NETWORKS AND CITIZENSHIP:
USING TECHNOLOGY FOR CIVIC INNOVATION

A Report of the 2011 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society

Jeffrey Abramson, *Rapporteur*

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
FORUM on Communications and Society

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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*

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This report is written from the perspective of an informed observer at the Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society. Unless attributed to a particular person, none of the comments or ideas contained in this report should be taken as embodying the views or carrying the endorsement of any specific participant at the Forum.

Foreword

The advent of digital information and communications technologies (ICTs) has brought disruption to numerous industries, from music, publishing and newspapers to manufacturing and services. Traditional institutions have seen their markets, economic models, power relationships and other aspects of business upended by ordinary consumers empowered by digital technologies. New tools for searching, creating and communicating enable consumers and businesses to find each other in the global marketplace. For some companies, the transition from business models in the industrial age to those in the digital era has been a shock-and-awe experience, and they have been slow to adapt. But many others have seized the opportunities afforded by ICTs and the inherent power of networks to rethink company business models and practices, leading to broader participation and fundamentally changed relationships with customers and the broader public.

The premise of the 2011 Forum on Communications and Society (FOCAS) is that the digital disruption is now coming to democratic institutions and processes. The role of citizen and the exercise of citizenship have grown more complex. People engage in and across new networks and public spheres not bounded by geography. They often belong to more than one network at a time. These may include local, state and regional communities; sovereign states, nations and tribes; and even the global community. The ability to work within and across networks, and to form new networks of citizens, is an increasingly important skill set for citizens in the 21st century. Technology critic and writer Howard Rheingold emphasized the critical role of networks as he points out, "The structure and dynamics of networks influence political freedom, economic wealth creation and participation in the creation of culture."

Concentrating on the citizen as the basic unit in a democracy, FOCAS 2011 explored the parallels between user-centric applications in the business world and citizen-centric democracy. Just as business has moved away from the top-down, command-and-control ethos, so too is the democratic experience evolving as a bottom-up approach to civic and political engagement. There are signs that this evolution is already

underway. Simply look at the ways in which citizens acquire and share information about candidates and government, receive information and services from their governments, participate in campaigns and elections and engage in civic life.

The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program brought together 43 distinguished citizens with considerable experience working in and around the institutions of democracy to explore these issues. A full list of participants appears in the Appendix of the report. The Forum took place in Aspen, Colorado, August 1-4, 2011.

The FOCAS participants sought to address two basic questions: 1) What does citizenship look like in an era of digital networks? 2) What are the emerging roles of individual citizens and institutions in this changing environment? With a common understanding that citizenship is evolving, participants then set out to make recommendations for how to put the power of networks and digital technologies at the service of democratic citizenship.

Conference rapporteur Jeffrey Abramson has deftly summarized their insights, discussions and findings. In the report that follows, Abramson presents a detailed set of recommendations made at the conference for moving the citizenship experience forward—from the ideals of democratic citizenship to practice in the real world of the new digital landscape.

A New Digital Landscape. The following are among the key observations made during the Forum (with special acknowledgement to Andrew McLaughlin, who summarized these defining features of the new digital landscape at the conference):

- ***The Public Sphere.*** ICTs can alter politics by enhancing the public sphere, making it more muscular and egalitarian. The Arab Spring is one example. The emergence of social networking reduces the costs of forming and maintaining connections within and among groups that may form around particular interests or around a particular geography (like Tahrir Square).

- ***Access to Information.*** An explosion of access to huge amounts of data on open-source and open-data networks has democratized access to information. More democratized access to infor-

mation leads to greater civic education, which in turn leads to better-informed citizens and communities. However, information overload and inadequate filtering aids create the risk of citizens drowning in so much information that it becomes difficult to make sense of or use the information effectively. And while the overall trend is toward greater egalitarianism, the ability to pay for the necessary ICT tools and training means that income is still a formidable barrier to equal access to information.

- ***Connectivity between Citizens and Government.*** More and more, digital technology is decentralizing; some of the power that had resided in the hands of gatekeepers and intermediaries is shifting to average users. Now two-way communication and information flows between government and citizens and horizontal communication among citizens is vast. ICTs have increased the speed of communication, permitting citizens to communicate with candidates and elected officials in real time. This immediacy can lead to greater impact on policy decisions and agile responsiveness to the polity, but immediacy also carries the risk of losing valuable time for reflection and careful deliberation.

- ***Global Networks.*** The emergence of global and cross-border networks can help to undermine repressive and authoritative regimes. The impact of social media in the Arab Spring cannot be understated. But even before that, in 2008, the Ushahidi platform, which enabled the monitoring of post-election violence in Kenya, led to improved democratic outcomes in that country. ICTs also enable ad hoc networks to form to address specific, targeted needs beyond electoral politics, such as the coordination and delivery of aid to earthquake-ravaged Haiti. (When the nation's entire infrastructure was lost, Haitians turned to Twitter.)

- ***Hyper-local Citizenship.*** ICTs can work to globalize and also to localize citizenship. Hyper-local networks are key portals for bringing people into civic affairs and connecting people to issues of local or neighborhood concern.

- ***Crowd Sourcing.*** The rise of crowd sourcing to tap knowledge and the talents of the public is another feature of an ICT-enabled citizenship. The methods and techniques of crowd sourcing include self-correcting and self-governing processes in collecting the wisdom of the many.

The Ideals of Citizenship. The following list, taken from Abramson's conference report, captures the ideals of democratic citizenship that any experiments in digital democracy should seek to realize:

- ***Informed citizenship:*** access to independent and accurate information about the doings of government and other powerful institutions. Neither income nor rural location should be a barrier to access to the core information that makes for informed citizenship.

- ***Participatory citizenship:*** meaningful opportunities to participate actively in the deliberative processes of government through which public policy is made.

- ***Empowered citizenship:*** genuine power, in combination with others, to affect the outcome of policy debates.

- ***Educated citizenship:*** the civic education, virtue and spirit it takes to engage others in public dialogue, deliberation and open exchange of ideas about the common good.

- ***Mobilized citizenship:*** the partisan idealism it takes to join with others to fight for a cause or candidate.

- ***Local citizenship:*** the need for public squares, town commons, town meetings and Speakers' Corners to bring citizens out of their homes and into conversation and collaboration with their neighbors.

- ***Global citizenship:*** the understanding that we live in a global village and have the capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance and to protect human rights everywhere.

Key Recommendations of the 2011 Forum on Communications and Society. The 2011 FOCAS recommendations promote ICT environments that enhance relationships among citizens, between citizens and governments and between citizens and the media in the public sphere. The recommendations fall under one of six headings: *Go Local, Go Franklin, Go Madison, Go Truthful and Thorough, Go Entertaining* and *Go Global*. Many of these recommendations propose to create new applications on top of existing or new platforms to improve information flow, communication and citizen interaction. Each recommendation emphasizes the ability of networks to support citizens in large collaborative efforts, smaller-scale collaborations and collective problems. Each recommendation also focuses on building platforms for citizens to take an active role rather than a passive stance. That is, the important nexus of ICTs and citizenship is about citizens' control and their leading roles in governance, not simply more efficient delivery of government services to otherwise passive citizens.

