
Yes	123	100%

Table 5: Demographics. Responses to each question are given as the number and percentage, respectively, of participants who selected each answer.

Of the 129 people who initially participated in the survey, the responses of six participants had to be thrown out. One was not a Latter-day Saint, one was younger than

the required age range, and four were older. Of the 123 participants who met the requirements for participation, the majority attended Sunday church services three to four times a month. 87% reported that religion was very important in their lives, and 8.9% reported that it was somewhat important.

The number of participants who never attended Sunday church services and for which religion was not at all important was unexpected (both were 4 participants, or 3.3%). This suggests that even though some participants may not be active in the practice of their faith and may not even consider their faith to be important, they still consider themselves as Latter-day Saints. Indeed, one of the participants who I spoke with for the follow-up interview mentioned that he was no longer an active member of the faith, though he still considered himself a Mormon. Further research about the uses and effects of communication technologies in regard to this demographic may prove to be a rich topic of study.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

Of the 123 people who participated in the initial survey, 18 people (14.6%) scheduled and completed the follow-up interview. Their open-ended responses provide context for many of the survey questions and indicate areas for further research.

A t-test comparison of the interview participants' survey responses and the overall survey responses would determine whether the interview participants are representative of the 123 initial survey participants, but because approval by the University of Texas Institutional Review Board required anonymity of survey respondents, a second survey (See *Appendix 7: Second Survey*.) was used to gather contact information for those who opted into the follow-up interview. Consequently, no identifying information connected the interview participants to their survey responses, and no t-test comparisons could be

made. There is some consistency between the online survey results and the interview responses, however, that may indicate trends in the use of communication technologies among young adult Latter-day Saints.

After I conducted the first interview, it became clear that I needed to modify the question wording and order. Scheduling 30-minute interviews proved to be extremely difficult, and because there were several days or even weeks between the online survey and the time available for a participant to complete the follow-up interview, a refresher needed to be given. The order for the interview questions (See *Appendix 8: Follow-up Interview.*) were consequently changed to remind the participant what the study was about and what kind of communication technologies the Latter-day Saint Church publishes. As an additional refresher, the list of communication technologies from Survey Question 12 was given. The modified question order can be found in *Appendix 9: Modified Follow-up Interview.*

The responses for the follow-up interview are reported below, with each section corresponding to one question from the modified interview.

What communication technologies of the Church do you use? How often do you use them, and what do you use them for?

This question gauged which communication technologies young Latter-day Saints commonly use, how often they use them, and what they typically use them for. For the complete table of results, see *Appendix 14: Follow-up Interview Results, Question 1.* With some variation, the results were similar to those found in Question 12 of the online survey, in which participants were asked to check which Church communication technologies they use. See *Table 6: Communication Technologies, Comparison of Survey and Interview Results.*

<i>COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES, COMPARISON OF RESULTS</i>			
Online Survey		Follow-up Interview	
LDS.org	99.2%	LDS.org	94.5%
LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices	79%	LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices	88.9%
The Mormon Channel	72.3%	MormonNewsroom.org	61.1%
Mormon.org	66.4%	The Mormon Channel	50%
FamilySearch.org	58%	FamilySearch.org	38.9%
MormonNewsroom.org	43.7%	Mormon.org	33.3%
The LDS Church on Facebook	31.9%	The LDS Church on Facebook	27.8%
The LDS Church on Twitter	16.8%	The LDS Church on Twitter	22.2%
LDS Newsroom on Google+	5%	LDS Newsroom on Google+	5.6%

Table 6: Communication Technologies, Comparison of Survey and Interview Results. This table displays the popularity of Church communication technologies by percentage of participants in the online survey and follow-up interview, respectively, who reported using them.

Interview participants reported using the various technologies anywhere from daily, weekly, and monthly to occasionally, rarely, and never. To calculate the percentage of use in *Table 6: Communication Technologies, Comparison of Survey and Interview Results*, I used the number of participants who reported using these technologies daily, weekly, monthly, and occasionally. (See *Appendix 14: Follow-up Interview Results, Question 1.*) Again, although there is some variation in the reported use of these technologies, there are a couple of remarkable similarities: 1) The two most commonly used technologies are the official website of the Church, LDS.org, and the LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices, and 2) the least commonly used technologies are the Church’s social media pages.

Most Popular Communication Technologies

Regarding LDS.org, nearly 80% of participants reported that they used this communication technology weekly or monthly. Among the common uses listed were

talk⁴ and lesson preparation for Sundays, reading or listening to General Conference addresses, accessing local church websites for directory information, locating meetinghouses and temples, and linking to other LDS websites, such as MormonNewsroom.org, The Mormon Channel on YouTube, and LDSJobs.org. Although the LDS.org site contains the Church's entire scriptural canon, participants reported that they do not typically read the scriptures online; instead, they use LDS.org when searching for particular scriptures or cross references to other scriptures and General Conference addresses. The scriptures on LDS.org are used for study, rather than daily reading.

