Media and Democracy

A Report of the 2008 Aspen Institute
Forum on Communications and Society

Richard P. Adler
Rapporteur

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

Communications and Society Program
Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
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The Aspen Institute
Communications and Society Program
One Dupont Circle, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 736-5818
Fax: (202) 467-0790

Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director

Patricia K. Kelly
Assistant Director

The Aspen Institute
One Dupont Circle, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

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This report is written from the perspective of informed observers at the conference. Unless attributed to a particular person, none of the comments or ideas in this report should be taken as embodying the views or carrying the endorsement of any specific participant at the conference.

Foreword

For more than 30 years the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program has convened private, invitation-only forums, seminars, and conferences in the signature Aspen format. Typically, 25 leaders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives address a particular communications policy topic in a moderated roundtable dialogue driven by a detailed agenda. They aim to arrive at new insights they can act on individually, in their organizations, through collective action, or by recommending change in government and business policies. These small, off-the-record meetings encourage trust, candor, free exchange among peers, and creativity of thought.

Once each year, however, we get bigger. At our annual Forum on Communications and Society (FOCAS) we convene twice that number to consider a different issue each year, with the common theme of addressing the impact of information and communications technologies on societal issues and institutions. It is open to public subscription, and streamed for free on the Internet.

FOCAS 2008 took as its theme, **Media and Democracy**, exploring the topics of communications and elections, civic engagement, citizenship and global presence. This report summarizes the results of the 2008 FOCAS deliberations from four interconnected roundtables, and working groups around them designed to recommend specific outcomes.

The results were encouraging. As this report documents, the dialogue was illuminating and produced some important recommendations. Stemming from FOCAS 2007, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation commissioned the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program to organize the *Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy*. FOCAS 2008 has led to three projects, all still in the development stage. A fourth recommendation is being acted upon due to other forces.

- The **Online Peace Corps** has moved along the fastest, under the leadership of Phil Noble at Politics Online. It will bring individual efforts and ingenuity to bear on the problems of the developing world.

- **Groundswell** (originally called Chuckhole) is a software application that will serve as a kind of eBay for civic engagement.

- The **American Dialogue Initiative** is an attempt to bring a variety of disparate media—from PBS stations to local newspapers, to Generation Engage online chats—together to foster a dialogue between the citizenry and its government on a particular topic and at a particular time each year.

- Finally, the group recommended widespread **diffusion of broadband** in the United States, a goal that is being implemented not as a result of this conference but as part of the 2009 Economic Stimulus package.

These and other insights, recommendations, and initiatives arose from the FOCAS 2008 dialogue developed in four roundtables:

Media and Elections. From George Allen's "macaca" moment, spread virally over the Net, to the CNN/YouTube Presidential debate, where citizens could frame questions, to Mayhill Fowler's "Off-the-Bus" *Huffington Post* reportage of Obama's faux pas (bitterness has led the economically disadvantaged to guns and God), 2008 was finally the first Internet campaign. Fundraising hit new heights thanks to millions contributing small amounts, and social networking brought out volunteers to canvass, convince, and turn out votes.

As FOCAS participants marveled at the public involvement in the 2008 campaign, they wondered if this enthusiasm could be converted to engagement with government going forward. From that came the proposal for an American Dialogue Initiative which would bring a multitude of communications channels to bear on a single issue, once each year to start, where a very high government official—the president or a secretary of a department—would listen and engage with the public. The first issue, they thought, should be energy, and employ:

- public broadcasting stations across the country, which could be local gathering spots and broadcast the event,

- local newspapers and radio who could investigate local angles and run stories on the topic leading up to the day of dialogue,

- i-chat projects such as Generation Engage to bring in younger audiences, and

- online blogs and news entities (we are pursuing this concept with interested parties).

Civic Engagement. Many of the younger members of the Forum focused their concerns almost exclusively on local civic engagement, which they thought a more important aspect of democracy than voting. And here, the Net has even greater potential. Noting that there is a significant disconnect between the tools at one's fingertips and how they are used, FOCAS participants saw the need to make it easier for everyone to participate in governance. They saw the potential for expanding opportunities for citizens to engage with their fellow citizens—at the local and national levels—in the form of a kind of eBay for local engagement.

A new, interactive software for civic engagement they called "Chuckhole" (now called "Groundswell"), mentioned above, is one approach, but others were mentioned. As envisioned, Groundswell would enable someone to suggest, for example, that the school board make their lunches more nutritious. Someone else would offer to work on that, having knowledge of the local school board's politics and procedures, and a third might contribute time, expertise or financial help. The application could also be used to gather other localities' attempts to make similar changes, with the opportunity to learn best practices.

Information Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship. As they contemplated the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the digital environment, FOCAS participants saw the thorny issues and conflicts among transparency, access, and privacy. All are desired goals that implicate the basic rights of citizens to participate in government and still retain personal identity. The Sunlight Foundation is an example of an organization using the Net to provide transparency of government actions and transactions in a responsible manner.

FOCAS participants were hardly the first to find that Americans should have the right to communicate with 100 percent of the country through a common medium—broadband Internet. For important interactive applications, such as e-governance, telemedicine, and education, networks need

to be robust, fast and affordable. Through the efforts of others, this recommendation is being subsumed in the 2009 Economic Stimulus package, and will require no direct action on the part of FOCAS participants.

Global Citizenship and the Media. To even think about global citizenship, particularly with respect to ethical responsibilities toward others around the world, one has to consider the importance of the Internet. As Madeleine Albright pointed out, however, each country has certain barriers between citizen and action. For example, in the United States openness, diversity, and free speech could be seen as working against a unified, efficient national plan of action. Conversely, the Chinese are limited by the Government's monitoring of the information they receive, stifling openness and creativity.

Yet, when the tsunami hit four years ago, 15 percent of the U.S. population contributed online. And I would not be surprised to learn that a good number of Chinese also contributed online. One recommended outcome for global citizenship was to create an Online Peace Corps, referenced above. Like Groundswell, it would allow someone in one place—anywhere in the world—to offer their local problem as a matter of need, and others, again anywhere in the world, to put together the resources to solve it. Online Peace Corps, the brainchild of Phil Noble (President of Politics Online), is incubating at the Communications and Society Program until it can spread its wings.

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Thanks to the great work of Rachel Sterne and Ground Report for streaming the event live on the web for the second year. This real-time streaming provided the opportunity for an international viewership and occasional interaction with remote viewers during the Forum itself. Archives of the conference proceedings can be viewed online at: *http://aspeninstitute.tv*.

We thank our lead-off presenters Diana Owen, Craig Newmark, Reed Hundt and Madeleine Albright; and panelists Phil Bennett, Reed Hundt, Paula Kerger, Cyrus Krohn, Phil Noble, John Oliver and William Dean Singleton, for their participation on the 2008 Election panel. We give special thanks to our rapporteur Richard Adler, and to our FOCAS project manager Erin Silliman, and thank director of journalism projects Amy Garmer, for suggestions of background readings, assistant director Patricia Kelly, project manager Sarah Snodgress, and program associate Peter Keefer for their work at the Forum itself, behind the scenes to make it happen, and afterward to bring this report to fruition.

Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
Communications and Society Program
Washington, D.C.
March 2009

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> What information do citizens need to participate fully in the democratic life of their communities? How did they get this information in the past and how will they get it in the future?
>
> What impact is the emergence of digital news having on traditional media and on the profession of journalism?
>
> What business models will support the continued creation and dissemination of high quality news, particularly on a local level? What policies are needed to support the continued availability of vital news about America's communities?

These are among the questions that are being considered by the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, created in early 2008 by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation as the result of a recommendation made at FOCAS 2007. The Commission held a meeting immediately prior to this year's FOCAS conference. Several Commission members helped begin FOCAS 2008 by describing the issues that the Commission is exploring and some of its initial findings.

Knight Commission Co-Chair Marissa Mayer of Google started the discussion by raising the possibility that technology may be changing the "atom of consumption" for news in the same way that the iPod and digital distribution have changed the basic unit of recorded music from the album to the individual song. While the traditional atom of consumption for news has been the newspaper or the evening TV news, it may be the individual article that emerges as the key unit. (Google itself may be contributing to this shift through Google News, which provides a continuously updated overview of news events around the world by automatically selecting and displaying articles from multiple sources on a single Web page.)

Ted Olson, the other Commission Co-Chair, identified two issues that he considers particularly critical: First, if news is in fact shifting from traditional forms such as print and broadcast media to the Internet, it becomes important to ascertain what segment of our society has the tools that are necessary to gain access to digital content. Basic literacy is widespread in this country, as is access to broadcasting, but online access—particularly broadband access—remains considerably less than universal. Although the "digital divide" (those who are wired and those who are not) that prompted such broad concern over the last decade has diminished, it has not completely disappeared. Second, Olson also expressed concern over erosion of the profession of journalism. The traditional models of journalism are eroding, and it is not clear what will replace them. And, if the influence of the traditional media continues to shrink, it is unclear how journalists will be supported in the future.

Peter Shane, Executive Director of the Commission, added that the key word in the Commission title is "community," which refers to local, physical communities, not geographically dispersed virtual "communities of interest"—one of the things that the Internet is said to support. Shane noted that historically, local media have played a vital role in shaping and supporting their communities by reporting on government activities, helping to set the agenda of important civic issues and, when necessary, uncovering and reporting on local malfeasance. Carrying out these tasks has been the province of professional journalists trained to pursue and verify the truth and report on it in a non-partisan, disinterested way. Among the concerns of the Commission is how well this role will survive the transition to new digital media.

The State of the Newspaper

Several Commissioners who represent traditional news media commented on the current state of their industries (this discussion took place in August 2008, before the economic crisis began in the fall). Mary Junck, President and CEO of Lee Enterprises, noted that at the same time the audience for online news has been growing steadily, the readership for printed news has remained largely stable.[1] While newspaper readership is okay, the real problem has been the decline in advertising revenues for print, which has not been made up by increases in rev-

enues from online advertising. Robert Decherd, President and CEO of A.H. Belo Corporation, added that he is still optimistic about the long-term future of newspapers. The print medium still employs the largest number of journalists and remains the primary source of news, even for newer media. If newspapers are able to reduce their costs without abandoning their commitment to journalistic quality, he expects that many newspapers currently experiencing financial problems will return to profitability when the overall economy begins to improve. He worries, however, that the "perception that newspapers are doomed"—as promoted by numerous observers outside the newspaper industry—could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Reporters are generally not comfortable reporting on themselves, but local media need to do a better job of reporting on what is happening with local newspapers.