In summary, the 2011 FOCAS recommendations are:

Go Local

- Build good-neighbor apps to run on existing social networks, so as to build citizenship from the local level up.

- Design these neighbor networks to leverage the talents and skills that citizens already—and abundantly—possess.

- Motivate citizens to participate in public policy debates by running prize-winning contests for proposals that garner the most online votes. Give those citizens with a winning proposal face time before a government body that could actually enact the suggestion.

- Design participatory exercises in which citizens make decisions through online referenda.

- Use the point-to-point and decentralizing properties of digital technology to support citizen-to-citizen and citizen-to-government communications.

Go Franklin

- Promote government efforts to "go Franklin" by doing with digital communication what Benjamin Franklin did in his own time: supporting public investment in libraries or in forming community fire brigades.

- Create a political version of the "Prius Effect" by designing an online dashboard display that visually depicts how government and citizens are doing—including each group's achievements and disappointments.

Go Madison

- Convene a former group of congressional representatives to model how political deliberation might take place at the community level, free from the influence of money and the pressure of elections.

Go Truthful and Thorough

- Support media efforts to design an online "flipboard" that pulls together information by subject. Users could flip through the news, coming across articles from multiple points of view. As one example, the flipboard could include a "fact-check" section and "pro" and "con" buttons that lead to op-eds with contrasting perspectives on the same topic.

- Design a downloadable "What it Means to Me" widget to give readers an idea of why a given news story matters to them—how health reform affects the average citizen, whether stimulus money is coming to your town, what the European debt crisis means to your bottom line.

- Develop a media fact-checking capability by creating applications to run on existing browsers that would highlight reliable and accurate sites or sources.

Go Entertaining

- Produce and broadcast an entertaining webisode or television game show around a political topic—like how to solve the city's budget crisis—with a winner declared through online audience participation.

Go Global

- Support global citizenship with applications that monitor censorship and encourage more sustained attention to events abroad.

Acknowledgments

The 2011 Forum on Communications and Society met at the Aspen Institute in Aspen, Colorado, August 1-4, 2011. We thank our senior sponsor, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, for its leadership in developing this Forum. We would also like to thank our special guest, Vice President Al Gore, for joining the FOCAS session on August 4 and sharing his considerable knowledge and insight into the nature of networks and democracy. We would like to thank Livestream, LLC for once again live-streaming the FOCAS sessions, so that people around the world could be a part of the experience. We give special thanks to rapporteur Jeffrey Abramson and to Senior Project Manager Erin Silliman, Assistant Director of the Communications and Society Program Tricia Kelly and Director of Journalism Projects Amy Garmer for their work in bringing this report to fruition.

Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
Communications and Society Program
The Aspen Institute
March 2012

Networks and Citizenship: Using Technology for Civic Innovation

Jeffrey Abramson

Networks and Citizenship: Using Technology for Civic Innovation

A Report of the 2011 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society

Digital Disruption and the Ideals of Citizenship

In any robust understanding of democracy, citizenship is a crucial component of self-government. In turn, the free flow of information, the accuracy of that information, opportunities to participate in the affairs of government and a sense of civic engagement with others are crucial components of citizenship. In evaluating these components, participants in the 2011 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society (FOCAS) explored how best to take citizenship digital. Participants gathered to take stock of innovative ways that citizens can use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to better practice the core—but often unrealized—ideals of citizen participation and empowerment.

The advent of digital ICTs has disrupted numerous industries. Free online content undercuts record labels and print publications. Technologies that increase the speed of communication also untether manufacturing and service jobs from geographical restrictions.

The premise of the 2011 FOCAS is that this digital disruption has or will come to democratic institutions and processes as well. The Forum explored the similarities and differences between citizen-centric democracy and user-centric applications in the world of business. Participants looked specifically at how citizens will access the information necessary to govern, receive services and information from their governments, participate in democratic processes and participate in the public sphere of their locality and the broader world. What are the emerging roles of individuals and institutions in this changing environment?

In the current media environment as described by Paula Kerger, President and CEO of the Public Broadcasting Service, people still watch television, in fact more than ever. Political candidates continue to spend far more money on television advertising than any other way of reaching

voters.[1] These realities mean that digital ICT's political role is not likely to emerge in isolation or in replacement of traditional media. Rather, it will evolve as part of imaginative multi-platform sites that marry the reach of television and the investigative independence of journalists with the speed, graphics, interactivity and open information capacity of ICT. Joaquin Alvarado, Senior Vice President of Digital Innovation at American Public Media, described the FOCAS mission as launching the next multimedia "Extreme Makeover: The Democracy Edition."

Conference participants approached the topic of networks and citizenship from a variety of professional perspectives—business, technology, politics, journalism, entertainment, philanthropy and academics. But there was widespread agreement that Americans are disenchanted with their government and feel relatively powerless as citizens to do much about it. Former Federal Communications Commission Chairman Reed Hundt discussed how despite all the new opportunities for citizens' input, there seems to be little impact on the current policy paralysis in Washington. Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) explained that part of the problem is that networks enable a small and unrepresentative number of partisan activists to indulge in deep-rooted pathologies that can ultimately end in the capture and control of their parties' primaries.

Technology alone accomplishes little but must be accompanied by cultural and financial support for change.

Given these real-world effects from a very few discontented extremists, FOCAS participants considered what ICT might do to make citizenship more muscular and democratic. Though they also acknowledged that technology alone accomplishes little and must be accompanied by cultural and financial support for change. Michael Oreskes, Senior Managing Editor of The Associated Press (A.P.), remarked that media producers can and should build enticing—even entertaining—platforms for active citizenship (the supply side), but at the end of the day individuals have to *want to be* citizens (the demand side).

To date, we have yet to see ICT disrupt politics to the extent that the Internet has already disrupted the music, media and publishing industries, and transformed advertising, marketing, retailing, video, telephones and even our social lives. Given these disruptions

elsewhere, Moderator and Executive Director of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program Charles M. Firestone asked why we should expect government to remain immune from the digital onslaught. According to Daniel Weitzner, Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Internet Policy at the White House, ten years passed after personal computers were introduced into the workplace before they generated a rise in productivity. It may well be that we are in a similar window, waiting for political change.

Certainly signs of transformation are all around us. One does not have to think that ICT *caused* the Arab Spring to credit social networking with mobilizing citizens and pumping up their power to act directly in civil society and outside the bounds of traditional organizations. Nor is this connection between communication change and political reform entirely new. As former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pointed out, the social networks in the Arab Spring played a similar role to the cassette tapes that were smuggled by Polish Solidarity members seeking to distribute Lech Walesa's speeches. Of course, today, ICT distributes ideas more quickly, less expensively, to more people, from more people, in more open and interactive ways than cassettes ever did.

