# Going online on behalf of others

We have reached a point in modern society where we seem to go online for everything. To organise meals, book transport, pay bills, earn an income, vote, communicate and of course, obtain all sorts of goods and entertainment.

Yet, there are still some people who can’t or won’t go online. For some, a **proxy internet user** takes their place: someone who goes online on behalf of others. Usually an informal relationship, proxy users are an overlooked group of consumers. It is easy to assume that proxy users undertake practical internet activities, such as shopping or checking timetables, on behalf of others, but it could be that they undertake a much wider variety of activities altogether.

In the 2015 [ACCAN Grants](http://www.accan.org.au/grants) Round, Neil Selwyn, of Monash University, is [investigating proxy users](http://www.accan.org.au/grants/current-grants/1067-going-online-on-behalf-of-others-an-investigation-of-proxy-internet-consumers) and trying to discover who they are, their relationships with the people they assist, the sorts of technology expertise they have, what social networks they use, and so on.

It might be that most proxy users have close relationships with the person they proxy for. For example they may be family members, carers, friends or neighbours; or they might be work colleagues or technology-related community actors, such as librarians, or the local IT retailer.

Little is understood of their reasons and motivations for acting as a proxy internet user, and why the ‘real user’ is not online. The barriers faced by proxy users in providing effective assistance are also unknown.

Perhaps the biggest question of all is how can these proxy users best be supported with the right sorts of resources, training or support networks?

The project will undertake a survey of proxy users, in-depth interviews and workshops so that we can produce useful resources and policy guidance for this often hidden group of consumers.

If you’re a proxy user and would like to participate you can access the [survey online](http://monasheducation.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3t1DoZ7p63oPwKF). For more information on the project contact the ACCAN Grants Team via [grants@accan.org.au](mailto:grants@accan.org.au).