Dean Singleton, Vice Chairman and CEO of MediaNews Group, Inc., added that most of the financial problems being experienced by newspapers are confined to the top 50 markets (out of a total of 1,400 markets nationally). While many large city papers are struggling financially, with many of them having to make substantial staff cuts, papers in the next tier of markets (51-100) are still making profits in the range of 30 percent, while papers in smaller markets are doing even better.

The State of Journalism

Philip Bennett, Managing Editor of *The Washington Post*, suggested that even if it is a bad time to be a newspaper, it is "a great time to be a journalist." In every newsroom, he noted, the question is being asked about how reporters should adapt their practices to accommodate the new digital media. These new media are playing an important role in the news process by "verifying the verification of the traditional media."

In fact, the challenge to the role of journalists is not new. The role of reporters has shifted over time in response to changing economic conditions. Tom Rosenstiel, Director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, reminded the participants that the current role of reporters as "finders of fact who are not committed to a particular outcome" is a relatively new phenomenon. Prior to the 20th century, the press in the U.S. was highly partisan, with individual papers reflecting the perspective of the parties that subsidized them. Reporters who worked for these papers were expected to reflect the perspective of their patrons.

Non-partisan newspapers that employed objective reporters emerged only when commercial advertising grew to the point that it could generate more money than political parties were willing to provide. A newspaper that appealed to the broadest segment of the population could attract a larger audience which, in turn, could produce greater revenues from advertisers who wanted to reach that audience. The problem facing newspapers today is that their audience is migrating online, but advertising revenues have not kept pace.

If the traditional advertising model does not work for online media, are there alternative models that can replace it? For example, are individuals willing to pay directly for the news they read online (just as they pay at least part of the cost of producing and delivering a printed newspaper)? Marissa Mayer's answer is "maybe." But she noted that in the early days of Google, when the company lacked a model for "monetizing" its popularity, some people suggested that it could generate revenue by charging users a modest fee—like $20 per year—for use of its service. But an advertising-supported model turned out to be much more profitable: if people make 20 searches a day and advertisers are willing to pay just $.01 to appear in the results of a given search (and some advertisers are willing to pay substantially more than $.01), that approach will generate a much larger amount of money (i.e., $73 per year). It is possible that a hybrid model that combines both ad revenue and user payments may eventually emerge, but there are not many successful examples of this approach today.[2]

Media and Elections

A critical role for media in a democracy is to cover elections. But how good a job are the new media doing in covering elections? Are voters finding the new, more open environment created by the new media to be more engaging or more cluttered and confusing?

Diana Owen, Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of American Studies at Georgetown University, who has been studying the relationship between media and politics, presented some of the results of her recent research. She confirmed that the "media landscape is shifting," and the way that voters get information is changing. In 2008, nearly one-quarter of Americans (24 percent) say that they rely on the Internet for information about campaigns, a figure that has doubled

since 2004. Among young people ages 18 to 29, 42 percent say they regularly learn about the campaign from the Internet, a figure that has also doubled over the past four years.[3]

The biggest change in terms of the impact of media on elections is the rise of grassroots campaigning based on social networks. This movement that began with MoveOn.org in 1998 has now become mainstream. Virtually all campaigns now are attempting to use social media to reach voters. One of the most interesting developments in the use of social media is what John Hart, President and CEO of the American Democracy Institute, described as "horizontal dialog" among young people empowered by online networks. Increasingly, young people regard their peers—not "experts" in government or the media—as their most trusted sources of information and opinion. Jake Oliver, Publisher and CEO of the Afro-American Newspaper, agreed that a radical shift is taking place in how communities communicate with themselves. People are more informed, more activated. Although listservs (e-mail lists that distribute messages to a pre-defined group of recipients) are largely invisible and not particularly "sexy," Oliver believes that they are playing a particularly important role in facilitiating dialogs within communities.

Not everything has changed, however, in terms of the media's role in elections. Media coverage of campaigns is still largely focused on "the horserace" and scandals. According to Owen, 17 percent of news stories are focused on the personalities of the candidates, while just 15 percent are primarily about issues in the campaign. In fact, election coverage seems to be becoming less factual and more sensational as the competition for audience becomes more intense. Although television continues to be the dominant medium for news, cable news is gaining viewers at the expense of the network news programs, and newspapers' share of the audience is continuing to decline.

Finally, Owen noted there are a number of factors beyond the shifting media environment that are having significant impact on the political process. The 2008 presidential contest was an open contest, which generated a high level of interest; the race revolved around a number of compelling issues that also increased interest; and the campaigns made a concerted effort to recruit new voters, including young people. Finally, the economic crisis that took place in the midst of the campaign made the stakes seem even higher and further increased voter interest. In this

complex environment, it is not easy to isolate the role played by the media. For some voters, the new media may have encouraged greater participation, while it may have discouraged participation for others.

Gaston Caperton, who served as governor of West Virginia from 1989 to 1997, said that if he were running for office today (he is currently president of the College Board), he would run his campaign very differently than he did at that time. It is, he observed, "a totally different game today." One of the biggest shifts brought about by the Internet has been the democratization of fundraising. The Obama campaign was particularly successful in expanding support from relatively few large contributors to a large number of small contributors. It remains to be seen whether this campaign has established a new pattern for the future or whether it was an anomaly or the unique charisma and appeal of Barack Obama.

One of the biggest shifts brought about by the Internet has been the democratization of fundraising.

Another major change in campaign strategy in recent years has been a shift from appealing to "swing voters," which was the primary focus of election campaigns until about ten years ago, to efforts to attract new voters. According to Tom Rosenstiel of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, in the last two presidential elections, campaigns have not only tried to persuade people to vote for their candidate, but they have had success persuading non-voters to vote.

Bill Kling, President and CEO of American Public Media (APM), reminded the FOCAS participants that some 90 million Americans "voted" for their favorite contestant on American Idol. They not only did this voluntarily, but they paid one dollar for each vote they cast (via text message). This demonstrates that people are willing to vote if you can engage their attention. As a way of promoting interest in the electoral process, Kling noted, APM developed an interactive "Select the Candidate" game that invited voters to answer a series of questions about their positions on major issues, and then matched them with the candidate that most closely represents their views.

Philip Bennett pointed out that the Internet has also had a substantial impact on the way more traditional media, including newspapers, cover elections. For example, there is no longer a 24-hour news cycle defined by the daily editions of newspapers and evening news programs. Now, "everyone is living in the moment," and reporters are filing stories continuously throughout the day. Deadlines are now "seven minutes, not seven hours" as in the past. In addition, there is no longer a core narration about the campaign that dominates news coverage across media. And campaigns themselves are now in the news business, as when the Obama campaign text messaged the announcement of the candidate's choice for vice-presidential running mate to everyone who signed up to receive it (more than three million people according to press accounts.[4])

Campaigns themselves are now in the news business.

Campaigns have also discovered new ways to influence news coverage. For example, campaigns can get an ad into the public discourse without having to pay to put it on the air, but rather just by releasing it on the Internet. Ads that are edgy or controversial are almost certain to be picked up and repeated by bloggers and cable news and commentary programs, giving them much greater visibility than if they had only been run as paid ads.

As the media environment continues to evolve, a split is widening between older reporters who are most comfortable with the old ways of covering campaigns, and younger reporters who are familiar with new forms of digital storytelling and are eager to experiment with new ways of linking to their readers. Dean Singleton added that in his company's news operations, "the Internet is first" and what gets put into the newspapers is now "almost an afterthought." During the most recent election cycle, the most striking shift was the level of interactivity that the public now expects—both with the media and with political campaigns. But Singleton emphasized that the mission of the press is still "to seek out the truth, to get the facts." Candidates and their supporters will continue to make use of propaganda; it remains the role of the

media to sort out truth from fiction and distortion—relying on the Web or on the cable news pundits for this is undesirable. In fact, more than half of all Americans still read a daily newspaper, and Singleton expects them to continue to play a significant role in keeping the public informed for the foreseeable future.

Michael Lomax, President and CEO of the United Negro College Fund, noted that newspaper editors and reporters are now frequent guests on cable programs where they are encouraged to express their own viewpoints as well as to report on the facts of the stories that they have covered. He suggested that having reporters in this kind of role may have liabilities as well as benefits.

Finally, there are a number of interesting experiments underway to provide voters with new perspectives on the political process. The Knight Foundation has funded a number of such initiatives. One example described by Gary Kebbel, Director of the Journalism Program at the Knight Foundation, is Patchwork Nation, a joint project of the Christian Science Monitor and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The project has identified 11 different types of communities and tracked how the election campaign is unfolding in each type of community. For example, the project followed which types of communities were visited most often by each of the candidates: Over the summer of 2008, McCain mainly visited "Boom Towns," while Obama spent more time in "College Towns."

Robert Decherd concluded the discussion by acknowledging that Internet-based social media are supporting a broader, more inclusive dialog around the national presidential election. But social networks are having the same impact on local elections. In local communities, he suggested, the convening power of the legacy media is still important in performing roles such as interviewing candidates and sponsoring town hall meetings—roles that bloggers or citizen journalists are often ill-equipped to provide. In fact, social networks are still dependent on traditional media for much of information which they pick up and amplify.

Election 2008

> "The 2008 race for the White House has rewritten the rules on how to reach voters, raise money, organize supporters, manage the news media, track and mold public opinion, and wage—and withstand—political attacks, including many carried by blogs that did not exist four years ago."
>
> —*The New York Times*, November 4, 2008[5]

For those who are interested in the impact of new media on politics, the 2008 election is "the big one, the one we've been waiting for" according to Phil Noble, President of Politics Online, Inc. Although the impact of the Internet on political campaigns has been growing steadily, the 2008 election is the first one in which the Internet is deeply embedded at the core of campaigns. Nonetheless, we are still very much at the beginning of the role of new technology in the political process. If 2008 is "Election 1.0," Noble asked, what will Election 17.0 look like?

The impact the Obama campaign has had on politics is equivalent to the impact of the iPod on music.

Phil Noble

The Obama campaign has been particularly aggressive in using the full gamut of online resources (several examples have already been cited). According to Noble, the impact the Obama campaign has had on politics is equivalent to the impact of the iPod on music. While both parties have been making extensive use of social media in the 2008 election, these media have become a central element of the Obama campaign. The campaign's website shifted from being primarily a source of information about the campaign to being a center of activity—a place where volunteers and donors are recruited and where campaign activities are organized. The technology also allowed the campaign to use volunteers in flexible and imaginative ways. Rather than just using "check boxes" to sign up volunteers for prescribed roles, the campaign asked them what they wanted to do.