Media producers can and should build enticing, even entertaining platforms for active citizenship (the supply side) but at the end of the day persons have to want to be citizens (the demand side).

Michael Oreskes

Globally, ICT portends the end of center-out control over ideas and communications, though blowback from the forces of censorship is likely to remain a serious threat to political transparency, as OpenNet Initiative's 2010 report on Internet censorship around the world makes clear.[2] Open-source platforms and open data make for the democratization of information, but the battle over whether information should be open or closed on the Internet is far from over. What is clear is that digital networks have emerged as a dominant—if not the dominant—organizational form.[3]

Archon Fung of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government observed that the possibilities for how digital networks and ICT might transform citizenship are as numerous as they are indeterminate. Citizens might

network to bypass traditional organizations such as political parties in favor of bringing public opinion directly to bear on candidates and government policymakers.

They might use ICT to inhabit virtual, online public squares that are inclusive and egalitarian and that mobilize citizens through new organizations, such as Moveon.org or FreedomWorks.org. Alternatively, ICT might support referenda-like exercises in direct democracy, which was tried in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, when voters were empowered to allocate tens of millions of dollars of the city's budget.[4] Tracy Westen, Founder and CEO of the Center for Government Studies, noted that a number of states have adopted online voter-registration systems; the same technologies could be used for online ballot-initiative qualification, leading to more direct democracy. Or perhaps WikiLeaks might be the harbinger of citizens empowering themselves through new forms of truth-based advocacy. Whatever form the transformations take, existing political institutions will certainly change to accommodate the movement of political activity onto digital networks.

The possibilities for how digital networks and ICT might transform citizenship are as numerous as they are indeterminate.

Archon Fung

This is not to say that digital networks will have effects on political life parallel to their effects to date on media, commercial and social life. Being a *citizen* is fundamentally different from being a consumer—or even a Facebook friend. Citizens do not use communication technologies merely to search out a DVD; they search for ideas. Citizens go online not only to express or register or capitalize on their individual interests; they communicate in part to debate what their interests ought to be in light of the diverse issues around them. Citizens accept an ethic of personal responsibility as well as of personal liberty; they expect to serve as well as to be served. Citizens do not habitually cocoon themselves in closed and self-contained societies; their fraternity must be tolerant of and conversant with strangers and friends alike. The FOCAS discussions therefore took note of the need for networked citizens to communicate openly and transparently in public space—in the virtual equivalent of the public square—rather than in narrow silos.

The following list captures the ideals of democratic citizenship that any experiments in digital democracy should seek to realize:

- *Informed citizenship:* access to independent and accurate information about the doings of government and other powerful institutions. Neither income nor rural location should be a barrier to access to the core information that makes for informed citizenship.

Being a citizen is fundamentally different from being a consumer or even a Facebook friend.

- *Participatory citizenship:* meaningful opportunities to participate actively in the deliberative processes of government through which public policy is made.

- *Empowered citizenship:* genuine power, in combination with others, to affect the outcome of policy debates.

- *Educated citizenship:* the civic education, virtue and spirit it takes to engage others in public dialogue, deliberation and open exchange of ideas about the common good.

- *Mobilized citizenship:* the partisan idealism it takes to join with others to fight for a cause or candidate.

- *Local citizenship:* the need for public squares, town commons, town meetings and Speakers' Corners to bring citizens out of their homes and into conversation and collaboration with their neighbors.

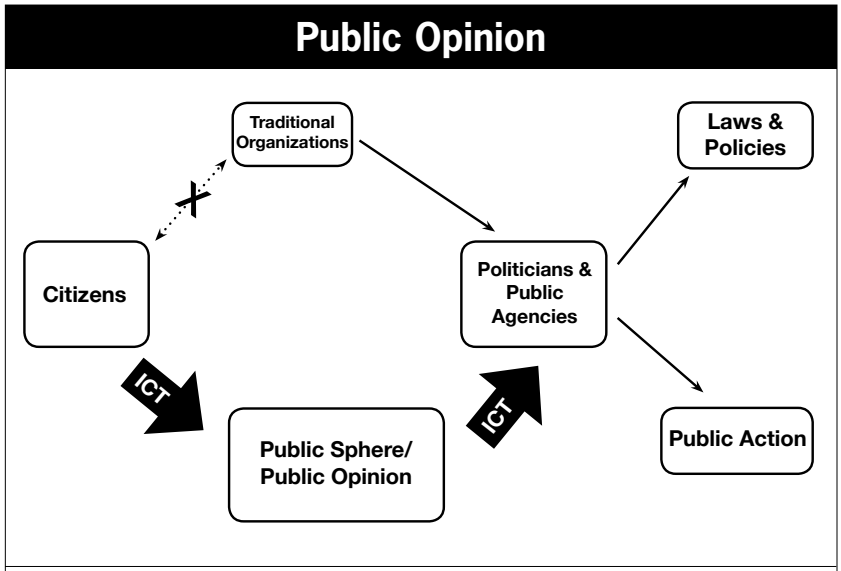
- *Global citizenship:* the understanding that we live in a global village and have the capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance and to protect human rights everywhere.

These various elements of citizenship are not mere scattered entries on a laundry list. They add up to one overall point: citizens of course have private and partisan interests to serve, but citizens also understand that democracy is not about self-interest writ large and certainly not, in the words of political scientist Robert Dahl, about "50 percent plus one getting their way on every issue." Democracy is government accord-

ing to a common good and about participating in the gives and the takes, the compromises and the coalitions that enable a diverse people to share a good life together. E pluribus unum captures this vision of creating a unity that is respectful of difference as well as any slogan of citizenship could.

The Defining Features of the New Digital Landscape

During the first 20 years of the Internet, content industries such as music and newspapers saw radical disruption in their traditional models, and society is currently in the midst of significant changes in telephony, video, advertising, marketing, finance and retailing. With these technologies causing disruption in business institutions and models, why would the institutions and models of governing be immune? Certainly the role of communications tools in the revolutions in the Middle East and political movements elsewhere suggests that the days of center-out control are over. Networks have become the dominant organizational form, offering new opportunities for the individual.



Public Opinion. ICT can alter politics by enhancing the public sphere, making it more muscular and egalitarian. The best real-world example of this may be the Arab Spring.

—Archon Fung, "Public Opinion," a presentation to the 2011 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society (August 2, 2011, Aspen, Colorado).

On the technology side, what are the novel features of digital communications that might enrich or impoverish citizenship? Andrew McLaughlin, Executive Director of Civic Commons and former White House Deputy Chief Technology Officer of the United States, presented FOCAS participants with the most salient features of the new digital landscape.

The emergence of social networking. Pros: social networking has dramatically lowered the cost of group formation, and social networking permits individuals to link together by passion and interest, as well as by geography.