While LDS.org is used by more participants, the LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices was reported to be used more frequently than LDS.org. The LDS Gospel Library was used only 5.56% less than LDS.org, but over 80% of participants reported utilizing this technology on a daily or weekly basis. Most participants seemed especially excited when talking about the LDS Gospel Library as well. With many of the other technologies, they often paused and thought a moment about the last time they had used that particular technology, but when talking about the LDS Gospel Library, there was rarely hesitation in the response. "I love it," one person immediately said; "I use it *all* the time." "All the time" was a common expression. The participants who responded this way typically use their mobile device for their daily scripture reading. They also use it to access hymns during church services, listen to music or "Mormon Messages" on The Mormon Channel, download lesson manuals to follow along in Sunday School, and listen to General Conference addresses or scriptures while they are doing other things, such as

⁴ In addition to the clergy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members of each congregation speak on Sundays. The bishop or his counselors ask members to speak on specific gospel topics or on a topic of their choice. These orations are not called "sermons" in the LDS Church; they are typically referred to as "talks."

driving, getting ready for the day, or—as one participant remarked—baking. Many participants use the LDS Gospel Library while they are traveling or when they go to church, so they do not have to “carry around a big book.” They also use it to complement their scripture study. Several participants mentioned that when reading their physical copy of scripture, they kept their mobile device on hand to look up other scriptures or articles. A Finnish participant said he used his mobile device when translating for the many international visitors who attend his local congregation.

Because this convenience sample is likely composed of early adopters of technology, use of LDS.org and LDS Gospel Library is likely higher than it would be among the Latter-day Saint population as a whole. Still, among young adults, who are generally tech-savvy compared to other age groups, these high percentages indicate that young adults are utilizing at least two of the Church’s main technologies to enhance the practice of their faith.

Social Media

Despite the multitude of social media pages published by the Church, which include 40 Facebook pages, 10 Twitter pages, and 37 Google+ channels, social media use by the young adults who participated in this study was lower than all other communication technologies. 72.2% never looked at any of the official Church Facebook pages, 77.8% never followed the Church on Twitter, and 94.4% did not subscribe to the Google+ channels. Of the small percentage of participants who reported following the Church through these social media outlets, all but one participant viewed the pages or clicked on the Facebook links only occasionally.

Many participants did not know whether they were subscribed to any official Church Facebook or Twitter page. One participant said, “Um, I think I’ve liked some of

the pages, but I never visit them. I don't really visit pages on Facebook. If it comes up on my newsfeed and it seems interesting, then I'll click on it. But that's it. Sometimes I'll post a video or a quote by a Church leader." Another participant said he had questions about authenticity and Facebook; "I subscribe to President Monson [on Facebook]," he said, "because I'm fairly certain it's him."

A few participants mentioned that using social media to discuss their faith feels impersonal and pushy. In a church that sends tens of thousands of members on full-time missions⁵ each year (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013, *Facts and Statistics*) and strongly encourages its members to speak about the gospel of Christ to their non-Mormon friends, this topic was unexpected. One participant said, "I don't want to use Facebook and social media for missionary work; I get annoyed when people push their agenda on social media." Another participant, who served a full-time mission, said she uses social media and other Church communication technologies for personal use only:

I'm not big on using social media for missionary work. I know we're supposed to, but I do it in my own way, not overtly. I feel like you can't really tailor a message on social media, and you don't get to control your tone. Most of my friends are Mormon, anyway. Instead of promoting the good word through social media, I think it's useful to just make people aware of what's out there.

She continued to say that using social media for missionary work feels like marketing, and it takes away from a personal connection or conversation you could

⁵ Latter-day Saints believe they have a responsibility to share the gospel message to those who are not Latter-day Saints. Many members leave their homes and families to share the gospel message full-time. Single men between the ages of 18 and 25, single women over the age of 19, or retired couples can serve full-time missions. Single men serve for two years, single women serve for 18 months, and retired couples serve for varying lengths of time (usually a year).

otherwise have with someone in person. “People are more open in person,” she said; “You can find common ground in person that you can tie in to the gospel.”

Again, because this convenience sample is likely composed of early adopters of technology, use of social media sites is likely higher than it would be among the general Latter-day Saint population. It is expected, then, that use of the Church’s social media tools is even lower than what is reported by the participants in this study, especially among those in the lower bounds of technology use.

Other Church Websites

The Church websites that fell into the middle range of usage (about 30–60%) include MormonNewsroom.org, The Mormon Channel, FamilySearch.org, and Mormon.org. Participants generally reported that The Mormon Channel is most often accessed via LDS.org or the LDS Gospel Library on a mobile device and is commonly used to watch “Mormon Messages” and General Conference addresses. Mormon.org is a site that participants use when they want to find information about how to answer questions about their faith from non-Mormons. They also use it to find and watch “I’m a Mormon” videos.

About 60% of participants said they visit MormonNewsroom.org to read Church news headlines and official Church statements. For them, the Mormon Newsroom—more than any other Church site—was the source for official and trustworthy information about the Church’s position on policy, current events, and controversial social issues.

Finally, FamilySearch.org is used only by only 38.9% of participants, and only about 11% of participants reported using it regularly. Although it is not required to use FamilySearch.org to research family history, the Church has put significant resources into this technology since the late 1990s, and again, considering the strict command that

Latter-day Saints do family history research, 11% of regular young adult users is quite low. I asked participants why they did not use the website regularly. “Counterintuitive,” “kind of clunky,” and “frustrating,” were all words and phrases used to describe the site. One Asian participant said, “It’s not helpful for my family specifically. It would be awesome if [the Church] would upload Asian records.”