The use of the Internet by the Obama campaign also "changed the dynamic of money" in campaigns. Traditionally, a campaign's donor base, made up of primarily large contributors, has been distinctly dif-

ferent from its volunteer base. But in this case, the two groups were indistinguishable.[6] Noble asserted that even if all contributions over $5,000 were eliminated, the Obama campaign would still have raised more money than any other previous campaign.

Cyrus Krohn, Director of the eCampaign division of the Republican National Committee, noted that the GOP has always had a strong database of financial supporters, but has realized that raising money is not the only component of a successful campaign. The party is now attempting to find better ways of turning out voters. The GOP has also experimented with new ways to connect with its supporters. In 2008, for example, the party created a web site to accept suggestions about what should be in the party's platform.

A blogger's election eve analysis of the use of new media by both campaigns clearly demonstrated the extent to which the Obama campaign dominated the social networks. While John McCain's Facebook page listed 620,359 supporters, Barack Obama' page showed that he had attracted 2,379,102 supporters. On MySpace, Obama had 833,161 friends compared to 217,811 friends for McCain. The biggest difference was on Twitter, where @barackobama had 112,474 followers compared to 4,603 followers for @JohnMcCain.[7]

The New Media on Election Day…and After

New media not only played a big role in the campaign, but continued to be used in new ways on Election Day and beyond.

On November 4, for example, National Public Radio sponsored an initiative called "Vote Report" that encouraged people around the country to send in reports of any voting problems they encountered. Reports could be submitted via text message, via Twitter, through free applications for iPhones and Google (Android) phones, or by uploading video reports to YouTube. On Election Day, all reports were shown on an interactive "mash-up" map on the NPR web site. (A disclaimer on the site noted that "the information displayed on this map has been submitted by the general public and has not been verified by NPR.")

After the election, the new administration quickly signaled its intention to continue to use the Internet and other new media to maintain an interactive dialog with the public. Even before the inauguration, the administration's transition team set up a web site, *www.change.gov*, that included a blog with updates on appointments and other activities, a list of meetings held with outside groups, and a feature called "Open for Questions" that solicited questions in areas such as the economy, health care, foreign policy, national security and energy and the environment, and then allowed visitors to vote for the most important questions submitted by others. Among the questions posted on the topic of the economy: "How is the Obama Administration going to hold banks and other companies that received bailout money responsible for the money they have received? What strategies other than bailouts can we employ to keep jobs in America?" In less than two months, the site reported that "81,399 people submitted 58,192 questions and cast 3,476,685 votes."

The Media and Public Engagement

Why do we care about civic engagement? Peter Shane proposed that the quality of our collective life depends on everyone's willingness to engage in "non-self-regarding behavior" that goes beyond individual self-improvement to work for the betterment of a larger community. Shane described a project in Pittsburgh that created a curriculum that involved high school students writing about their relationship to important civic landmarks in their community. An evaluation of the project's impact found that the participating students began to think of themselves more as "Pittsburghers" who had an interest in and a stake in their community. But when the media portray the political process purely in terms of conflict, Shane worried that this might undermine efforts to build greater civic engagement.

There have been a number of initiatives in recent years that attempted to use the power of the Internet to promote greater civic engagement by giving individuals tools to evaluate the information they find online and sort truth from fiction. Other initiatives have focused explicitly on providing local residents with information and resources that allow

them to engage in discussions with their neighbors about issues that are important to them. Most of these Initiatives have been developed as non-profit ventures, many of which have been funded by private foundations (see "Online Resources for Citizens and Communities" for descriptions of several of these projects).

Online Resources for Citizens and Communities

National News Resources

Newstrust.org allows individual users to rate trustworthiness of news reports and news organizations. Users post links to stories they recommend and then evaluate the story's reliability. These ratings are assigned to the news organization (or individual) so that they create a reputation over time.

Factcheck.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit "consumer advocate" for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in politics. Volunteers monitor the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in the form of TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews, and news releases. The Annenberg Political Fact Check is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

ProPublica.org is an independent, non-profit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the public interest. Its goal is to focus on important stories with "moral force." The project is funded by the MacArthur Foundation, the Atlantic Philanthropies and other private foundations.

SourceWatch is a directory of the people, organizations and issues shaping the public agenda. SourceWatch documents the PR and propaganda activities of public relations firms and public relations professionals engaged in managing and manipulating public perception, opinion and policy. SourceWatch also profiles think tanks, industry-funded organizations and industry-friendly experts that work to influence public opinion and public policy on behalf of corporations, governments and special interests.

Open.Salon is a "social blogging platform" intended to provide bloggers and journalists who do not want to create their own sites but want to provide news or express their opinions with a new publishing option. Anyone can post an article, photo, or video and can earn money through voluntary micropayments from readers. The best content will be republished on Salon's commercial site.

Resources for Local Communities

FrontPorchForum.org started in 2000 as the Five Sisters Neighborhood Forum for residents of Burlington, Vermont. The success of this forum led the founders to launch Front Porch Forum to serve residents of other neighborhoods.

Everyblock.com allows residents to keep track of what is happening on their street, neighborhood or city including information on nearby crimes, events, restaurant inspections, media coverage and more.

Outside.in is a "hyperlocal news and information service" that provides access to news and information on thousands of towns and cities and neighborhoods. Sources include blog posts, news stories, discussion posts, and Twitter updates.

Voice of San Diego is a Web-based news operation staffed by professional journalists with a mission "to provide ground-breaking investigative journalism for the San Diego region and to increase civic participation by giving citizens the knowledge and in-depth analysis necessary to become advocates for good government and social progress." Launched in 2005, it operates as a non-profit organization supported by foundation grants and audience contributions as well as advertising. According to *The New York Times*, similar initiatives have started in New Haven, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Seattle, St. Louis and Chicago.[8]

In some ways, the new media may be doing a better job of providing local content than traditional media. John Carroll, former editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, argued that the way in which newspapers have involved people in civic life has been relatively crude. Newspapers

include many types of content, such as comics, crossword puzzles and horoscopes, that have no civic value but are entertaining. Journalists hope that readers who are attracted by this type of content would encounter more useful information in their papers that would inspire them to get engaged in their communities. In fact, surveys done for newspapers have consistently found that readers want more information about the block on which they live, and then more about their immediate neighborhood. Unfortunately, newspapers have not been very good at providing this type of information. For example, with a primary circulation area that encompassed 18 million people, it was impossible for the *Los Angeles Times* to cover everyone's neighborhood. But the new media can do a better job of providing highly targeted local information.

A related issue is whether participation in online communities of interest represents a new but meaningful form of engagement, or whether the proliferation of sites that cater to a virtually unlimited number of narrow interests is encouraging narcissism and skepticism. Even if newspapers (or television news) are not particularly good at "hyperlocal" coverage, they can provide shared content that provides common ground for community residents. If the new media make it increasingly easy for citizens to filter out everything that they do not like, everyone's personal perspectives and prejudices may just get reinforced.

New York University Associate Professor of Sociology Eric Klinenberg noted that beyond the changes in the media environment, there have been other far-reaching social changes since World War II, a time author Robert Putnam described as "the golden age of civic participation." Women have entered the workforce in massive numbers and no longer have the time to spend maintaining the vitality of many traditional civic institutions. And today, everyone is "overworking," which further hampers their ability to participate in community activities.

It is possible that involvement in online communities of interest is replacing much of the face-to-face engagement whose loss Putnam has documented. (Perhaps one of the appeals of virtual communities is that participation in them requires less physical effort than going out into the real world to socialize or work with others.) But if civic engagement is increasingly happening online, there is a real digital divide that

is exacerbating the distinction between more and less affluent communities: While members of more affluent communities have access to a range of information sources, the poor often do not. Loris Ann Taylor, Executive Director of Native Public Media, asserted that this is a real issue for many disadvantaged communities, and that we still need an "analog safety net" for groups that lack access to the digital world. As long as everyone is not online, Taylor argued, "democracy cannot function by modem alone."[9]

"Democracy cannot function by modem alone."

Loris Ann Taylor

danah boyd, a doctoral candidate in the School of Information at the University of California at Berkeley, described her research with young people who are growing up in a world that is very different from that of their parents: They live highly structured lives with little free time and have large restrictions on their physical mobility. With so few opportunities to experience the life of their communities, young people do not see traditional definitions of civic engagement as relevant to them. Young people are willing to get involved in constructive programs when they are available, but many schools do not let their students participate in programs that operate outside of the schools.

The kinds of communities that are thriving online are generally not geographically-based, but revolve around personal interests. Young people may be engaged in these virtual communities, but they are not particularly involved in their local communities. This pattern is not restricted solely to young people growing up in the U.S. Jordan Greenhall described a study of multiple generations in one English suburb that also found that members of each succeeding generation experienced greater restrictions on their ability to move outside of their homes.[10] If young people have fewer opportunities to participate in their neighborhoods, it is not surprising to find that they are less interested in and less involved in the life of their local communities.

One of the ways in which many young people are responding to the constraints on their lives is by attempting to "recreate public life" for themselves through their participation in online social networks like MySpace and Facebook that allow them to express themselves and con-

nect with peers who share common interests. Through these channels, they are talking about the things that are important to them, which at least in some cases include politics. But, danah boyd noted, young people have generally not been involved in explicitly political web sites or media. Their involvement is "highly filtered" and "headlined." Their interest is often driven by a view of politicians as celebrities—"the black guy," "that woman," "the mayor of New York." It is relatively rare for younger people to be seriously engaged with substantive issues or to be involved in campaigns in deeper levels.

John Kunzweiler, retired Senior Partner at Accenture, added that we seem to be living in a "culture of subway relationships" in which everyone is wired into some personal media environment but is largely disconnected from their immediate surroundings. Moreover, there is an important difference between engagement and action. Even if people believe that they are deeply engaged with the events of the day through the media, that is not the same thing as getting personally involved in shaping the outcome of these events through some form of activism. In fact, although the United States has one of the world's freest and most active media environments, the country also has among the worst records in terms of voter participation.

Andrew Prozes, CEO of the Lexis Nexis Group, pointed a finger at the educational system for failing to educate young people in how the political system works. Without an understanding of political processes, there is little chance that people will make the effort to get involved. Unless society is willing to improve the quality of its schools and the civic education that they offer, the country runs the risk of having a large portion of the population unprepared for civic engagement.

Several participants proposed strategies for encouraging more civic engagement, particularly among younger people. Philip Rosedale, Founder and Chairman of Second Life, noted that the degree to which individuals feel empowered is directly related to the immediacy of response that they get to actions that they take. New Internet tools that let people "start small" in dealing with issues that touch their lives directly, can provide that sense of empowerment, which will then encourage them to move on to larger challenges (this concept formed the basis for one of the recommended initiatives described at the end of this report). Donna Nicely, Director of the Nashville Public Library,

added that public libraries are well positioned to provide access to civic engagement activities in the communities that they serve.