Cons: the very ease of group formation may make ties to those groups weak and cursory.

The explosion of access to huge amounts of information on open-source and open-data networks. Pros: the availability and access to information promises a democratization of information and a true revolution in civic education. For example, the Recovery.gov website permits concerned citizens to track how stimulus money is being spent under the Recovery Act of 2009, to blog and tweet about it, to exchange views, to report fraud and abuse and to search for jobs funded with stimulus money. There is also the Participatory Culture Foundation's open-information work; the Foundation provides organizations worldwide with free access to an array of video tools for distributing their messages.

Cons: the sheer volume of information can overwhelm citizens with what University of Wisconsin Professor Lewis Friedland called "information noise."[5] The Center for Government Studies' Westen stated that often people concoct strategies to navigate through the flood of data to avoid drowning in useless information. For example, people often will cling to one commentator or one station or cable TV news network to pilot them and to provide safe harbor in meaningful information. Unfortunately, this strategy can lead people to lock onto one fixed star for their politics and tune out points of view with which they disagree.

Nancy Tate, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters, expressed the problem as the absence of any "context setters" for the information. University of Maryland computer scientist Ben Shneiderman echoed that thought by suggesting that society needs new interfaces to help mediate all this information in ways that support collaboration on social networks. And former U.S. Secretary of State

Albright expressed concern that the spread of some information—for instance, WikiLeaks' trove of classified State Department cables—can harm rather than serve democracy by exposing the confidential channels through which diplomacy sometimes must be conducted.

The equalizing of access to information. Pros: the Internet can lower the cost of spreading information, and it can provide it in open and free formats and without control by traditional gate-keeping authorities. Jed Alpert, CEO of Mobile Commons, noted ICT's capacity to reach historically underserved communities. He cited the example of Reform Immigration in America, whose website has helped to mobilize and include new groups in politics. Another example is the inclusive and egalitarian effects of TheRoot.com in establishing an electronic news platform, in collaboration with Slate.com, for the African-American community.

The shift from fact to opinion journalism leaves citizens without the kind of accuracy checks newspapers and broadcast media traditionally provided.

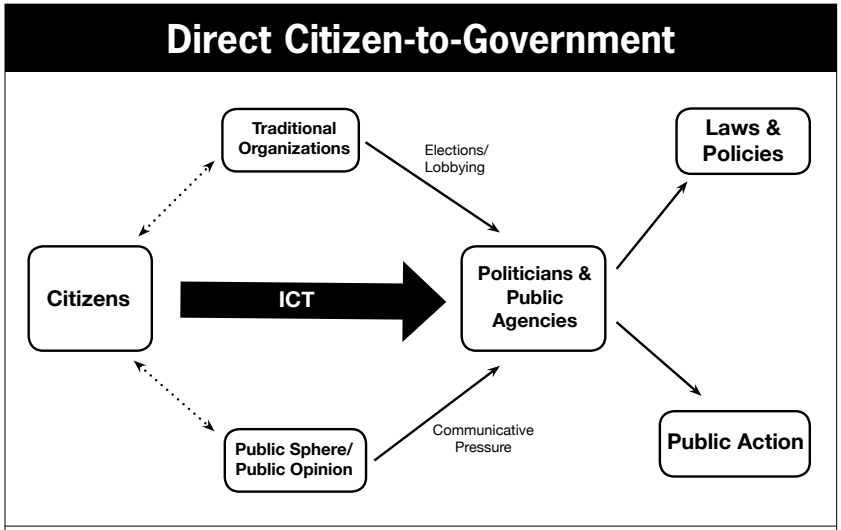
Craig Newmark

Cons: both Jenny Toomey, Senior Program Officer with the Ford Foundation, and Andrew Rasiej, Founder of the Personal Democracy Forum, emphasized that the cost of broadband has created a new "digital divide" that prevents the equality of access to the Internet. According to the 2010 Pew Center survey of Internet usage, 21 percent of adults do not use the Internet and 33 percent of households do not have broadband Internet connections at home.[6]

Digital technology is decentralizing. Pros: in the broadcast era, communication was centralized in the hands of a few powerful actors and was primarily mass-to-point. Citizens had little opportunity to communicate back to government and even less opportunity to network with one another. Compared with broadcasting, digital technology supports point-to-point communications and empowers citizens to make their own television shows or blog their own news.[7] According to Rasiej, citizens and not candidates produced nine of every ten of the 1.5 billion online videos mentioning Barack Obama or John McCain during the 2008 campaign. Digital networks also support genuine two-way communication between citizen and government, and they permit horizontal communications among citizens themselves.

Cons: the body politic can become splintered, fragmented, polarized or balkanized if communications are so decentralized that users filter out opposing sources of information and hear only from likeminded people inside what Steven Clift, Founder and Executive Director of E-Democracy.org, labeled "gated virtual communities." According to Jeffrey Smulyan, CEO of EMMIS Communications, and David Westin, President and CEO of the News Licensing Group and former head of ABC News, the polarization is partly fueled by the economic incentives. Cable television stations that appeal to highly motivated audiences, although small, can be very profitable (Fox News and MSNBC being rival examples). Moreover, as often pointed out by craigslist Founder Craig Newmark, the accompanying shift from fact to opinion journalism leaves citizens without the kind of accuracy checks newspapers and broadcast media traditionally provided.

The increased speed of communications, permitting citizens to communicate with candidates or elected officials in real time. Pros: representatives are expected to serve the interests of their constituents and the speed of communications makes it feasible to know those views in real time.



Direct Citizen-to-Government. One way that technology can change politics is by creating direct links between citizens and government. These links bypass or significantly supplement intermediaries such as the public sphere and traditional organizations.

—Archon Fung, "Direct Citizen-to-Government," a presentation to the 2011 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society (August 2, 2011, Aspen, Colorado).

Glenn Otis Brown of Twitter, pointed to the increased opportunities to accurately measure public sentiments on issues and to rapidly visualize that sentiment with info-graphics. Additionally, speedy communication is helpful if one wants the local government to fix a pothole. A See-Click-Fix style of electronic platform will presumably hasten the government's response to a citizen's post.

Speed can be an enemy of the habits of deliberation and reflection.

Mickey Edwards

Cons: both citizen and elected representative ideally need time to reflect on and possibly change their opinions. Speed, in the judgment of former Congressman Mickey Edwards, can be an enemy of the habits of deliberation and reflection that we value in our representatives. Westen, of the Center for Government Studies, added that speed takes the ability to control the spin on one's message away from candidates. Knowing this, candidates keep their remarks bland, so that nothing said in Peoria will be pounced on as inconsistent with something said in Philadelphia.