On the other hand, two participants mentioned that it is not FamilySearch.org that is difficult to use; rather, it is family history itself. One participant put it this way: “The subject is overwhelming to me—not so much the website.” Another said, “Census records are sort of confusing, but I don’t know if that’s the site or the records themselves.” One of the participants who uses FamilySearch.org regularly said she likes some of the features included in the recent re-design, such as uploading photos. “This has helped my family to be more involved in family history,” she said. She also does not expect FamilySearch.org to be extremely similar to Ancestry.com, another popular online resource for genealogical work. “I don’t treat Ancestry.com as a comparable resource,” she said; “They have different records and record collections.” This participant did have one complaint about FamilySearch.org; she said, “It makes me feel like I’m a kindergartner. The old [design] was mature-looking.”

These conflicting accounts indicate that further research should be conducted to understand the demographic that uses FamilySearch.org and ensure the site is usable and user-friendly.

Are there any other communication technologies from the Church you use?

Seven participants (38.9%) reported that they also use LDS Tools, a mobile application that includes local ward and stake⁶ directory information and events calendar.

⁶ Local congregations are called wards (or branches for smaller congregations) and are organized geographically. A group of wards and branches comprise a stake; stakes are also organized geographically.

One participant said he uses it to look up addresses or phone numbers while he is “out and about.” Another participant said, “[LDS Tools] is very nice because you don’t have to ask for people’s address or number all the time—or their kid’s name.”

Do you find that using these communication technologies is supportive of your faith?

Every interview participant reported that using the Church’s communication technologies is positive. 72.2% gave a clear “yes,” and 27.8% qualified their answer. These responses were similar to those gathered from Question 14 of the survey, with 74.2% of participants responding “yes” and 23.3% responding “no.”

In both groups, most participants mentioned ease of access to gospel resources as being the key reason their faith was supported or enhanced by communication technologies, especially on a mobile device. A person can essentially carry scripture around with them all day. One participant said he uses these technologies to get a “spiritual feeling during the day,” by accessing a General Conference address, for example. Another said the ease of access “gives [her] the resources to maintain good habits [she] already has.” In response to this question, another participant said, “Absolutely. It just permeates the things that I do. My phone is ingrained in my life, and part of my life is my faith. Everything’s so convenient on my phone.” During the 18 follow-up interviews, one participant wanted to make it clear that he was no longer an active member of the Church. “But,” he said, “in terms of accessibility, [communication technologies] were helpful and probably faith-promoting.”

Not only do these technologies offer easy accessibility and convenience, they allow people to effectively study gospel topics and gain knowledge that enhances their faith. One participant said he studies with both his physical copy of scripture and his laptop. Sometimes he comes across a scripture and thinks, “What on earth does this

mean?” He uses his laptop to look up articles, lesson manuals, and scripture cross-references to get clarification or more understanding, and he thinks, “Oh, this is what that means.” Another participant said he “would miss things, if it wasn’t for the technology.” For him, communication technologies provide better access to Church materials that would otherwise be difficult to find in their physical formats. Yet another participant said that with communication technologies, his knowledge of Church material is better, and his study has been aided. He cites MormonNewsroom.org specifically as increasing his understanding of Church orthodoxy, by publishing official announcements from the Church. He also said, “Sometimes it’s through social media that I discover things.” Finally, one participant said communication technologies “allow [members] to address things that take more than three hours⁷ to discuss.”

Of the 27.8% of participants who qualified their answer, all but one said they would still have a testimony of their faith regardless of religious communication technologies. One participant said, “Are communication technologies supportive of my faith? Absolutely. But in terms of enhancing or building faith—not exactly. I would have a testimony,⁸ anyway.” Another said, “I use these tools for the purpose of study, not for enhancing or gaining faith.” One participant qualified his response in a different way; he was specific about which communication technologies were supportive of his faith. Websites and mobile applications were; Facebook and social media were not.

Whether they were in the group that immediately answered “yes” to this question or the group that qualified their answer, all of the participants reported that communication technologies offered by the Church are ultimately positive. The

⁷ For Latter-day Saints, regular Sunday church services are three hours long and include sacrament meeting, Sunday School, and other meetings.

⁸ Latter-day Saints use “testimony” or “having a testimony” to express that they have a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe it to be true.

overarching tone of the responses was that communication technologies allow young adults to access some part of their religious tradition nearly anytime and anywhere. If the numbers of young adults who have no religious affiliation are increasing (The Pew Forum, 2012) and they are losing their religion, as the NPR piece reported (Glenn, 2013), then The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is using technology in a way that at least makes religion easier for those young adults to access. This may be part of the key to retention, for any religious tradition.

Do you think there are any negative effects on your faith with the use of these communication technologies?

Although there were a few participants who responded with a clear “no” to this question, most participants did not directly answer it. Instead, they generally commented on the negative effects of communication technologies and the Internet in a broad sense. This perhaps speaks to the difficulty of people expressing issues with their faith (especially to another member of their faith) and ascribing any particular reason to what is ultimately a very complex situation. Two common themes did emerge, however: the problems of studying in a digital environment and the challenges to religious authority.

Digital vs. Physical Study

Despite using communication technologies to read and study scriptures and other Church materials, participants discussed the potential problems with using digital resources for study. Fourteen participants (77.8%) indicated that studying exclusively in a digital environment is problematic for a multitude of reasons. Two participants simply think there is an inherent value in reading from a book. One said, “I believe in physical books. They are powerful, more personal, and my notes are embedded in them.” The affordance of note-taking and turning pages is something several other participants

commented on. There is a notes feature in the Church's online scriptures, but according to one participant, this feature is unreliable, at least on mobile devices. Several participants said they liked being able to see their notes and markings in their physical set of scriptures. One participant remarked that he has "better spatial awareness" with a hard copy, and another said he likes knowing how much reading he has left. Another participant said, "You can't flip through online text."

