

CREATOR(S):

TITLE:

YEAR:

Original citation:

OpenAIR citation:

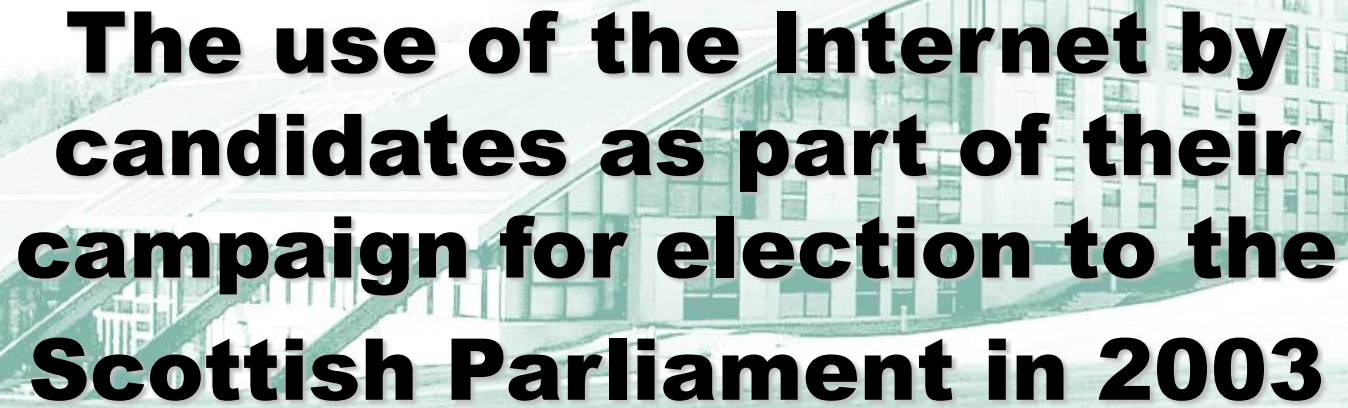
Copyright statement:

This work was distributed in the first instance by _____ and was originally presented at _____.

OpenAIR takedown statement:

Section 6 of the "Repository policy for OpenAIR @ RGU" (available from <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/staff-and-current-students/library/library-policies/repository-policies>) provides guidance on the criteria under which RGU will consider withdrawing material from OpenAIR. If you believe that this item is subject to any of these criteria, or for any other reason should not be held on OpenAIR, then please contact openair-help@rgu.ac.uk with the details of the item and the nature of your complaint.

This _____ is distributed under a CC _____ license.



**The use of the Internet by
candidates as part of their
campaign for election to the
Scottish Parliament in 2003**

Rita Marcella, Graeme Baxter and Sandra Smith

Background to the study

- **Scottish Parliament established 1999; 2003 election only the second to take place**
- **Freedom of information; openness and transparency agendas**
- **e-government agendas ('information age government'); e-Envoy website design guidelines**
- **Growing political apathy among UK public**
- **Builds on previous research by Project Team, and by others (e.g. Hansard Society)**

Methodology

- Content analysis of Web sites (weekly survey over 4-week campaign period)

11 political parties

Labour

Green

UK Independence

SNP

SSP

Pensioners

Conservative

BNP

SSCUP

Liberal Democrat

People's Alliance

11 individual candidates

Two each from Labour, SNP, Conservative, Lib Dem, and Green.
Plus one independent candidate

- E-mail enquiries on policy issues

Content analysis of 11 party websites

<u>Feature</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>No.</u>
Election manifesto	10	Party e-mail links	11
Other policy information	10	Online feedback	5
Campaign information	8	Online questions	2
Campaign materials	4	Discussion forum	1
Invitation to join, etc	9	Audio/video features	2
Updated news	7	Search facility	6
e-news service	4	Other interactive	4

Party websites: details of constituency candidates

- 73 constituency seats
- 56 regional seats (proportional representation)

	<u>Labour</u>	<u>SNP</u>	<u>Conserv.</u>	<u>Lib. Dem.</u>
Biographical	73	73	56	71
Personal e-mail	3	72	48	52
Personal website	10	7	3	2

Content analysis of 11 candidates' websites

<u>Feature</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>No.</u>
Hosted by party/constit.	3	Personal e-mail list	3
Biographical details	8	Constit. e-mail list	1
Campaign information	9	Discussion forum	0
Content updated	5	Link to party site	10
Contact details (excl e-mail)	9	Audio/video features	1
Personal e-mail	10	Search facility	3
e-mail link to party/constit.	3	Other interactive	1

E-mail enquiries on policy issues

- **Questions on GM food, voter apathy, services for older citizens, costs of new Scottish Parliament building.**
- **Enquiries to parties/Scottish Executive**
 - 19 sent, 16 replies received
 - response time: ½ day to 6 days
- **Enquiries to individual candidates**
 - 24 sent, 7 replies received
 - response time: ½ day to 4 days (day after election)

Scottish Parliament election results 2003 (of 129 seats)

Labour	50
SNP	27
Conservative	18
Liberal Democrats	17
Others	17

- **Voter turnout of 49.4%; down almost 10 points from 1999 turnout.**

Conclusions

- **Considerable variation between parties and between individual candidates in their capacity and willingness to seize the potential of technology.**
- **Little progress being made in the development of strategies for online campaigning.**
- **Little evidence of a desire to engage with the electorate in a meaningful and visible online debate.**
- **Contentious or 'difficult' e-mail enquiries may be ignored.**
- **Strategies not designed to overcome voter apathy.**