The emergence of global or cross-border networks. Pros: ICT undermines the ability of authoritarian governments to close their borders to the free flow of information. For example, the Ushahidi platform, co-developed by Juliana Rotich, was able to conduct intense monitoring of post-election violence in Kenya in 2008. Based on reports submitted by Ushahidi users via the web and mobile phones, events that authorities wished to deny became transparent to the world. In light of a live broadcast ban enacted by the government, the Internet became a vital outlet to show the world what was happening in Kenya. Citizens' eyes made up for the lack of journalists' boots on the ground. Meanwhile, during the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Rendon Group CEO John Rendon pointed out, people *not* in earthquake-ravaged Haiti but scattered throughout the world were able to create an ad hoc web network and an interactive map, which were successful in determining which doctors, with what specialties, were in Haiti and how they could be repositioned to better serve medical needs.

Cons: as technology writer Evgeny Morozov recently argued, ICT companies have supplied repressive regimes throughout the world with surveillance technologies that "agents of the East German Stasi could only have dreamed of."[8]

Hyper-local networks. Pros: At the same time as they are global, social networks can be hyper-local and can be a key portal for bringing individuals into politics by connecting them to the civic concerns of their neighborhoods. For instance, said E-Democracy.org's Clift, one can now readily reach out to neighbors electronically in Minneapolis on platforms like his with simple queries like "I'd like to start a community garden" or "I'd like to start a Spanish-English play group."

Cons: local networks that are not interconnected often are invisible to one another and lack the capacity to build links or bridges to other local networks' members with whom they should be talking.

The rise of crowd sourcing as a way of democratically tapping into the knowledge or talents of the public. Pros: Ushahidi's work in Kenya depended on crowd sourcing. Wikipedia is perhaps the most well-known example of outsourcing what used to be a professional task (writing encyclopedia entries) to the general public—and finding out in the process that there is a self-governing and self-correcting system that stems from the collective wisdom of the many. This process is currently being adapted for civic and political purposes.[9]

Cons: crowd sourcing can be used in ways that cause social harm. For example, in 2011 North London rioters apparently used mobile phones to pass on information in real time about where it was safe to loot. Moreover, the accuracy of crowd sourcing can be in doubt, which was certainly true of many early entries in Wikipedia (and still true of many current entries). The sources of information from the crowd are not always transparent or unbiased to users.

Use of social networking to reform campaign financing. Pros: AEI's Ornstein pointed to Barack Obama's success as a presidential candidate in raising large amounts of money on the Internet from small donors during the 2008 campaign.

Cons: Ornstein was not sure that the Obama network survived the campaign or proved self-sustaining, and, at any rate, social networking has not altered the role of Big Money in campaigns.

Policy Options Ahead: Recommendations

Conference participants considered new government policies and applications at the federal, state and local levels to promote an environment that encourages democratic innovations made possible from emerging digital and network technologies.

In making recommendations, participants were guided by two principles enabled by 21st century communication:

1) The ability of networks to support citizens in mega-collaboration on collective problems.[10] Ben Shneiderman's argument that the proper metric for assessing the democratic capacity of ICT in the new computing age was no longer what the computer can do or what the capacity of a chip is, but what *people* do with computers. Looked at in this way, Shneiderman suggested, the best measurement of the Internet's democratic uses is the number of "collabs" or "contribs" on a mega-contributing, mega-collaborating site such as Wikipedia, Ushahidi, Twitter, Facebook or Localocracy.

2) Distinguish e-democracy from e-services (sometimes also called e-government)—and concentrate on the former. Harvard's Fung suggested this distinction because, with e-services models, individuals are recipients of governmental services, the delivery of which is made more efficient by online communications.[11] But, in e-democracy models, sometimes also referred to as e-governance, individuals are the *co-authors* of their own government, using the new networking technologies to participate knowingly and actively in the formation of public policy. Participants' concern for citizenship as an active rather than passive stance led them to concentrate on how to build robust e-democratic platforms for participation and deliberation.[12]

To a certain extent, elected officials and administrative agencies already have sufficient political and career incentives to pursue efficient e-services delivery to constituents. But they lack similar incentives to invest in e-democracy platforms, since citizens can make both negative and positive comments on any online civic forum the government might create. This lack of a "political market" for citizen-friendly uses of ICT is one of the main reasons groups like FOCAS are trying to jump-start the process.

In making recommendations, the FOCAS participants divided into four working groups, each tasked with brainstorming innovations in a particular area defined by a particular communication dynamic:

1) citizen-to-citizen communications in the public sphere

2) citizen-to-government interactions

3) government-to-citizen communication

4) media-to-citizen content and programming

In the final sessions of the conference, it became apparent that there was considerable overlap and synergy among the working groups' recommendations. They are presented here, therefore, as one master list that recommends the following actions.

Recommendation 1. ***Go Local: Innovations in Citizen-to-Citizen and Citizen-to-Government Communications***

Community organizers since Saul Alinsky have stressed the need to start with what people want. In this spirit, citizenship should be built from the neighborhood out. Four reasons combine to make local citizenship the preferred starting point. First, as shown by Clift's work in Minneapolis (at E-Democracy.org) or Conor White-Sullivan's work in Amherst, Massachusetts (at Localocracy.com) or Graham Richard's tenure as Mayor of Fort Wayne, Indiana, geographical proximity carries with it a strong incentive for neighbors to collaborate in solving neighborhood problems. Second, local issues are likely to be citizen-manageable, or at least more manageable, than regional or national problems. Third, as shown by the work of Benjamin Rigby on micro-volunteering (Sparked.com) or of Conor White-Sullivan on local government, citizens have the talents and knowledge it takes to tackle local problems, and we should develop platforms that are well-designed to leverage existing citizen skills to solve existing problems. Fourth, different neighborhoods are likely to share the same problems, which requires that they be connected in order to work together to solve them; hence, local networking spontaneously expands the horizons of good citizenship. These four reasons for making local citizenship a starting point have a primary goal: to find local innovations capable of becoming "locally everywhere" solutions. The steps of "going local" are as follows:

Citizenship should be built from the neighborhood out.

Recommendation 1A: Develop a Neighbors App

A "Neighbors App" could operate on top of existing social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and the like) and enable neighborhood-level activities, such as discussion of local problems, sharing of tips and

recommendations, planning of neighborhood social events and volunteering activities.

According to a 2010 report from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 9 percent of adults surveyed exchanged emails with neighbors about community issues, 5 percent are on a community listserv and 4 percent have joined a social-networking site connected to community issues.[13] With attention to the importance of local connectivity growing, these percentages should double in the next few years.

The initial pitch to join the Neighbors App would be simple: *get to know your neighbors and talk about your neighborhood.* But the potential for larger-scale civic action around political issues would exist once neighbors networked and began to see the need for collective action to solve local problems.

Stephen Balkam, Founder and CEO of the Family Online Safety Institute, provided a moving example of how one person with a need shared by many built a powerful network of citizens to motivate broad change. The story is drawn from Balkam's previous work in the Islington neighborhoods of North London. At first, a woman paralyzed in a wheelchair had a purely personal need to find transport. So she started a Dial-a-Ride service and networked with others in need of transport. Next, she established a nonprofit and, with a grant from the Islington local council, branched out into a more general campaign to increase public investment in mass transit. Ultimately, her pioneering work laid the groundwork for the Congestion Charge, a multi-year public transport campaign that, among other things, now successfully charges any automobile driving into Central London during peak hours.