Idit Caperton, Founder and President of the World Wide Workshop Foundation, argued for the importance of social learning that allows students to work collaboratively to solve real problems and "construct knowledge" with others who share common interests. However, she noted that some types of "virtual education technologies" are either used too superficially to have a real impact or are, in fact, being used to program and dehumanize young people rather than to liberate them and promote meaningful civic engagement. When used properly, social media technology can dramatically improve the quality of the schools and the civic education that they provide. Caperton states if we are going to make a real difference, we need to provide hands-on media experiences that will enable young people to construct a personally meaningful understanding of civic and political processes.

Information Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

The past two decades have been "poor innings" for American democracy in dealing with big problems that affect almost all citizens, according to Reed Hundt, Senior Advisor at McKinsey & Company. Hundt identified three large national problems that urgently need attention and pose serious challenges to the nation's ability to find workable solutions. The first of these problems is energy, an area that will require a U.S. investment of about $2 trillion over the next eight years (about one-quarter of a total world investment of $8 trillion). The ability to keep its economy growing will depend on how this investment is made. Much of it will have to go into the transition away from carbon-based energy, but how this transition will take place is still far from certain: is building a wind farm in South Dakota a viable alternative to buying oil from Saudi Arabia? To what extent can solar power serve as an alternative to burning coal? What technology is the best bet to replace the gasoline-burning internal combustion engine? Clearly, there will be winners and losers, but society seems to lack the information necessary to make the right decisions about energy investments.

The second key area for decisionmaking is health care. On the one hand, there is wide agreement that everyone should have access to good health care; on the other hand, society recognizes that it should be pay-

ing less collectively for the health care it does have. Not only does the U.S. have the world's highest per capita expenditure on health care, it also lags behind many countries in overall population health.[11] It is clear that there are many costly inefficiencies in the U.S. health care system, but the country has not been able to address this problem effectively.

The third big problem area is education. The current generation of young Americans is likely to be the first who are "not better educated than their predecessors." High school drop out rates are now approaching 25 percent, and are nearly 50 percent in the country's 50 largest cities.[12] Failure to educate a larger percentage of the population represents "a disinvestment in our future" that will have serious financial consequences. But, once again, the country has not been able to address this problem in a broad and systematic way.

And, in light of the massive credit crisis in the fall of 2008, the country's economy—and its multiple links to the global economy—represents a fourth problem area posing an enormous challenge for policymakers. None of these problems are amenable to quick or simple solutions, yet how the nation deals with these problems will determine to what degree its democracy continues to be successful.

Hundt argued that addressing these problems effectively will require a robust dialog that involves widespread participation by ordinary citizens as well as their leaders. Such a truly democratic dialog will be possible only if all citizens have access to the power of network-based communication tools that have emerged in recent years. If this is to happen, then all Americans need to be assured a new set of rights that will guarantee that they are able to fully participate in the processes of democracy. Specifically, Hundt proposed that:

- Every American should have the right to communicate with all of their fellow citizens through a common medium. Since the Internet is the only medium that can accomplish this goal, policies need to be in place to ensure that 100 percent of the population has access to the Internet. And to insure the "right of free association"—that is, the ability of participants to communicate openly and freely—network operators must be prohibited from censoring the content of any message.

- Regulation must ensure that networks are sufficiently robust and reasonably priced to allow everyone to communicate effectively with everyone else. In practical terms, this means that everyone needs affordable access to a reliable broadband network.

- Everyone should have the ability to vote via modern communications—i.e., secure online voting should be universally available.

- Everyone should have access to the information they need in order to make thoughtful, informed decisions about critical issues that affect them. This includes the government itself, which should provide online access to a much wider range of the information that it controls than is currently available.

Several FOCAS participants responded by focusing on the technical and regulatory implications of Hundt's proposals. Josh Silver, Executive Director of Free Press, commented that the vision of an all-encompassing democratic dialog is being driven by the emergence of a ubiquitous digital network environment that provides a potential platform for such a dialog. The rise of the Internet represents the "fourth media revolution," following the earlier revolutions brought about by radio, television and cable. But in the U.S., the major media are privately owned, and the control of the Internet is moving to the carriers—the phone companies and cable companies—who provide access to the Net. It is to be expected that these companies will seek to maximize their profits, but Silver argued that because of the vital importance of the Internet as a democratic platform, we need to make sure that we foster competition and ensure broad access. If we want to ensure universal, open access, the government will have to provide subsidies to those who would otherwise lack access, just as was done previously with electricity and phone service (another proposal at the end of this report addresses this point).

Federal Communications Commission Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein agreed that we cannot get to 100 percent connectivity without providing incentives to network operators. Private companies will have to make large investments to expand the digital infrastructure, but there is a role for the government in providing subsidies to achieve universal (or even near universal) access. In addition, the government can be a driver

of demand by expanding online access to its services (e-government). This goal will not be accomplished by any single entity but will require a comprehensive strategy that encompasses all government agencies.

The conflict between government, which often wishes to restrict access to information, and a free press, whose mission is to uncover and report on the truth, is a long-standing one. Ted Olson, Knight Commission Co-Chair and former United States Solicitor General noted that in a democracy, citizens always need ways to learn things that their government does not want them to learn—a role that the press has been uniquely able to play. Knight Commission Executive Director Peter Shane added that even while government may be attempting to tighten up on the information that it is willing to share, new tools are emerging to expand citizen access to this information.

Functioning as an informed and engaged citizen today requires a "bundle of literacies."

Charlie Firestone

Henry Jenkins, Director of the Comparative Media Studies Program at MIT, argued that providing access alone—to technology or to information—is not enough. In addition to a "digital divide," there is also a "participatory gap." Research has found that almost all of the most popular videos on YouTube have been created by middle-class white males. If the goal is to have everyone involved in a democratic discussion, then they must have the capability to engage meaningfully with issues.

To fully participate in 21st century networked societies, citizens need new kinds of skills. Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program Executive Director Charlie Firestone argued that functioning as an informed and engaged citizen today requires a "bundle of literacies." In addition to basic literacy, citizens also need to be *media or digitally literate* in order to navigate the sea of information and opinions online and form an independent judgment. Beyond these technical capabilities, citizens need to be *civically literate* (be able to understand the basic tenets and concepts of our democratic system) and *news literate* (the ability to make sense of and integrate the news of the day into these constructs). Finally it is increasingly important for citizens to be *financially and environmentally literate* so that they can understand their complex interrelationships with the economic and natural worlds in which they live.[13]

Idit Caperton of World Wide Workshop Foundation expanded on the concept of digital literacy by describing a set of six "contemporary technology-based learning abilities" that young people need to master if they are to become fully active and literate citizens in the 21st century:

1. The ability to invent, develop and complete an original idea for a digital project (e.g., creating an educational web-game or interactive simulation)

2. The ability to manage a project in a wiki-based networked environment (project-based learning)

3. The ability to publish and distribute self-created digital media

4. The ability to participate with others in learning in a networked environment (social-based learning)

5. The ability to search online for resources that support students' interests (information-based self-learning)

6. The ability to surf websites and use web applications.

Caperton also suggested an empirical way to determine the kinds of skills needed by young people: look at the places where the digital "haves" are currently active online—including sites like YouTube and Facebook, as well as explicitly civic sites—and observe what they are doing and how they are doing it, then figure out how to expand this kind of participation in ways that can scale to a far broader audience, including the technologically underserved and economically disadvantaged populations.

Peter Shane agreed that it is not sufficient simply to discuss issues that are often as complex as they are important. What is needed is a systematic process that includes mechanisms for citizens to inform themselves about the issues that they are considering. He noted that *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has experimented with a process of "Deliberative Polling" developed by James Fishkin at Stanford University. This process provides a structured method for a group of citizens to learn about an issue, discuss it together and then come to a collective decision about what should be done.[14] Shane proposed that participation in such a

process could be expanded by requiring all citizens to serve in "public policy jury duty"—that is, an obligation to take part every few years on a panel to deliberate on and make recommendations about a pertinent public policy issue.

Shane added that Hundt's list of media access rights should include the right to a good education that will prepare young people to participate in the expanded democratic process that Hundt envisions. He argued that this "right" is currently undermined by "a perverse legal framework" based on the Supreme Court's 1973 Rodriguez decision that held that the unequal funding of local school districts through property taxes was allowable since the constitutional right to education, if one exists at all, is limited to education at the minimum level for adult competency—a level supposedly met even by the nation's poorest school districts.[15] This decision has meant that there is no national standard for education in this country. The United States is virtually the only country that approaches this issue by asking "how much federal government intrusion in education will we tolerate?" rather than asking "what can we do to ensure that our children get the best possible education?" (Much the same situation applies to health care. The U.S. is one of the only developed countries in the world that does not consider access to health care to be a basic right. And like education, there is little national oversight or direction for health care, which is also provided by a highly fragmented localized delivery system.)

Michael Lomax of the United Negro College Fund noted that the United States has a long tradition of unequal access to education for people of color and other disadvantaged groups. He is concerned that the young who are uneducated are increasingly children of color, yet this country still finds it difficult to talk about the impact of race and its role in determining access to opportunities. Jeff Smulyan, CEO and Board Chairman of Emmis Communications, added that a growing portion of the population has been economically dispossessed over the past decade, and that we are likely to have a true crisis if this growing disparity is not addressed effectively.

Any discussion of information rights and responsibilities inevitably leads to a consideration of the tension between access to information and the challenge of protecting personal privacy. Andrew Prozes pointed out that LexisNexis is a very large aggregator of government-

generated information. For example, the company's databases of legal information represent a $3 billion annual business. ChoicePoint (acquired by LexisNexis in 2008) collects information on individuals including criminal records, work history and insurance coverage—partly gathered from public records. The company generates revenues in excess of $1 billion a year from customers including credit-issuing institutions and law enforcement agencies. In light of the massive amounts of information that government agencies collect about individuals, society needs to ensure that strong safeguards exist to prevent inappropriate access.

Michael Klein, Chairman of the Sunlight Foundation (that advocates for public access to government information) commented that he has never understood why companies such as LexisNexis and Westlaw should be able to operate as profit-making businesses that sell access to government-created information that was presumably paid for by everyone's tax dollars. To the extent that government possesses information about individuals, that information should either be kept confidential or be made freely available to the public, rather than being sold privately. Klein noted that his own bias would be to err on the side of greater rather than less availability of information about what government does.