A few participants think communication technologies can make people lazy about gospel learning. One participant said, "[Communication technologies] handicap you. Sometimes you need technology to help you remember or to make an argument; reading scriptures in physical copy helps my memory." Another participant mentioned something similar. She said gospel study in a digital environment "can be a little cavalier." "Instead of *knowing* something," she said, "you just look it up." A few other participants echoed these thoughts, with one saying that reading from a physical set of scriptures requires extra effort and focus and "shows commitment."

Finally, one participant said that although he sometimes uses his smart phone to study his scriptures and his desktop to do "something really research-y," he continues to use his physical set of scriptures if he knows he is reading chronologically or in large chunks. Reading in a digital environment, he said, "can feed into a culture of limited attention span and instant gratification."

Challenges to Religious Authority

Challenges to religious authority and control, especially regarding new religious movements, are discussed in detail by Jean-Francois Mayer (2000) and Eileen Barker (2005) and are beyond the scope of this research, but it is worth noting that they exist for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that young adult members recognize

it as a negative effect of communication technologies in general. These challenges, they said, usually come in the form of oppositional information online. Using the Internet, especially, can lead people in search of information about the Church to material that challenges Church doctrine and principles. “Many of the top hits are ‘anti’ material,” said one participant. To counter such inaccurate information, one participant thinks the Church needs to develop a better online persona. “The messages [online] are good,” he said, “but not necessarily good for people who are questioning. Letting the opposition define your policy is problematic.” A few participants offered suggestions regarding such challenges, and they are included in the following section.

Do you think the Church should do more or less with communication technologies to reach out to people?

Most of the 18 participants for the follow-up interview had much to say regarding the Church’s use of communication technologies. Five participants lauded the Church, saying it makes a conscious effort to be tech-savvy. One participant said it was difficult to find information about other churches, but that was not the case with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Another participant said, “[The Church] does a really great job. I’m always impressed. They’re always on the edge of [technology]. They’re warm, but professional.” She also said that the Church’s communication technologies are good for people who are not so tech-savvy. Another said, “They got off to a pretty slow start to embrace technology, but then it’s like a light bulb went off, and they started developing really user-friendly and robust products.”

Some participants were not positive and said the exact opposite. They had complaints about the speed with which the Church develops communication technologies and about the user experience of such technologies. One participant said, “The Church isn’t super forward in adopting technology,” and another said, “They could do a better

job of supporting [their products] across platforms, such as Java and Linux.” Another participant said she knows the Church is “trying to stay on top of current technology,” but it is problematic because “the decision-makers are her parents’ ages.” She wants the Church to “get younger people to be in charge.” Whether or not this is the case, it is the perception of at least some Latter-day Saints. They want the Church to develop new technological tools and resources without hesitation and to improve the user experience of the current technologies.

Five participants want the Church to be proactive about confirming or denying oppositional information found on the Internet. (See previous section, *Challenges to Religious Authority*.) One participant said, “A lot of members of the Church can’t talk about [controversial or problematic topics]; they don’t know how to address these things.” While this observation speaks more about a culture or discourse of faith rather than technology use, he and the other four participants who discussed this topic believe that online discussions about oppositional information would raise the Church’s public image and help members understand their own religion better. One participant said, “Every member will at some point encounter ‘anti’ stuff. The Church should discuss it more via the Internet.” He suggested the Church publish an online forum, where people could address legitimate concerns and leaders would weigh in on those concerns. Another participant suggested that the Church be proactive about publishing correct information across various communication technology platforms, which would improve search engine optimization and consequently boost search results for official Church content, rather than oppositional material. Another said, “Intellectual hunger in the Church is not being fulfilled.” He recommended the Church produce “smarter” stories on

The Mormon Channel or highlight “older stuff,” such as old Brigham Young University devotionals.⁹

Several participants proposed specific tools and ways the Church could reach out to people. Among the suggestions were pass-along cards¹⁰ with Quick Response Codes, which could point non-Mormons to specific videos to watch; more Asian records on FamilySearch.org; a mobile application that reminds people to read their scriptures every day; an improved note-taking application that would synchronize across multiple devices; and temple schedules that could be integrated into Google Calendar. Additionally, one participant said she would like to see a Latter-day Saint perspective represented on communication technologies offered by other organizations as well, such as The Huffington Post religion blog. Finally, one participant from Finland wanted to see more Church website content translated into Finnish. He specifically mentioned Mormon Newsroom articles.

⁹ Beginning in 1952, Brigham Young University began inviting Latter-day Saint prophets, apostles, university presidents, professors, and distinguished guests to address students on a variety of spiritual and educational topics. The devotionals are held weekly.

¹⁰ Pass-along cards are provided by the Church for members to use as a missionary tool. They have a picture on one side and a toll-free contact number on the other, with an invitation to call and receive a free gift from the Church, such as a video or a book. The cards are about the size of standard business cards.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

FINDINGS

The results of this study provide insight into the relationship between religiosity of young adult Latter-day Saints and the use of communication technologies offered by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The results indicate that with the exception of social media, active young adult members are utilizing the multitude of religious communication technologies offered by the Church, and they do so primarily to support and enhance their own religiosity. The ease of access to scripture and nearly any Church publication facilitates gospel learning and study, and the most common communication technologies used for this purpose are LDS.org, the official website of the Church, and the LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices.