To date, people have made relatively few attempts to connect neighborhoods via Facebook apps. Some new design or campaign seems necessary to move people to make use of the opportunities out there. BeNeighbors.org is one example of a proposed "local everywhere" neighborhood platform from E-Democracy.org. The intuitive design idea is that people should be able to select their own "neighborhood circle" size, adjusting it as needed depending on the issue that concerns them and determining what information or community discussions they want to join. This allows citizens to share information only to their nearest neighbors (e.g., "I was broken into last night, did anyone see anything?") or to the entire city (e.g., "Join 'CityWatch' to drive crime out of our communities!").

Recommendation 1B: Locals Online—Search, Find and Join Neighborhood-to-Neighborhood Networks

As Balkam's story (about how one woman's pursuit led to a ripple effect on public transportation and traffic throughout London) illustrates, individuals need to be networked to neighborhoods, but neighborhoods also need to be networked to each other. Currently, thousands of independent, grassroots networks remain largely invisible to outsiders. Yet the premise of the great American experiment depends on broadly shared public discourse. For that reason, a second stage of networking is necessary, geared to discovering, bridging and connecting hyper-local networks.

ICT needs to be more visible and more accessible to *all* members of various networks, not just the highly engaged members who are already connected and who often serve as change agents. There is research to back up the importance of interlinking networks. MIT's Damon Centola, investigating how social networks affect the spread of health-related behavior, found that networks with many locally redundant ties resulted in behavioral changes spreading farther and faster than behavioral changes within random networks. As Centola has written, "Whereas locally clustered ties may be redundant for simple contagions, like information or disease, they can be highly efficient for promoting behavioral diffusion."[14] By extension, it may be that exposure to civic engagement behaviors within and across newly visible networks may yield more such behaviors across the entire community.

The recommendation here is to build on the existing Locals Online communities while still moving the field forward by launching a campaign that can help millions of Americans find and link their local online groups. Such a campaign would start from existing neighborhood- or parent-email lists and build outward through Facebook or Google+ groups tied to a specific geographical place.

Recommendation 1C: Ramp Up Existing Local Platforms into Virtual Public Squares Capable of Supporting Two-Way Citizen-to-Government Communications

Existing local platforms should be expanded to support citizen participation in government policymaking. Platforms should be designed to support not just citizen-to-citizen or neighbor-to-neighbor exchang-

es, but citizen-to-government two-way dialogues as well. Neighbor apps could be ramped up into virtual public squares through the following steps:

- Add an information kiosk icon that citizens can click on to retrieve basic political information scaled to their community, such as: "Where do I register to vote?" or "What is the mayor's position on building a solar farm in the old landfill?" Using a question-and-answer format allows citizens, as well as participating officials, to answer posted questions and to take advantage of crowd sourcing to generate accurate answers.

- Add a virtual public square where citizens can make policy suggestions and debate one another's proposals for solving neighborhood or cross-neighborhood concerns. The virtual public square should include a tool- and open-data set—such as Democracymap.org—that would help citizens to locate their representatives and to contact them by email. The virtual square should also be designed so that citizens can interactively debate an issue—like building a solar farm in the old landfill. Posted proposals would be subject to debate, amendment and voting. Proposals that achieve sufficient support in the virtual public square would then be taken to government. Government officials could be brought into the virtual public square to consider any policy proposals achieving certain levels of citizen support and to respond to them.

- Provide incentives for citizens to participate in the virtual public square along the lines of the X-Prize or Challenge.gov competitions. Citizens whose policy proposals win the most support in any online debate could receive rewards, such as 1) institutional and financial support from the sponsor of the contest to help implement the winning policy proposal; 2) an opportunity to move from participating in the virtual discussion to getting face time with local representatives and a chance to present a neighborhood group's consensus recommendation; or 3) face time before the legislative or administrative body with the specific authority to enact the winning proposal.

- Add a virtual volunteering booth, where local governments and nonprofit organizations can meet online to match their needs with the time and skills of citizen volunteers. Many citizens already have the talent to solve many neighborhood problems; communities should build platforms that leverage those talents and that lower the costs of solutions to problems as citizens freely contribute their time and expertise. For instance, many companies already have policies to support community volunteering by providing employees with incentives to get involved. There are even businesses—such as Sparked.com—that work with companies to create websites that support the companies' volunteer programs.[15]

Recommendation 1D: Equalize Access to Local Networks and Forums

Neighborhood networks and virtual public squares, as envisioned by participants, will work to promote democracy only if more is done to give citizens equal and affordable access to Internet and mobile communications. Two ideas deserve considered support:

- In 2005, at the urging of Mayor Graham Richard, Verizon invested over $100 million to build out a fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) system in Fort Wayne, Indiana, making it one of the first cities to enjoy city-wide fiber-optic broadband services (FIOS). However, today many communities do not have local providers—or enthusiastic mayors—willing to build FTTH systems. Mayor Richard is working on public-private partnerships to bring fiber-optic cable to rural and outlying areas currently underserved by high-speed broadband. The partnership calls for municipalities to issue bonds (Smart City Bonds) to finance the construction, but it calls for private FTTH operators to partner with the local community to share some of the risk of operation, management and financing. Laying of optical fiber not only serves the Internet needs of a community's citizens; it also creates new public goods, since the fiber infrastructure can be used for smart sewer, water and energy systems.

- The Ford Foundation's Toomey recommended studying the feasibility of the One Economy Corporation's proposal that

no public housing be built or substantially renovated without adding Internet connectivity. Developers would receive a tax write-off to defray the costs of networking buildings, in the same way they already can write off certain maintenance and grounds-keeping expenses.

RECOMMENDATION 2. ***Go Franklin: Government-to-Citizen Communications***

ICT is just one tool for citizen congregations to use in a virtual public square. Government must do its part to make citizenship participation *matter* in the actual policymaking process. Unless citizens see that participation has consequences, they are unlikely to sustain their visits to the virtual public square, no matter how well-designed it is.

The slogan "Go Franklin" puts the call out for a modern-day Benjamin Franklin, who will do for government today what Franklin did in his time by starting local fire brigades and libraries. Governments "go Franklin" when they use ICT imaginatively to: 1) communicate with citizens; 2) empower citizens to address public problems; and 3) meet the needs of the community. The following are suggestions for how government can use its resources and authority to support innovations in digital citizenship.[16]

Recommendation 2A: The Social Contract Meets the Social Network

In Abraham Lincoln's 1861 inaugural address, he beseeched a shattered nation on the brink of Civil War to let "the better angels of our nature" prevail, to come together and preserve the union. Americans today face no such dire crisis and yet disenchantment with government does justify a renewal of the social contract. ICT should help convene the people in a constitutional "re-founding" by asking core questions about what it means for "We, the people, to form a more perfect union":

- Should government do things people cannot do on their own (e.g., build and maintain roads, bridges, mass transit systems, sewers)?