John Carroll, former editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, added that newspapers generally take the position that all government information should be public. In fact, arguments go on continuously about what information should be kept confidential and what information should be released. Carroll admitted that he feels a "chilling effect" from the knowledge that every keystroke that he makes when he is online could possibly be monitored by some third party. Although the public knows little about them, there are, in fact, large commercial and government entities that are constantly capturing and storing huge amounts of information.[16] (Carroll's operating principle is not to put anything in an e-mail that he would not be willing to see posted publicly on a bulletin board in his office.) Citizens need a public debate about what information the government has a right to know, and where the limits (if any) should be on information gathering.

The basic design of the Internet makes it possible for virtually anything done online to be traceable. Unlike the highway system, the Internet was built with few safety standards. John Kunzweiler, retired

Senior Partner at Accenture, noted that "no one owns the privacy problem." Serious privacy breaches happen regularly, yet nothing happens. If we are going to use the Internet for sensitive discussions of important issues, we need to pay more attention to the challenge of providing security online.

Global Citizenship and the Media

Is the Internet "the technology of democracy"? Will the spread of the Internet with its ability to expand access to information and to empower individuals to express their opinions lead to more open societies?

If the issue of access to information and its relation to citizen engagement is complicated in the United States, it is even more complex in countries lacking democratic traditions. Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright cited three issues that illustrate the potential and problems of using the media to enhance democracy. Her first example concerned China, where the combination of a dynamic population, a nervous government and advanced communications technology has produced some fragile and at times dubious compromises. Although economic progress has enabled millions of Chinese to flock to Internet cafes, openness remains relative. Albright recalled sitting in a Beijing hotel room in 2006 watching a story on CNN about Yahoo! attempting to establish itself in China. Suddenly the screen went blank, a reminder that someone is constantly monitoring and—often censoring—the information entering China. This has created a dilemma for Western media companies who seek access to China's huge market. Some have struck bargains with the government that have led to criticism in the West. China's government wants the best technology but only under certain conditions. The question is where to draw the line between a reasonable adjustment and a betrayal of principle.

Is the Internet "the technology of democracy"?

A second issue involves the growing gap between rich and poor in the world and the potential role that technology could play in alleviating this gap. No matter how poor they are, virtually everyone in the world has access to television, and today, more than half of the world's population now owns a mobile phone. But the poor need more if they are to escape poverty: they need an identity, they need a voice, they need the ability to

organize. Albright cited the work of the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto who argues that the land that is theoretically available to the world's poor is enormously valuable, but that most of the population who live and work on the land lack the ability to prove ownership, which is key to putting them on a path to bettering themselves. Unfortunately, the burden of bureaucracy in many countries makes this seemingly simple task difficult or impossible; for instance, obtaining a 5-year lease on government land in Haiti requires 65 separate bureaucratic steps that typically take at least two years. In Egypt, acquiring a title to a lot on state-owned desert land requires 77 bureaucratic procedures at 31 public and private agencies that can take from 5 to 14 years.[17]

Expanding access to information can be a powerful force for change if it enhances transparency.

Madeleine Albright

Digital technology can play an important role in overcoming these stifling bureaucratic hurdles. In India, for example, the Internet-based Bhoomi system (established in 2001) allows poor farmers in the state of Karnataka to obtain quick access to critical rural land records. Getting access to a legal document that previously required up to 30 days and often involved bribing an official can now be done instantly for a cost of less than one dollar through a network of government-owned Bhoomi kiosks that have been set up in 177 villages.[18] Technology alone cannot solve these problems, of course. There must be pressure for change and governments must be willing to act.

Finally, Albright talked about the broader role that technology could play in promoting democracy around the world. She is convinced that expanding access to information can be a powerful force for change if it enhances transparency. But the world needs to understand the costs involved in doing this and the barriers that must be overcome. Fortunately, there are already millions of people, including teachers and politicians, who already have access to the Internet. The National Democratic Institute (NDI), which Albright chairs, has undertaken a number of technology-based initiatives to strengthen democratic processes, including helping to develop legislation tracking systems and experimenting with the use of cell phones to monitor elections in emerging democracies in Africa and Eastern Europe.[19] NDI, along with the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-Parliamentary

Union, and other international NGOs, also sponsors a Web-based resource called iknowpolitics.org that connects women legislators globally. The site provides users with access to a library of practical information, hosts moderated discussions, and facilitates the sharing of knowledge across borders.

On the issue of bringing the Internet to China, Chris Neimeth, Publisher of Salon Media Group, described a conversation that he had with an attorney who negotiated Google's entry into China and who urged him to bring Salon to China. When Neimeth expressed concern about being censored, the attorney responded that it would very likely happen from time to time. Neimeth needed to decide whether he was willing to have some of his content censored in return for making the rest of it accessible to China's huge population. In the end, he decided that this trade-off was acceptable.

Marissa Mayer acknowledged that the decision to do business in China was a difficult one for Google. Like Neimeth, Google came to the conclusion that getting even some of Google's functionality into China would be a positive force for change. But Google has been criticized for its willingness to compromise with the Chinese government censorship requirements and the debate about how to deal with non-democratic regimes continues both inside and outside the company. One recent initiative is Google's participation in the Global Network Initiative (see The Global Network Initiative, below).[20]

The Global Network Initiative

In October 2008, Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft, along with a number of universities, human rights organizations and other NGOs, announced the creation of the Global Network Initiative whose mission is "to protect and advance the human rights of freedom of expression and privacy." Sponsors of the Initiative pledge to support several principles, including "establishing greater transparency with users; assessing human rights risk; requesting the legal rationale for government actions and policies; training employees; challenging human rights violations; and providing whistle-blowing mechanisms through which violations of the Principles can be reported." For more information, see *www.globalnetworkinitiative.org.*

Mayer also described how Google's technology is being used to bring attention to global crises. For example, efforts have been made to provide information about areas of conflict on Google Earth, which provides satellite images of virtually every point on the planet. Working with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Google Earth added a downloadable "layer" of information on the genocide in Darfur. Users can view maps that show damaged and destroyed villages and the location of more than two million displaced people in Darfur and in neighboring Chad as well as photos and video that show the destruction that has taken place in the country and a collection of personal stories from survivors of the genocide.[21]

Another innovative project designed to promote global awareness is the "Girl Effect" initiative sponsored by the Nike Foundation and Warren Buffet's NoVo Foundation. As presented by Lisa MacCallum, Managing Director of the Nike Foundation, the project is designed to "tell a simple story" about the lives of young girls in poor countries and how helping them to improve their lives can have a big impact on the economic development of an entire country. In addition to supporting activities aimed at helping adolescent girls in developing countries, the project has created a website to tell the story of the project and provide links to *www.globalgiving.com*, where individuals can contribute money that is guaranteed to go directly to girls being helped by the project.

Phil Noble of Politics Online affirmed that new media can be effective tools to encourage Americans to support worthy international causes. In 2004, 15 percent of Americans made a contribution online to help the victims of the tsunami that devastated Southeast Asia. The next challenge is to figure out how to go beyond online giving to use technology to inspire action and to make direct connections between people in different cultures (see Noble's proposal for an Online Peace Corps at the end of this report).

Efforts to expand Americans' awareness of global issues are not new, though they may take new forms in new media. Bill Kling, President and CEO of American Public Media, explained that starting in 1980, when communications satellites made it possible to transmit radio programming internationally, public radio began to bring BBC news and international programming to the U.S. Fifteen years later, Public Radio International (PRI) partnered with the BBC to create "The World," a daily hour-long newscast with anchors in both the U.S. and the UK that

provides in-depth coverage of global developments. Kling noted that there is no equivalent in the U.S. to the BBC—a publicly-funded national media entity with a mandate and the resources to provide true global coverage.

In fact, at a time when the U.S. is more interconnected than ever with the rest of the world, international news coverage is actually diminishing. The number of foreign news bureaus maintained by U.S. newspapers has been steadily declining (according to Nicholas Kristof, just four American newspapers still maintain foreign desks[22]), which has had a negative effect on the depth and breadth of overseas news available to Americans.

As with other areas of the news, a growing "citizen journalism" movement is attempting to fill the void left by the withdrawal of traditional media from foreign news. The goal of GroundReport (which provided a webcast of the FOCAS conference) is to "democratize media globally." According to GroundReport founder, Rachel Sterne, the organization provides a global news platform that allows people to post a news story or a video about events anywhere in the world, and get paid according to the traffic that the content generates. More than 3,500 reporters have contributed stories to the site and the site attracts more than 300,000 unique visitors each month. In some cases, its contributors are able to get stories that others have missed or cannot get. Over the summer, for example, a reporter for GroundReport was deported from China for filming a Tibetan protest in Beijing during the Olympics.

Beyond supporting new channels for foreign news, the Internet also has the potential for enabling new forms of interaction and exchange between Americans and citizens of other countries. danah boyd described connections that developed between fans of Japanese anime stories in Japan and the U.S. Young people in the U.S. who became interested in the genre began to learn Japanese and became more involved with Japanese culture. Idit Caperton described Globaloria, a project that provides young people with opportunities to learn about new media and work on creative projects with others around the world. The group's first project, Midlife, which focuses on teaching skills required to create video games, is globally targeting more than a dozen different countries.

Providing the means for foreigners to link to and learn more about the U.S. can have important and significant consequences. John Rendon, President of The Rendon Group, described the top-lines from

both quantitative and qualitative research his company conducted in 2002-2003 for the United States government. The research focused on young (non-American) global citizens in countries around the world. The top-lines toward America and Americans that emerged from the participants: "You (the United States) look at us, but you don't see us; You talk to us, but you don't listen; You believe in democracy inside your borders, but not outside," and "We admire and respect you for innovation and technology, but you do not share." The finding identified recognition, respect, hope and opportunity, as the key drivers, Rendon added. Given the educational and democratizing potential of the new media, Rendon argued, "it is in the national interest of the United States to ensure and support getting everyone in the world online, as quickly as possible. Ironically, for most people this will probably mean via a mobile phone."

Of course, while the Internet provides the physical means to connect people, language differences represent a major barrier to improving global communication. Once again, new online tools may help. Philip Rosedale noted that it is now possible to do automatic (text) translation of chats within Second Life—for example, from English to Kanji or vice versa—using resources such as Google's Language Tools.

In reflecting on all of these initiatives, Madeleine Albright asked whether all of these initiatives are simply an expansion of the old concept of pen pals, or whether the new media are truly sparking a movement toward more meaningful global communication that could promote democracy and spread peace. The question is whether greater connectivity will enable people to improve their lives—and help them to help others improve their lives. The kinds of initiatives described here are encouraging, but the jury is still out on its ultimate impact.

