Contribution from Robert Sharp

I am writing to make a short contribution to the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy.

I write as a private citizen. However, I have relevant expertise as the Head of Campaigns at English PEN, the writers association campaigning on freedom of expression issues; and as a founding director of Fifty Nine Productions, a digital design and production agency.

My submission is simply to implore Parliament, Government and their agencies to make *all* their output available as searchable, linkable, HTML web-pages. This is more than simply having a website. It means ensuring that every paragraph of every document has its own 'anchor' so it may be uniquely referenced.

The Gov.uk pages are an excellent example of best practice. The Legislation.gov.uk is also a brilliant example. The Houses of Parliament official record (Hansard) is of mixed quality. The text of amendment papers in particular is presented in an old 'Web 1.0' style which is difficult to link and to search. I commend the work of MySociety, which has produced a far superior way to read Hansard: TheyWorkForYou.com, of which the Commission will certainly be aware.

Inspired by the MySociety projects, I have produced my own 'proof of concept' for how a Government report should be structured. 'The Leveson Report (As It Should Be)' presents the entire text of Lord Justice Leveson's report into the culture, practices and ethics of the press as linkable, searchable HTML - something not available on the Inquiry webpage itself.

http://leveson.robertsharp.co.uk/

Another MySocity Project, SayIt, presents the transcripts of the Inquiry's oral evidence sessions in a similar style. In my view, all select committee reports and documents produced by the Government departments and their agencies should carry a similar structure.

My short essay on the motivations for my project gives further arguments for why presenting text like this can catalyse democracy.

http://leveson.robertsharp.co.uk/#why

With very best wishes,

Robert Sharp