- Should government create public goods (e.g., parks, public swimming pools, public schools)?

- Should government create a safe and trusted environment for all (e.g., police, fire fighters, environmental protection)?

- Should government create a safety net (e.g., Social Security, unemployment compensation, Medicare, Medicaid)?

All government agencies in the United States could accomplish this by using multiple platforms to survey citizens in their jurisdictions about the purposes of government. The survey should be the start of an ongoing dialogue about what a social contract should provide.

Recommendation 2B: Create a Dashboard that Visualizes "How Government is Doing" and "How Citizens are Doing"

It is important to design any social-contract survey so that it does not seem like just a token gesture. To make the survey supportive of genuine two-way conversation, Ushahidi's Rotich suggested an accompanying visual display that measures how government is actually doing in response to feedback from the social-contract survey. In any such display or meter, citizens should also rate their own performances (are they actively engaged citizens?). An engagement loop between citizens and government works a little like those flashing speedometer signs in a school zone: when drivers are made aware of their speed, they often adjust accordingly. The government gives information to the citizen, the citizen alters her actions, communities are safer and the feedback loop proves effective. Everyone wins. Another analogy might be the "Prius Effect," in which Toyota Prius drivers have a special dashboard feature that lets them know how much gas they are burning through or conserving at any given moment; drivers so prompted often tweak their driving habits in an effort to conserve more fuel. Essentially it is about incorporating feedback loops into the engagement between citizen and government. This is an instance where technology can be a big help.

The question is whether an innovator can design a similar visual monitor that displays how well government is doing. The obvious obstacle to designing such a monitor is that ratings of government performance are bound to be far more subjective than are ratings of a car's fuel performance. The measurement variables are more numerous and far more complex. Still, there is something inspiring about an officeholder boldly "going Franklin" and inviting online citizens to rate his or her perfor-

mance. Local citizens could even create the display system themselves—much as students have created online evaluation systems for their professors. If the mere display of gas consumption causes Toyota Prius drivers to reform their ways, a well-designed "how well is government doing?/ how well are citizens doing?" graphic could prompt analogous reform among both those piloting the ship of state and those onboard.

Recommendation 2C: Recruit Communities Willing to Go Franklin

According to American Public Media's Alvarado, the technology to support governments wishing to "go Franklin" is already on the shelf—or could be designed within six months. What is needed is a small number of local governments or organizations who are excited about empowering citizens and willing to roll out the technology. Some possible partners for going Franklin are: 1) interested mayors convened in concert with technology designers; 2) The League of Women Voters; 3) the National Conference of Cities; 4) public universities designing democracy-in-action classes; 5) public libraries; and 6) public broadcasting stations interested in creating a television show around democracy in action.

A promising example of finding partners willing to go Franklin was offered in 2010 by Chicago Alderman Joseph Moore. Each city alderman that year was given a discretionary fund of $1 million to spend in support of projects that would be to the benefit of residents in his or her ward. Rather than making the decision alone, Moore empowered the residents of Ward 49 to vote on the best uses for the money. He turned to existing platforms for online participatory budgeting exercises that had been developed in Brazil and elsewhere. He permitted online discussion and voting by any ward resident over 16, regardless of citizenship or registration status. More than 1,600 residents participated and the winning projects included sidewalks, bike lanes, bike racks, community gardens and wall murals. Moore wrote that the process not only resulted in project recommendations; it also helped to build a sense of community involvement in the ward that would remain even after the particular exercise was over.[17]

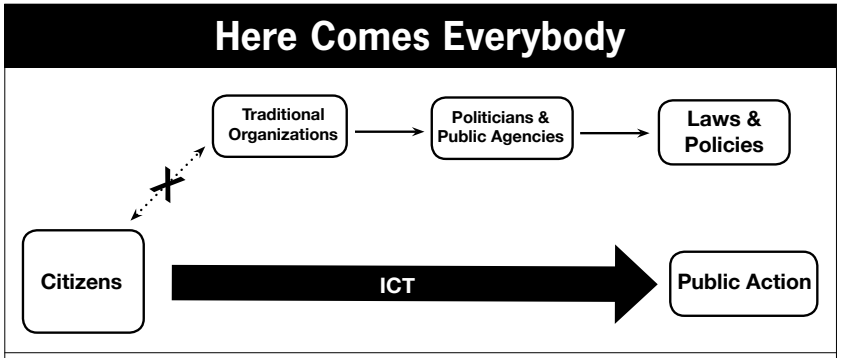
One recent example of government going Franklin, described by Rachel Sterne, Chief Digital Officer for the city of New York, was the recent "Hackathon." The goal was to redesign the city's website to make

it more citizen-friendly. New York City held an open design contest with onsite participants suggesting innovations. The Judge's Prize was awarded to Casson Rosenblatt, Matthew Howell and Tom Gibbons for their idea: MyNYC.gov. The site brings "gameification" to being a good citizen, awarding points to residents who report problems, such as potholes and downed trees. Citizens can then use those points to compel the city to make small grants toward a local cause.

Recommendation 2D: Study Successful Examples of Going Franklin

Government can go Franklin in ways that differ not only in their technological means but also in their political ends. For example, two of the most successful examples of going Franklin to date, described below, had very different political ideals behind their design.

The first is the example of the participatory budgeting rolled out in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and by Alderman Moore in Chicago's 49th Ward. With participatory budgeting, ICT empowered citizens to bypass the traditional budgeting process in favor of allocating monies themselves. This is what Harvard's Fung described as the "here comes everybody" model of politics: using the pathways of ICT to permit citizens, in the equivalent of online referenda. In other words, citizens do not just vote for representatives who will then vote on budgets, but they bypass the institutions of representative democracy altogether and vote on the budgets directly.



Here Comes Everybody. Another way that technology can alter politics is by allowing citizens to bypass all intermediaries standing between them and a desired action.

—Archon Fung, "Here Comes Everybody" a presentation to the 2011 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society (August 2, 2011, Aspen, Colorado).

A second, and conceptually different way for government to go Franklin would be to invite citizens to participate far more actively in and through the established channels of representative democracy. An intriguing example of this approach comes from Latvia, as described by Andrew McLaughlin. Latvia's government has embraced an online petitions process developed by the website Mana Balss (http://manabalss.lv). Citizens are invited to post proposals for parliamentary action. Initially, only the proposing citizen knows the URL of her proposal; her mission is to use email, her blog, Twitter or any other means to inspire her fellow Latvians to visit that page and cast a "vote" in support of the proposal. Once the proposal garners 1,000 supporters, the page moves to the public portion of the Mana Balss site, where any Latvian can review and debate the proposal, suggest improvements or revisions and publicly signal support. If a proposal attracts 10,000 supporters, then the proposing citizen is invited to the floor of the national legislature to present the proposal for consideration by the elected representatives.