The results also indicate that young adult Latter-day Saints do not generally use communication technologies for missionary purposes, caring for the poor and needy, or family history, which comprise three of the four responsibilities of the Church and its members (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010, *Overview of the New Handbooks*). Rather, they use communication technologies to fulfill only one of those responsibilities: to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Communication technologies help them live the gospel by again, providing easy access to Church materials, and by helping them establish or maintain good habits of faith-promoting study. Communication technologies also provide young adult members with opportunities of study and inspiration throughout the day, which helps to support and enhance their religiosity.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on this study's limitations regarding the lower-bound claims of technology use, one avenue for future research is to conduct in-person surveys to uncover any systematic differences between that data and the online survey responses.

The results indicate that usability studies of the various communication technologies referenced in this study would prove useful for Church research and development. The user experience of FamilySearch.org and the note-taking feature on LDS.org and the LDS Gospel Library, in particular, would benefit from user testing. Additionally, because young adults use their mobile devices to access many Church websites—especially LDS.org—user testing of these sites on mobile devices is another item for further research.

Finally, another area for future research is to conduct the online survey and follow-up interview with a larger sample—one that includes young adult Latter-day Saints who live outside of the United States. It would also be beneficial to extend this research to a broader population within the Church, such as youth, adults, or inactive members, to discover whether there are any trends in the use of communication technologies across multiple demographics.

Appendices

Appendix 1: General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

First Presidency



Henry B.
Eyring

First Counselor



Thomas S.
Monson

President



Dieter F.
Uchtdorf

Second Counselor

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Boyd K.
Packer



L. Tom
Perry



Russell M.
Nelson



Dallin H.
Oaks



M. Russell
Ballard



Richard G.
Scott



Robert D.
Hales



Jeffrey R.
Holland



David A.
Bednar



Quentin L.
Cook



D. Todd
Christofferson



Neil L.
Andersen

Presidency of the Seventy



Ronald A.
Rasband



L. Whitney
Clayton



Donald L.
Hallstrom



Tad R.
Callister



Richard J.
Maynes



Craig C.
Christensen



Ulisses
Soares

Appendix 2: General Auxiliaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Relief Society General Presidency



Carole M. Stephens
First Counselor



Linda K. Burton
Relief Society General President



Linda S. Reeves
Second Counselor

Sunday School General Presidency



Brother David M. McConkie
First Counselor



Brother Russell T. Osguthorpe
Sunday School General President



Brother Matthew O. Richardson
Second Counselor

Young Women General Presidency



Sister Carol F. McConkie
First Counselor



Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson
Young Women General President



Sister Neill F. Marriott
Second Counselor

Young Men General Presidency



Brother Larry M. Gibson
First Counselor



Brother David L. Beck
Young Men General President



Brother Randall L. Ridd
Second Counselor

Primary General Presidency



Sister Jean A. Stevens
First Counselor



Sister Rosemary M. Wixom
Primary General President



Sister Cheryl A. Esplin
Second Counselor

Appendix 3: Websites

LDS.org	Mainly directed to members of the Church, presenting messages from Church leaders, Web groups for local congregations and providing resources for those studying the gospel or preparing lessons.
Mormon.org	This site is meant to introduce our Church to the world. Through these pages we hope to answer your questions, give accurate information, and provide ways to learn more. The "Our People" page introduces its readers to Mormons who tell their own stories about how the Gospel of Jesus Christ has blessed their lives. "Our Values" highlights some of the cultural priorities of Mormons, such as strong families, service and good citizenship. And we present the core doctrines that underpin our beliefs in the "Our Faith" section. We hope this site will be a good beginning to your investigation of our faith, furthered by contact with the missionaries and visits to our Church services.
Mormon Newsroom.org	The official news source for news media, opinion leaders and the public. Provides news stories and statistical information regarding the Church.
FamilySearch.org	FamilySearch is a nonprofit family history organization dedicated to connecting families across generations. It is the largest genealogy organization in the world, providing records and services for anyone interested in family history research.
The Mormon Channel	The Mormon Channel is the media channel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The channel originates from Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, and broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Content for the station comes from the vast archives of the Church, along with several new series created specifically for this station. The Mormon Channel also features great programming from various partner organizations.

Appendix 4: Social Media

Facebook	<p>The Church has found many ways to use the resources of Facebook to spread the message of the Restoration, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Posting embedded videos from LDS.org and related sites like• Sharing scripture passages and quotations from General Authorities.• Announcing news updates.• Broadcasting meeting reminders.• Pointing users to particular resources on Church websites.• Gathering user-generated ideas for upcoming Church products.• Providing building hours and exhibit details for Church libraries and museums. <p>There are 25 Facebook pages devoted to Church organizations, magazines, and services. There are 15 Facebook pages for the general authorities of the Church, including the First Presidency; these pages are maintained by the Church on the general authorities' behalf. For a complete list of all official Facebook pages, see http://www.lds.org/media-library/accessing-media-facebook?lang=eng.</p>
Twitter	<p>New uses for Twitter that the Church is exploring include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing scripture passages and general conference talks.• Using hashtags (pound symbols used to mark keywords or topics) such as #family or #religion to share content with nonmembers.• Monitoring hashtags such as #lds or #mormon to gather data on community interests.• Conducting quick surveys of followers' opinions.• Sharing succinct ideas about how to share the gospel, improve one's scripture study, and the like.• Finding social media influencers in specific areas of the world. <p>There are 10 official Church Twitter accounts. For a complete list of all official Twitter accounts, see http://www.lds.org/media-</p>