Recommendations from FOCAS 2008

The final portion of the conference was devoted to recommendations for initiatives that would strengthen the democratic process. Three working groups developed recommendations for media, for citizen initiatives, and for public institutions. These recommendations are summarized below.

Media: American Dialog Initiative

For many years, observers have lamented what has seemed to be a steady decline in citizen engagement in elections and other democratic processes. The current election has seen an unexpected change in this pattern. Millions of young people, minority group members and others who have not traditionally participated in the political process have become actively involved. Several factors may be contributing to this turnaround: the widespread concern that the country "is on the wrong track" may be motivating citizens to get more personally involved in politics; the Obama campaign with its charismatic leader and its emphasis on grassroots organizing and fundraising has attracted many new voters to the political process; and the Internet is providing a new "platform" for expanding participatory democracy by making it easier for individuals to express their opinions and connect with others who share a common point of view. As several FOCAS participants noted, this year's campaign is the first in which the Net is playing a vital, perhaps even a decisive role, in the election process.

But will the excitement and citizen activism inspired by the 2008 campaign continue? Will those who have gotten involved in politics for the first time remain involved? Will the Obama Administration show the same openness to citizen participation as the campaigns have done?

To build on the excitement generated by the 2008 election, the FOCAS conference recommended that a new broadly-based initiative be launched in early 2009 that will make use of all forms of media at every level to support a deep and focused analysis and public discussion of an important national issue. This initiative would be an ongoing event, perhaps taking place nationally on one designated day (or week) each year, like Earth Day. The message of the initiative would be that politics as usual are no longer acceptable and that the American public wants to be more intensely involved in shaping the country's response to key issues.

Attracting broad participation in the initiative will require the involvement of multiple media as well as civic and other groups willing to organize local activities. Another important success factor will be to obtain a commitment from the new Administration to listen carefully to the discussion and take seriously the recommendations that flow from it.

An excellent first topic for the initiative would be energy policy. This topic is an important issue that directly affects the lives of all Americans and is one with no simple solutions. The unprecedented volatility in the cost of oil and gasoline and other petroleum based fuels has created a real sense of crisis that has stimulated wide interest in the topic. And the environmental implications of energy use ties the issue to even broader concerns. (Another potential topic that was suggested was the meaning of democracy.)

The initiative would begin with a pilot in the spring of 2009 that would involve the following people, groups and resources:

- Local venues, ideally at local PBS stations, that could televise appropriate portions of the discussion,
- Local leaders from government, non-profit organizations, academia, businesses and the citizenry to engage in a dialogue on the topic,
- Local newspapers, who would be enlisted by ASNE, the Lee and MediaNews Groups, and the Washington Post,
- Interactive platforms, beginning with neutral sites but also potentially involving partisan blogs,
- Chat, using Generation Engage as a center point,
- A major U.S. government official who would be willing to engage with the citizenry on this topic. Ideally this would be the President or Secretary of Energy.

Several FOCAS participants noted that talk that does not lead to real results will not be meaningful. In fact, if the initiative cannot make a demonstrable difference, it runs the risk of increasing alienation from the political process rather than inspiring greater engagement. Loris Ann Taylor of Native Public Media expressed concern that all voices, including those of minorities and the economically disadvantaged, have an equal opportunity to be heard. It was also noted that to the degree to which the initiative promises to expand citizen participation and thereby dilute the power of entrenched special interests, it will draw the attention of groups

that will attempt to distort, suppress or subvert the process. Michael Klein indicated that the Sunlight Foundation, of which he is Co-founder and Chairman, could play the role of watchdog to ensure that "lobbyists and special interest groups do not hijack the discussion."

(Note: A number of past and current initiatives have attempted to encourage greater citizen involvement in the policy deliberation process. Some of these are media-based, while others involve face-to-face discussions. A few of these precedents are listed in the Appendix.)

Citizens' Initiative: Groundswell

A second initiative proposed at the FOCAS conference centered on developing an online resource to support individuals and groups wishing to bring about specific changes in their local communities. This tool would be based on the new Web 2.0 tools that have emerged to support group collaboration.

It was noted that the current political process dominated by lobbyists for specific interest groups, typically involves a small number of participants who are able to have great impact on the process. Some mechanisms—like 311 citizen complaint phone lines—have emerged in recent years that enhance citizens' abilities to connect with government agencies to request action. These resources have enabled somewhat larger groups of people to be engaged with government, but have a relatively modest impact on government actions. The initiative proposed at FOCAS is intended to allow much larger groups of citizens to achieve more substantial results by making it easy for individuals with a cause to find allies and enable them to work together to bring about change.

The key "operating principles" that determined the characteristics of the citizens' initiative resource were that it should:

- Be citizen driven, from the bottom up
- Offer the ability for rapid engagement
- Provide for full participation; be broadly inclusive
- Offer real results
- Be fun and engaging to use
- Connect to existing communities of interest.

This new resource, called Groundswell, was introduced as "Chuckhole 1.0" through the fictional story of a 10th grade girl who is unhappy with the food available in her school's cafeteria and wants to improve its quality. She realizes that she is dealing with a policy issue, albeit a highly local one, and wonders what she can do to bring about a positive change.

Fortunately, she has access to the Chuckhole website where she is able to enter a description of the "mission" she intends to undertake. She then is able to recruit others (in this case, her friends and schoolmates and family members), creating an ad hoc social network of people willing to support her mission. She is also able to use the network to gain access to information resources related to her issue (e.g., a database of foods served in school and their costs and nutritional values) and connect with experts or with others who have pursued similar missions, enabling her to learn about what strategies and techniques worked for them. As she becomes more expert in her own process, she is able to document her successes and failures so that others can learn from her experience.

Groundswell is based on tools and resources that are inexpensive and widely available, such as social networking software, wikis, e-mail, instant messaging and, especially, text messaging which is widely used by young people as a primary communications tool (86 percent of all adults now have cell phones). This new resource could either be developed on a non-commercial basis (perhaps with a grant to a non-profit organization or support from a social venture capital fund) or on a for-profit basis by a company, perhaps a new start-up that would presumably attempt to monetize the resource based on its success in engaging a large number of participants. Another model would be to create the resource through a community using an open source software development model, leaving the prospect that one or more companies might emerge to provide support for the software on a commercial basis.

In any case, supporters of this concept agreed that a working prototype could and should be developed relatively quickly and at a relatively modest cost, then be allowed to evolve and grow based on the experiences of its initial users. The essence of the concept is to use simple, low cost, widely available tools to help individuals respond to actual needs in their communities.

Citizens' Initiative: An Online Peace Corps

The goal of an Online Peace Corps (OPC) would be to harness the global power of the Internet and new digital technologies to facilitate new connections and relationships among people to tackle the problems of the world. At its core, the OPC would be a web site where people can go to join with others to find the tools, resources and pathways to directly link them with others who need help, primarily in developing countries. The site would support an ongoing global conversation that will allow people to share ideas and insights about problems and challenges, and then develop strategies for working collaboratively to solve these problems. A "toolbox" will be a repository for online tools and resources that can be used by others.

The OPC will also include a mechanism that will allow people to pledge money or other resources to a given project. In-kind donations will match donors of products or services with organizations or groups that can use them to help solve problems. Feedback loops will create direct, ongoing one-to-one relationships among "donors" and "recipients." Most significantly, the site will grow and evolve depending on the interests and abilities of the participants.

The OPC will take advantage of efforts and lessons learned from many existing online projects that are aiding the developing world. For example, millions of Americans contributed online to help victims of the Asian tsunami; sites like Micro Place and Kava are funding micro loans directly to people in the developing world; Time Bank is channeling volunteer donations of time to worthy causes; while Donors Choose is helping people donate supplies and resources to needy schools. The Online Peace Corps will combine elements from existing efforts such as these with new technologies and strategies to provide a central place for people wanting to make a global contribution.

Public Institutions: Universal Broadband Fund

Realization of the full potential of new media to enhance civic engagement will depend on the availability of these media to all citizens. A final recommendation from the FOCAS conference concerned a government initiative to promote greater participation in democratic processes by expanding access to online media.

While broadband penetration continues to increase and has reached 57 percent of U.S. households, this country continues to lag behind other countries in the use of broadband networks. According to the 2008 ranking by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF), the U.S. is in 15th place among developed countries in terms of broadband penetration. Moreover, while average download speed in Japan is 63.6 Mbps and 49.5 Mbps in South Korea, the average speed in the U.S. is just 4.9 Mbps.[23]

One reason that has been cited for the lagging performance of the U.S. in this area is the lack of a coherent national policy to promote broadband deployment. The FOCAS participants recommended that one relatively simple step toward such a policy would be to reallocate the Universal Service Fund (USF), which is currently focused on subsidizing traditional voice telephone service, to support broader access to broadband services. In 2007, the USF, which is overseen by the Federal Communications Commission, and is generated by taxes imposed on existing phone lines, provided $4.3 billion in subsidies (out of a total of $6.9 billion) to subsidize telephone service in "high cost" (i.e., low density rural) areas.[24]

Using the USF to expand access to broadband services would be consistent with the goals of the Fund as spelled out in the 1996 Telecommunications Act: the Fund is intended to be used "to increase access to advanced telecommunications services throughout the Nation [and] to advance the availability of such services to all consumers, including those in low income, rural, insular, and high cost areas." Given this mandate, this change in how USF funds are used could be made by the FCC itself, without the need for Congressional action.

Ensuring broad access to broadband resources will involve more than simply providing affordable physical access. The FOCAS participants recommended that support also be provided to expand training in the use of the technology to groups who lack the skills to participate fully in the online world. And to ensure that broadband networks remain a robust and trusted platform for democratic activities, networks that make use of these funds should be required to meet standards for security and non-censorship. Finally, to help increase the value of online participation and stimulate greater civic engagement, the government should make a commitment to expand the scope of "e-governance" applications that it provides.

Notes

1. According to the 2008 report on *The State of the Newsmedia* published by the Center for Excellence in Journalism, daily newspaper circulation declined 8.4% from 2001 to 2007, while Sunday circulation declined 11.4% in the same period. www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2008/narrative_newspapers_audience.php?cat=2&media=4

2. In 2007, for example, *The New York Times* decided to stop charging for online access to its news because it concluded that it would make more money from selling advertising based on a larger audience attracted by free content.