	library/accessing-media-twitter?lang=eng .
Google+	22 official Church Google+ channels provide information about the Church. Seven channels are devoted to Church organizations, magazines, and services. 15 channels are for the general authorities of the Church, including the First Presidency; these pages are maintained by the Church on the general authorities' behalf. For a complete list of all official Google+ channels, see http://www.lds.org/media-library/google-plus?lang=eng .
Podcasts/RSS Feeds	Inspirational daily quotations, news articles, and content posted to Church websites are available as RSS feeds. Podcasts such as general conference sessions, CES firesides, and many others are also available. There are 60 audio, video, RSS, and e-mail podcasts and feeds. For a complete list, see http://www.lds.org/media-library/accessing-media-podcasts-rss-feeds?lang=eng .

Appendix 5: Mobile Applications

Gospel Library	Study, search, mark, and share gospel content, including scriptures, general conference talks, manuals, music, media, and more.
LDS Tools	Download directory information and the events calendar for your ward, branch, stake, or district. Bishoprics, branch presidencies, and stake and district presidencies, as well as clerks and executive secretaries, can also download additional membership data and reports for their units.
Mormon Channel	Listen to the Mormon Channel, the Church's 24-hour-a-day audio station featuring gospel-oriented programs, music, and interviews, as well as scriptures, general conference, and Church magazines.
Bible Videos	Read about Jesus and His teachings, explore biblical environments, watch scripture-based videos and photo slideshows, and discover interesting facts about biblical accounts.
Book of Mormon	Learn for yourself or invite others to discover how and why this sacred book has brought millions of people to Jesus Christ.
LDS Music	Browse and search the <i>Hymns</i> and <i>Children's Songbook</i> , view the words and sheet music, and listen to hymns and songs.
LDS Youth	Get the latest content from youth.lds.org on your Apple mobile devices.
Scripture Mastery	This app will help you memorize scripture mastery verses as well as the Articles of Faith.
Ensign	Browse a tablet edition of the November 2011 <i>Ensign</i> . In addition

to downloading and studying the magazine please complete the survey on the contents page to help us evaluate potential future editions.

Appendix 6: First Survey

1. Do you ever download or listen to online music with religious or spiritual themes?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Prefer not to respond

2. Do you ever download or watch online videos with religious or spiritual themes?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Prefer not to respond

3. Do you ever send an online greeting card for a religious holiday, such as Christmas or Easter?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Prefer not to respond

4. Do you ever send, receive, or forward e-mail with religious or spiritual content?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Prefer not to respond

5. Do you use the Internet to seek information about your own religious tradition?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Prefer not to respond

6. Do you use the Internet to share information online about your own religious tradition?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Prefer not to respond

7. Do you use the Internet to seek information online about the religious traditions of others?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Prefer not to respond

8. Do you use the Internet to share information online about the religious traditions of others?
 - A. Yes

- B.** No
 - C.** Prefer not to respond

- 9. Do you use communication technologies to express your personal faith and spirituality?
 - A.** Yes
 - B.** No
 - C.** Prefer not to respond

- 10. Do you use communication technologies to connect to other Latter-day Saints?
 - A.** Yes
 - B.** No
 - C.** Prefer not to respond

- 11. Do you use communication technologies for missionary purposes?
 - A.** Yes
 - B.** No
 - C.** Prefer not to respond

- 12. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints administers several communication technologies. Do you use any of the following? Please check all that apply.
 - A.** LDS.org
 - B.** Mormon.org
 - C.** MormonNewsroom.org
 - D.** FamilySearch.org
 - E.** The Mormon Channel on YouTube (This includes five channels: Mormon Messages, Mormon Messages for Youth, LDS Public Affairs, FamilySearch, and Mormon.org.)
 - F.** The LDS Church on Facebook (or any one of their 22 Facebook pages)
 - G.** The LDS Church on Twitter
 - H.** LDS Newsroom on Google+
 - I.** LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices

- 13. Do you feel that using The LDS Church's official communication technologies enhances your faith?
 - A.** Yes
 - B.** No
 - C.** Prefer not to respond

- 14. Do you feel that using communication technologies in a religious context in general enhances your faith?
 - A.** Yes
 - B.** No
 - C.** Prefer not to respond

15. How often do you attend Sunday church services?
 - A. Three or four times a month
 - B. Two times a month
 - C. Once a month
 - D. A few times a year
 - E. Seldom
 - F. Never
 - G. Prefer not to respond

16. How important is religion in your life?
 - A. Very important
 - B. Somewhat important
 - C. Not too important
 - D. Not at all important
 - E. Prefer not to respond

17. This survey is intended to examine the responses of young adults aged 18–31. Do you fall into this age range?
 - A. Yes, I fall within that age range.
 - B. No, I am younger.
 - C. No, I am older.

18. Are you a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

19. Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up interview to explore these questions further? The interview will be conducted by telephone and will be no longer than 30 minutes. There are no known risks for participating. Initial contact information will only be used temporarily to set up the interview, and no identifying information about you will be retained.
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

20. Thank you. Please click below to provide an e-mail address, so the researcher can contact you to schedule and conduct the follow-up interview.
[link to second survey on SurveyMonkey.com]

Appendix 7: Second Survey

1. Please enter your e-mail address below so the researcher can contact you to schedule and conduct the follow-up interview.

Appendix 8: Follow-up Interview

1. Do you find that using communication technologies, such as those in the survey are supportive of your faith?
2. Which specific communication technologies, if any, enhance your faith? (e.g., LDS.org, The Mormon Channel on YouTube, LDS Gospel Library, etc.)
3. When and how do you use these specific communication technologies?
4. Do you think there are any negative effects on your faith with the use of communication technologies?
5. Do you think the Church should do more or less with communication technologies to reach out to people?

Appendix 9: Modified Follow-up Interview

1. I'm going to list some Church communication technologies, and I want you to tell me whether you use those particular technologies, how often you use them, and how you use them.

LDS.org

Mormon.org

MormonNewsroom.org

FamilySearch.org

The Mormon Channel on YouTube

The LDS Church or any of its official pages on Facebook

The LDS Church or any of its official pages on Twitter

LDS Newsroom on Google+

LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices

2. Are there any other communication technologies from the Church you use?
3. Do you find that using these communication technologies is supportive of your faith?
4. Do you think there are any negative effects on your faith with the use of these communication technologies?
5. Do you think the Church should do more or less with communication technologies to reach out to people?

Appendix 10: Recruitment Message

Assist in Research by Completing a Survey

Please take a 15-minute survey regarding your use of technologies offered by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You will not be compensated, but this research will be helpful in examining the interactions between technology use and faith, if there are any. You must be ages 18–31 to participate in the survey. You can access the survey by going to the following URL: [link to survey on SurveyMonkey.com]. Invite your LDS young adult friends to take it, too! Thank you!

(This study has been processed by the Office of Research Support at The University of Texas at Austin, and the study number is 2013-02-0093. If you have any questions about the study, contact researcher Sara Snow at 770-301-3287 or send an e-mail to sawasnow@gmail.com.)

Appendix 11: Consent for Survey Participation

Overview

This research, Religiosity and Techno-spiritual Practices of Young Adult Latter-day Saints, will provide an overview of the information and communication technologies The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers and determining whether its young adult members (ages 18–31) find these technologies helpful in the practice of their faith. It will examine technological effects on religious beliefs or behaviors at the individual level, if there are any.

During this survey, you will answer a set of demographic questions and questions regarding your use of the technologies the Church offers its members. No personal information will be requested, and all data will be destroyed at the close of the study.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes of your time, and you will not be compensated.

Participants in this study must be 18 or older.

Risks/Benefits/Confidentiality of Data

There are no known risks. There will be no costs for participating, nor will you personally benefit from participating. No personal or identifying information about you will be retained, unless you consent to a follow-up interview, which will be conducted by telephone; in this case, however, any contact information will be used only temporarily for scheduling purposes. A limited number of researchers will have access to the data, and the data will be stored on the principle investigator's password-protected computer.

Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas in anyway. If you do not want to participate, simply stop participating by closing the survey.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the study, contact researcher Sara Snow at 770-301-3287 or send an e-mail to sawasnow@gmail.com. This study has been reviewed by The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2013-02-0093.

Questions about your rights as a research participant

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Your participation in this survey indicates that you received information about the study and have given your consent to participate.

Thank you.

Appendix 12: Consent for Follow-up Interview Participation

Overview

This research, Religiosity and Techno-spiritual Practices of Young Adult Latter-day Saints, will provide an overview of the information and communication technologies The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers and determining whether its members find these technologies helpful in the practice of their faith. It will examine technological effects on religious beliefs or behaviors at the individual level, if there are any.

During this interview, you will answer questions regarding your use of the technologies the Church offers its members. These questions are follow-up questions to the survey you completed on the same topic. The researcher will record your answers during the interview by taking notes and may ask you to clarify statements you make. All data collected will be destroyed at the end of the study.

This interview will take approximately 30 minutes of your time, and you will not be compensated.

Risks/Benefits/Confidentiality of Data

There are no known risks. There will be no costs for participating, nor will you personally benefit from participating. No identifying information about you will be retained after the interview, and a limited number of researchers will have access to the data. All data collected during the interview will be stored on the principle investigator's password-protected computer and will be destroyed at the close of the study.

Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas in anyway. If you do not want to participate, simply stop participating by closing the survey.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the study, contact researcher Sara Snow at 770-301-3287 or send an e-mail to sawasnow@gmail.com. This study has been reviewed by The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2013-02-0093.

Questions about your rights as a research participant

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Your participation in this interview indicates that you received information about the study and have given your consent to participate.

Thank you.

Appendix 13: Survey Results

Question and Answer Choices	Responses	
<i>RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL USES</i>		
1. Do you ever download or listen to online music with religious or spiritual themes?		
Yes	99	80.5%
No	24	19.5%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
2. Do you ever download or watch online videos with religious or spiritual themes?		
Yes	113	93.4%
No	8	6.6%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
3. Do you ever send an online greeting card for a religious holiday, such as Christmas or Easter?		
Yes	31	25.2%
No	91	74%
Prefer not to respond	1	0.8%
4. Do you ever send, receive, or forward e-mail with religious or spiritual content?		
Yes	87	70.7%
No	36	29.3%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
5. Do you use the Internet to seek information about your own religious tradition?		
Yes	115	94.3%
No	7	5.7%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
6. Do you use the Internet to share information online about your own religious tradition?		
Yes	97	78.9%
No	26	21.1%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
7. Do you use the Internet to seek information online about the religious traditions of others?		
Yes	106	86.2%
No	16	13%
Prefer not to respond	1	0.8%
8. Do you use the Internet to share information online about the religious traditions of others?		