3. *Internet's Broader Role in Campaign 2008*, The Pew Research Center For the People & the Press, January 11, 2008. http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/384.pdf

4. Michael Dinan, "Interview: Obama Campaign Signals Start of Mobile Ad Revolution," TCMNet Mobile VOIP Community, November 8, 2008. http://mobile-voip.tmcnet.com/topics/mobile-communications/articles/45018-interview-obama-campaign-signals-start-mobile-ad-revolution.htm

5. Adam Nagourney, "The '08 Campaign: A Sea Change for Politics as We Know It," *The New York Times*, November 4, 2008. www.nytimes.com/2008/11/04/us/politics/04memo.html?ref=politics

6. An article published after the 2008 election reported that "while nearly 50 percent of donations to the Obama campaign came in individual contributions of $200 or less, in reality, only 26% of the money he collected through Aug. 31 during the primary and 24% of his money through Oct. 15 came from contributors whose total donations added up to $200 or less." In fact, the percentage of small donors to the Obama campaign was not dramatically different than that to the 2004 Bush or Kerry campaigns or John McCain's 2008 campaign. However, the article also reported that large donors who gave more than $1,000 to the campaign did represent a smaller portion of the funds raised by Obama than by other campaigns: large donors contributed 47% of Obama's money through August 31, compared to 56% for Kerry, 60% for President Bush and 59% for Senator McCain. John Luo, "Study: Many Obama Small Donors Really Weren't," *The New York Times*, November 28, 2008. http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/24/ study-obamas-small-donors-really-werent/?scp=4&sq=obama%20fund%20raising&st=cse

7. Jeremiah Owyang, "Snapshot of Presidential Candidate Social Networking Stats: Nov 3, 2008" Web Strategist.com, www.web-strategist.com/blog/2008/11/03/snapshot-of-presidential-candidate-social-networking-stats-nov-2-2008

8. Richard Perez-Pena, "Web Sites That Dig for News Rise as Watchdogs," *The New York Times*, November 18, 2008. www.nytimes.com/2008/11/18/business/media/18voice.html?scp=1&sq=Web Sites that Dig for News Rise as Watchdogs&st=cse

9. In a policy brief addressed to the new administration, Taylor argues that "in addition to being platforms for public debate and discourse, native media [such as radio] are lifelines that communicate vital information about public safety, health and community events, preserve culture and language, and build communities." Loris Ann Taylor, "Native Public Media Policy Priorities," Native Public Media, December 16, 2008.

10. David Derbyshire, "How Children Lost the Right to Roam in Four Generations," Daily Mail Online, June 15, 2007. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-462091/How-children-lost-right-roam-generations.html

11. In 2007, Americans paid $5,711 per capita for health care, at least 24% more than the next highest spending country in the OECD (Luxembourg, at $4,611). In Austria, Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, and Sweden, annual per capita expenditures for health care were less than $3,000. *Health Care Spending in the United States and OECD Countries*, January 2007, Kaiser Family Foundation. www.kff.org/insurance/snapshot/chcm010307oth.cfm

12. Gary Fields, "The High School Dropout's Economic Ripple Effect," *The Wall Street Journal,* October 21, 2008. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122455013168452477.html?mod=google-news_wsj

13. For an extended discussion of these literacies, see Charles M. Firestone, "The Responsibilities of Citizenship: A Bundle of Literacies," *Huffington Post*, October 13, 2008. www.huffington-post.com/charles-m-firestone/the-responsibilities-of-c_b_134385.html

14. Here is how the process works: "A random sample of citizens in a defined geographic area are called and given a brief survey that establishes their demographic and attitudinal profile. This makes it possible to figure out if those who eventually attend the Citizen Deliberation are representative of the larger sample. After the survey, the citizens are invited to attend a Citizen Deliberation event. Often, to minimize barriers to participation, citizens are told they will be paid a stipend for their time. Those who say they will come to the event are sent balanced background materials. The participants come together for a day, and are randomly assigned to moderated small groups to discuss the issues. As part of their small group discussions, they develop questions to ask a balanced panel of experts on each issue. At the end of the event, they fill out another survey. The citizens' changes of opinion from before and after their deliberation are analyzed. These results are shared with the larger public and with opinion-leaders and policy-makers." www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/articles/about_polls.html

15. San Antonio School District V. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 1 (1973). http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=411&invol=1

16. For a recent account of domestic surveillance, see James Bamford, *The Shadow Factory: The Ultra-Secret NSA from 9/11 to the Eavesdropping on America* (Doubleday, 2008).

17. Hernando De Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (Basic Books, 2000).

18. For a more detailed description of this and other e-government projects in India, see Richard Adler, *M-Powering India: Mobile Communications for Inclusive Growth* (Aspen Institute, 2008). http://www.aspeninstitute.org/atf/cf/%7Bdeb6f227-659b-4ec8-8f84-8df23ca704f5%7D/2008INDIA.PDF

19. "SMS delivers for Election Monitoring of the Montenegro Referendum on Independence," Mobile Active, June 6, 2006. http://mobileactive.org/mentengro_election_monitoring

20. A creative response to Chinese censorship of the Internet is the "China Channel" add-on for the Firefox web browser released in October, 2008. The add-on simulates searches that are conducted within China and blocks the user from any sources that cannot be accessed from China. http://chinachannel.hk

21. See Crisis in Darfur Mapping Initiative. www.ushmm.org/maps/projects/darfur

22. Nicholas Kristof, "Citizen Foreign Correspondence," *The New York Times*, July 24, 2008. http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/07/24/citizen-foreign-correspondence

23. "2008 ITIF Broadband Rankings," The Information Technology & Innovation Foundation. www.itif.org/files/2008BBRankings.pdf.

24. "High cost" subsidies are the largest component of the Fund. The USF also provides support for three other purposes – subsidies for "lifeline" phone service for low income consumers; reduced rates for telecommunications for rural health care providers; and support for telecommunications for schools and libraries (the so-called E-Rate). This proposal would not affect these three other components of the USF.

APPENDIX

National Civic Engagement Initiatives

Below are a few examples of many existing efforts to expand civic engagement. The first three examples are initiatives that are based on organizing face-to-face forums to discuss policy issues. The second three are examples of primarily media-based initiatives designed to support consideration of important national issues. The final example is an initiative that allows citizens of the UK to submit petitions directly to the Prime Minister via the web.

America Speaks

Founded in 1995, America Speaks' mission is to give citizens a voice in local, regional and national decision-making on public issues of the day. Through deliberative tools such as the 21st Century Town Meeting, more than 130,000 people across the country and around the world have had an impact on their communities. In 21st Century Town Meetings, citizens engage around issues ranging from public policy to land-use planning to public budgeting.

The use of these meetings is not limited to the public sector: they have been used by large non-profit associations, global leadership forums, and annual meetings for other organizations. For example, this methodology has been used by the Mayor of Washington, D.C., the Unified New Orleans Plan, Shaping America's Youth, Port Phillip, Australia, and others.

America Speaks is a nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C.

National Issues Forums

National Issues Forums (NIF) is a nonpartisan, national network of locally-sponsored public forums for the consideration of public policy issues supported by the Kettering Foundation. Organized by a variety of organizations, groups, and individuals, these forums offer citizens the opportunity to deliberate, to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues and to work toward creating reasoned public judgment.

Forums range from small or large group gatherings similar to town hall meetings to study circles held in public places or in people's homes. Each year, the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) identifies several issues of national concern such as health care, immigration, Social Security, or ethnic and racial tensions. Forums are led by trained, neutral moderators, and use a discussion guide that frames the issue by presenting the overall problem and then three or four broad approaches to the problem. Forum participants work through the issue by considering each approach, examining what appeals to them or concerns them, and also the costs, consequences, and trade offs involved with following that approach.

Generation Engage

Generation Engage provides access to civic engagement opportunities for young people through iChats, Community Forums, Engagement Screenings, volunteer and networking opportunities. The group currently has local branches operating in Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina; New York City, New York; Miami, Florida, and Silicon Valley, California.

The Inconvenient Youth

The Inconvenient Youth (ICY) is a non-profit organization established by Mary Doerr, a high school senior in Palo Alto, California. She organized this group to educate and inspire young adults to become agents of change regarding global warming.

ICY provides young people with the knowledge, tactics and tools to become activists in their communities. The goal of ICY is to utilize the opportunities for communications and collaboration provided by the Internet to maximize the collective power of youth to generate change.

Y2K Community Conversations

In 1999, the Clinton Administration sponsored a series of "Y2K Community Conversations" to provide information and a forum to address concerns about the potential impact of the so-called "Y2K" issue that involved built-in calendars in computers that needed to be repro-

grammed to account for the arrival of a new millennium. The federal Council on Year 2000 conversion created a "toolkit" that included a checklist that communities could use to organize town hall-like meetings on the topic. (At the time, the government-produced materials generated some criticism for downplaying the potential seriousness of the issue, but in retrospect, few real problems actually occurred when the year 2000 arrived.) In some locations, local public radio and television stations hosted meetings and broadcast them in their communities.

The Public Radio Collaboration

Starting in 2002, the Public Radio Collaboration sought to involve every public radio news station and each of the public radio networks (NPR, PRI, APM), along with outside partners, to focus on one important issue across one week of programming each year. The goal was to create a bigger impact for public radio than any single network or station could do on its own.

Led by American Public Media|Minnesota Public Radio, the collaboration raised $300,000-$400,000 a year to organize weeklong discussions on three different topics over four years. The three topics were "Understanding America After 9/11" in 2002 on the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attack; "Whose Democracy Is It," which examined the health of American democracy in 2003, a year before the 2004 election; and "Think Global," which focused on the issue of globalization in 2005.

APM|MPR and others produced daily hour-long documentaries on these topics. The participating networks ran stories tied to the central theme, while local and national call-in shows produced programs on these topics across the week, and more than 200 local stations produced their own reports and held radio forums on the same topics. APM|MPR produced additional special national programming, including a series of speeches, which was fed to the public radio system via satellite. For example, former President Bill Clinton spoke at the University of Minnesota on democracy, and Thomas Friedman spoke on globalization just as his book, *The World is Flat*, was being published. APM also produced two global call-in shows in conjunction with the BBC World Service that aired on more than 100 public radio stations and was carried worldwide on the BBC.

Each collaboration created a website to index all of the programming over the course of a week. The Web element let each public radio entity use whatever components it wanted. Millions of listeners heard pieces from the Collaboration project over the course of each week. Stories about the project ran in many newspapers, including *The New York Times*. A series of promos was produced for public television and radio stations and national ads were placed in major newspapers and magazines.

World Without Oil

World Without Oil (WWO) is an online game that invited people to contribute "collective imagination" to confront a real-world issue: the link between our dependence on oil and our economy, climate and quality of life. It used the format of a simulation game as a collaborative platform to explore possible futures and spark future-changing action.