Yes	39	31.7%
No	84	68.3%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
9. Do you use communication technologies to express your personal faith and spirituality?		
Yes	94	76.4%
No	29	23.6%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
<i>RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL USES SPECIFIC TO LDS</i>		
10. Do you use communication technologies to connect to other Latter-day Saints?		
Yes	111	90.2%
No	12	9.8%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
11. Do you use communication technologies for missionary purposes?		
Yes	72	58.5%
No	50	40.7%
Prefer not to respond	1	0.8%
12. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints administers several communication technologies. Do you use any of the following? Please check all that apply.		
LDS.org	118	99.2%
Mormon.org	79	66.4%
MormonNewsroom.org	52	43.7%
FamilySearch.org	69	58%
The Mormon Channel on YouTube	86	72.3%
The LDS Church on Facebook	38	31.9%
The LDS Church on Twitter	20	16.8%
LDS Newsroom on Google+	6	5%
LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices	94	79%
<i>DIRECT RESEARCH QUESTIONS</i>		
13. Do you feel that using the LDS Church's official communication technologies enhance your faith?		
Yes	98	79.7%
No	23	18.7%
Prefer not to respond	2	1.6%
14. Do you feel that using communication technologies in a religious context in general enhances your faith?		

Yes	89	74.2%
No	28	23.3%
Prefer not to respond	3	2.5%
<i>DEMOGRAPHICS</i>		
15. How often do you attend Sunday church services?		
Three or four times a month	114	92.7%
Two times a month	2	1.6%
Once a month	2	1.6%
A few times a year	1	0.8%
Seldom	0	0%
Never	4	3.25%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
16. How important is religion in your life?		
Very important	107	87%
Somewhat important	11	8.9%
Not too important	1	0.8%
Not at all important	4	3.25%
Prefer not to respond	0	0%
17. This survey is intended to examine the responses of young adults aged 18–31. Do you fit into this age range?		
Yes, I fall within that age range.	123	100%
18. Are you a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?		
Yes	123	100%
<i>OPT IN TO FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW</i>		
19. Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up interview to explore these questions further?		
Yes	62	50.4%
No	61	49.6%

Appendix 14: Follow-up Interview Results, Question 1

LDS.org	Daily	Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
		7	38.9%	7	38.9%	3	16.7%	1	5.6%		
	Common Uses										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday talk and lesson preparation • Searching for particular scriptures and cross references • Reading or listening to General Conference and other broadcast addresses • Watching General Conference live • To Link to other LDS websites (e.g., LDS Employment, Mormon Newsroom, “Mormon Messages” on The Mormon Channel, FamilySearch.org) • Accessing lesson manuals and study guides • Reading news articles • Reading Home and Visiting Teaching messages • Notes feature • Accessing ward websites (e.g., ward directory and calendar) • Locating a meetinghouse or temple • Browsing • Buying church materials • Printing articles to give to friends • Looking for information during natural disasters (e.g., ways to donate, checking on the safety of missionaries) 											
Mormon.org	Daily	Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
				2	11.1%	4	22.2%	9	50.0%	3	16.7%
	Common Uses										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a profile • “I’m a Mormon” videos • Looking for information about how to answer questions from non-Mormons • Personal study resource • To look at Church’s branding once in a while • Locating a meetinghouse 											
Mormon Newsroom.org	Daily	Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
		1	5.6%	4	22.2%	6	33.3%	1	5.6%	6	33.3%
	Common Uses										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading official church statements on policy and current events • Reading Church news headlines 											
FamilySearch.org	Daily	Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	1	5.6%	1	5.6%		5	27.8%	5	27.8%	6	33.3%

	Common Uses											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indexing census records • Browsing through family tree • Institute courses 											
The Mormon Channel on YouTube	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	1	5.6%	4	22.2%			4	22.2%	4	22.2%	5	27.8%
	Common Uses											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching videos (e.g., “Mormon Messages,” “I’m a Mormon”) • Watching General Conference addresses • Listening to the channel’s regular podcasts • Listening to “Music and the Spoken Word” 											
LDS Church on Facebook	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
			1	5.6%			4	22.2%			13	72.2%
	Common Uses											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking to articles on other LDS websites (e.g., LDS Employment, Mormon Newsroom, “Mormon Messages” on The Mormon Channel, FamilySearch.org) • Following particular apostles 											
LDS Church on Twitter	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
							4	22.2%			14	77.8%
	Common Uses											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading others’ tweets during General Conference 											
LDS Newsroom on Google+	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
							1	5.6%			17	94.4%
	Common Uses											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 											
LDS Gospel Library for mobile devices	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	7	38.9%	8	44.4%	1	5.6%					2	11.1%
	Common Uses											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal scripture reading and study • Church services (e.g., following along in scriptures or lesson manuals) • Listening to scripture, General Conference addresses, and articles • Accessing lesson manuals and study guides • Hymns • Notes feature 											

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