WWO simulated the first 32 weeks of a global oil crisis. During the game, players worked from a shared Web-based "alternate reality dashboard" which provided data on oil prices and availability. Players used this data to consider how the fictional crisis would play out in their part of the world and how it would affect them personally. The game provided awards and recognition for authentic and intriguing stories that were posted on the game's Web site, *www.worldwithoutoil.org*.

The game, which took place in 2007, was developed by ITVS Interactive with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

"E-Petitions" in the UK

In 2006, the office of the British Prime Minister, in partnership with a non-partisan charitable project, mySociety, launched an initiative that allows individuals, non-profit organizations and political groups to deliver a petition directly to the Prime Minister. The petitions are hosted on the Prime Minister's Number 10 Downing Street web site.

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Participants

Jonathan Adelstein
Commissoner
Federal Communications Commission

Richard Adler
President
People & Technology

Madeleine Albright
Principal
The Albright Group

Philip Bennett
Managing Editor
The Washington Post Company

danah boyd
Ph.D Candidate
School of Information
University of California, Berkeley

Gaston Caperton
President
College Board

Idit Harel Caperton
Founder and President
World Wide Workshop Foundation, and
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
MaMaMedia Inc.

John Carroll
Former Editor
Los Angeles Times

Robert Decherd
President and Chief Executive Officer
A. H. Belo Corporation

Charles Firestone
Executive Director
Communications & Society Program
The Aspen Institute

Brian Fisher
Media Director
Roll International

Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of the conference.

Jordan Greenhall

Patricia de Stacy Harrison
President and
Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for Public
Broadcasting

John Hart
President and
Chief Executive Officer
American Democracy Institute

Reed Hundt
Senior Advisor
McKinsey & Company

Walter Isaacson
President and
Chief Executive Officer
The Aspen Institute

Benjamin Jealous
President-Elect
NAACP

Henry Jenkins
Director
Comparative Media Studies
Program, and
Full Professor of Literature
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology

Mary Junck
President and
Chief Executive Officer
Lee Enterprises, Inc.

Gary Kebbel
Journalism Program Director
John S. and James L. Knight
Foundation

Paula Kerger
President and Chief Executive
Officer
Public Broadcasting Service

Michael Klein
Chairman
The Sunlight Foundation/
CoStar Group, Inc.

Eric Klinenberg
Associate Professor of Sociology
New York University

William Kling
President and
Chief Executive Officer
American Public Media

Cyrus Krohn
Director
eCampaign
Republican National Committee

John Kunzweiler
Retired Senior Partner
Accenture

Michael Lomax
President and
Chief Executive Officer
United Negro College Fund, Inc.

Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of the conference.

Lisa MacCallum
Managing Director
Nike Foundation

Marissa Mayer
Vice President, Search Products and User Experience
Google

Chris Neimeth
Publisher
Salon Media Group

Craig Newmark
Founder and Customer Service Representative
craigslist

Donna Nicely
Director
Nashville Public Library

Phil Noble
President
Politics Online, Inc.

John Oliver, Jr.
Publisher and Chief Executive Officer
Afro-American Newspaper

Theodore B. Olson
Former Solicitor General of the United States, and
Partner
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Diana Owen
Associate Professor of Political Science, and
Director of American Studies
Georgetown University

Andrew Prozes
Chief Executive Officer
Lexis Nexis Group

Robin Reiter-Faragalli
Reiter & Associates, LLC

John Rendon
President
The Rendon Group, Inc.

Philip Rosedale
Founder and Chairman of the Board
Second Life

Tom Rosenstiel
Director
Project for Excellence in Journalism

Paul Sagan
President and Chief Executive Officer
Akamai

Peter Shane
Executive Director
Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy

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Josh Silver
Executive Director
Free Press

William Dean Singleton
Vice Chairman, and
Chief Executive Officer
MediaNews Group, Inc.

Jeff Smulyan
Chief Executive Officer and
Chairman of the Board
Emmis Communications

Christopher Solmssen
Director, Media and
Telecom Specialist
Credit Suisse

Rachel Sterne
Founder
Ground Report, LLC

Adrian Talbott
Executive Director
Generation Engage

Loris Ann Taylor
Executive Director
Native Public Media

Staff:

Patricia Kelly
Assistant Director
Communications and Society
Program
The Aspen Institute

Erin Silliman
Project Manager
Communications and Society
Program
The Aspen Institute

Sarah Snodgress
Project Manager
Communications and Society
Program
The Aspen Institute

Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of the conference.

About the Author

Richard Adler is principal of People & Technology, a research and consulting firm based in California's Silicon Valley. He also is a research affiliate at the Institute for the Future (IFTF) in Palo Alto, California.

Mr. Adler was one of the first staff members of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, where he served as Associate Director under the program's founder, Douglass Cater. He has written several reports based on recent Aspen conferences, including last year's India Roundtable, *Minds on Fire: Enhancing India's Knowledge Workforce*, and reports from the Aspen FOCAS conference, *Next Generation Media: The Global Shift* (2006) and *Media and Values* (2007).

His current interests include the intersection of aging and technology and the potential of new healthcare delivery systems. He is the author of *Healthcare Unplugged: The Evolving Role of Wireless Technology* (California Healthcare Foundation, 2007) and is co-editing a book on Texting 4 Health.

He has taught communications at Stanford University and UCLA and was a research fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He holds a BA from Harvard, an MA from the University of California at Berkeley, and an MBA from the McLaren School of Business at the University of San Francisco.

Previous Publications from the Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society

Media and Values: Issues of Content, Community and Intellectual Property (2008)

Richard P. Adler, Drew Clark, Kathleen Wallman, rapporteurs.

This report examines how the new media paradigm intersects issues of content values, intellectual property, and local community. Framing the discussions from FOCAS 2007, *Media and Values* looks at topics such as offensive content, fair use, new business models, intellectual property, local media, and the future of democracy. The report also offers constructive suggestions for resolving several of the more contentious challenges that have accompanied developments in new media. 90 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-488-2, $12.00.

Next-Generation Media: The Global Shift (2007)

Richard P. Adler, rapporteur.

This report examines the growth of the Internet and its effect on a rapidly changing area: the impact of new media on politics, business, society, culture, and governments the world over. The report also sheds light on how traditional media will need to adapt to face the competition of the next-generation media. 76 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-469-6, $12.00.

Soft Power, Hard Issues (2006)

Shanthi Kalathil, rapporteur.

In this compilation of two reports, the author explores the growing importance of soft power by looking at two crucial areas of international tension: the U.S. role in the Middle East and Sino-American relations. The role of information and communications technologies in American public diplomacy in the Middle East and American's relations with China is a central theme in the reports. 70 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-447-5, $12.00.

Opening the Realm: The Role of Communications in Negotiating the Tension of Values in Globalization (2005)

Michael Suman, rapporteur.

This report addresses how communications media and information technologies can be used to ameliorate or exacerbate the tensions among the values of peace, prosperity, and good governance or among the forces of security, capitalism, and democracy. That is, can the media help a society gain the simultaneous benefit of all three values or forces? How does one prioritize how the media go about doing that in a free society? What is the role of the new media, which has so much promise to involve the individual in new ways? 51 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-432-7, $12.00.

Media Convergence, Diversity and Democracy (2003)

Neil Shister, rapporteur.

In the summer of 2002, chief executive level leaders from the public and private sectors met at the Aspen Institute to address the underlying role of media in a democratic society and policies that may improve the ability of citizens to exercise their roles as informed sovereigns in that society. This publication, authored by journalist Neil Shister, examines the concern of many over the shrinking electorate in American elections and the possible role the mass media play in that trend, the debate over whether consolidation in old and new media raises "democratic" as opposed to antitrust concerns, and opportunities for new media to enable citizens to communicate—both in terms of gaining new information and exchanging their own opinions with others. He also addresses the concern that new media will become bottlenecked rather than continue the open architecture of the Internet. 56 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-374-6, $12.00.

In Search of the Public Interest in the New Media Environment (2001)

David Bollier, rapporteur.

This report examines public interest and the role of the marketplace in redefining this concept with respect to educational and cultural content. It suggests options for funding public interest content when all media are moving toward digital transmission. The publication also includes afterthoughts from an international perspective by British historian Asa Briggs. 61 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-333-9, $12.00.

Information Literacy: Advancing Opportunities for Learning in the Digital Age (1999)

Richard P. Adler, rapporteur.

This report explores the barriers that impede acquisition of the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage information in its myriad forms, especially digital. It explores six concrete initiatives that individuals and institutions might develop to remedy this problem. The report includes a background paper on information literacy by Patricia Senn Breivik, former dean of libraries at Wayne State University and chair of the National Forum on Information Literacy. 45 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-262-6, $12.00.

Jobs, Technology, and Employability: Redefining the Social Contract (1998)

Richard P. Adler, rapporteur.

This report examines the changing nature of the employee-employer relationship and whether the economic, technological, demographic, and social trends driving the global economy will lead to the development of a new "social contract" between employer and employee. 62 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-241-3, $12.00.

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The Communications and Society Program is an active venue for global leaders and experts from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds to exchange and gain new knowledge and insights on the societal impact of advances in digital technology and network communications. The Program also creates a multi-disciplinary space in the communications policy-making world where veteran and emerging decision-makers can explore new concepts, find personal growth and insight, and develop new networks for the betterment of the policy-making process and society.

The Program's projects fall into one or more of three categories: communications and media policy, digital technologies and democratic values, and network technology and social change. Ongoing activities of the Communications and Society Program include annual roundtables on journalism and society (e.g., journalism and national security), communications policy in a converged world (e.g., the future of video regulation), the impact of advances in information technology (e.g., "when push comes to pull"), advances in the mailing medium, and diversity and the media. The Program also convenes the Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society, in which chief executive-level leaders of business, government and the non-profit sector examine issues relating to the changing media and technology environment.

Most conferences utilize the signature Aspen Institute seminar format: approximately 25 leaders from a variety of disciplines and perspectives engaged in roundtable dialogue, moderated with the objective of driving the agenda to specific conclusions and recommendations.

Conference reports and other materials are distributed to key policymakers and opinion leaders within the United States and around the world. They are also available to the public at large through the World Wide Web, *www.aspeninstitute.org/c&s.*

The Program's Executive Director is Charles M. Firestone, who has served in that capacity since 1989, and has also served as Executive Vice

President of the Aspen Institute for three years. He is a communications attorney and law professor, formerly director of the UCLA Communications Law Program, first president of the Los Angeles Board of Telecommunications Commissioners, and an appellate attorney for the U.S. Federal Communications Commission.