Importantly, the legislature is under no obligation to give these proposals further hearings or a vote, but it is notable that at least two proposals have, in the past year, gone from Mana Balss to the floor of the parliament to final approval as law. The Latvian government went Franklin by inviting citizen participation in and through established channels of representative democracy—rather than around them.

Any governments wishing to go Franklin must explain to technical advisors exactly which of the above two models (or other models) for citizenship participation they are seeking to follow.

RECOMMENDATION 3. *Go Madison*

Government needs to "go Madison" as well as Franklin. The Madisonian blueprint for good government calls for prudent politics, free of debilitating interests and ideologies. AEI's Ornstein put forward a concrete way to go Madison: convene and televise a debate among a bipartisan group of *former* members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. Unencumbered by the immediate and polarizing demands of money and campaigns or by the larger divisive culture inside Congress, former congressional leaders could debate controversial issues on the merits. A respected news program like "PBS NewsHour" could help design and air the proceedings, with local public broadcasting sta-

tions producing follow-ups or hosting companion shows with former mayors or state representatives. Going Madison would include ICT by delivering background information to citizens about the policies the former lawmakers are debating and permitting citizens to debate the issues with one another online and to participate in two-way exchanges with the former officials—for example, by using social media to submit questions. Funding sources must be found to help support such an endeavor, given the present financial pressure on public broadcasting.

Going Madison is flexible. The convened group could include representation from citizen groups, as well as former members of government from non-legislative branches. There could be citizen juries, chosen like actual juries to be representative of the community, before whom the case for and against a given proposal will be tried. Participants further suggested a convening of a bipartisan group of former mayors or governors to hear how they would tackle the national economic crisis. However structured, the purpose of the exercise would be to create a platform for politics as considered deliberation, rather than sound bites, pandering or venom.

The go Madison moment occurs when citizens and politicians escape from narrow and polarizing echo chambers and hear the clarion voices of compromise and coalition-building. To bring out the Madison in citizens, Harvard's Fung suggested designing a special widget to signal a potentially unhealthy consumption of news and information from an overly narrow slice of the political spectrum. The widget could glow blue or red, for example, depending on the user's news consumption (i.e., Democrat or Republican). A similar technology is already in development. "Truth Goggles" are the creation of MIT graduate student Daniel Schultz. It is a bookmarklet (a program that saves website links) that color-codifies written content on the web based on its level of truth. So, when the goggles highlight text with the color red, that indicates an entirely false statement; with yellow, a somewhat false statement; with blue, a somewhat true statement; and with green, a fact. Schultz stresses the incipient nature of Truth Goggles, but its potential is obvious. With further sophistication of the software, the goggles could guide news consumers out of polarizing echo chambers and toward credible news sources. With wide enough acceptance, such technology could even inspire writers to avoid distorting the truth in the first place—leading to a renaissance of accuracy and trust on the web.

RECOMMENDATION 4. ***Go Truthful and Thorough***

The following are a series of devices designed to buttress or replace the media's historic gate-keeping functions in presenting unbiased and accurate information to citizens from a variety of sources and competing views.

Recommendation 4A: Design a Flipboard to Help Citizens Navigate through the Flood of Information

News organizations should offer consumers a light, user-friendly flipboard that aggregates information by subject. Users could flip through the news in ways that guaranteed they would come across articles or sources from multiple points of view. The flipboard could include "pro" and "con" buttons: pushing the "con" button, for instance, would take the viewer to an article expressing an opposing point of view to that of the account already read. There could be a "point-of-view" slider that allows citizens to literally dial left, right and center for competing points of view. Craig Dubow, who at the time of FOCAS was the Chairman and CEO of Gannett Co., expressed the hope that a point-of-view slider would deter bias in media content production.

Recommendation 4B: Design a "What it Means to Me" Widget or Graphic to Show Viewers Why News Matters

Michael Maness of the Knight Foundation pointed out that there is nothing like an approaching natural disaster to focus a person's attention on the news. Perhaps drawing a reader's attention to the local or personal effects and impacts of other new features would spark interest almost as well as a tornado warning. For instance, articles on the Greek debt crisis could be accompanied by a "what-it-means-to-me" sidebar that shows how U.S. home mortgage rates or investments in global bond funds might be affected by events across the ocean in Greece. The notion is not that citizens should narrowly and selectively focus only on news that affects them personally; but a "what-it-means-to-me" widget could amplify natural incentives of self-interest to expand readers' appetites for the importance of news around the world. A.P.'s Michael Oreskes suggested that The Associated Press might be very interested in partnering with others on a "what-it-means-to-me" widget.

Recommendation 4C: Restore the Media's Traditional Fact-Checking Role by Creating Browser Plug-Ins that Check for Factual Accuracy

The perpetuation of factually inaccurate information is a matter for deep civic concern. To support the media's traditional fact-checking role, Internet browser-based applications should be designed to highlight credible or trustworthy sites and sources of information. Countless applications have already been designed and built into Internet browsers—like Safari, Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer—that perform tasks such as flagging websites that pose security risks to the user. Browser-based applications like this could perform the task of measuring the accuracy of a site's information as well. A fact-checking widget could provide browsers with a portal through which articles must pass in order to receive a factually trustworthy and unbiased rating. The Ford Foundation's Toomey noted that Politifact.com's "Truth-O-Meter" is close to performing as a fact-checking portal already. A similar concept could be a slider or meter that goes from red to yellow to green to signal the credibility of a site or particular blog or post. Newmark of craigslist thought the technology could go further and display the accuracy-check in real time—like when an interviewee, pundit or host on cable television was wrong on the facts. Such a recommendation needs to be fine-tuned and developed to function impartially so that it cannot be manipulated to filter in or out certain points of view. But, as Toomey pointed out, that danger is already the status quo.

Recommendation 5. ***Go Entertaining: Connect Social Networking to Broadcasting***

News organizations should design content production with entertaining hooks. As EMMIS's Smulyan put it, we need to show citizens that informing themselves politically can be fun.

To accomplish this, creative partnerships could be formed with simulation-game creators, broadcast outlets and social-networking sites to devise a multi-platform televised civic-participation event. (American Public Media's Alvarado wasn't kidding when he said we are after "Extreme Makeover: The Democracy Edition.")

Neal Shapiro, President and CEO of WNET, sketched out a political contest, which might interest a public-broadcasting outlet, called "YouVille": a budgeting game in which citizens maneuver to gain

support for their proposed solutions to their city's budgetary crisis, replete with a presentation of factual information, interviews with experts and local officials and audience participation—all culminating in an "American Idol"-like online voting process to choose a winner.[18] Following up on this, Smulyan imagined the hook: "Come up with the right solution to the budget crisis and win $10 million!" But the problem in designing a fair political game, Shapiro noted, is that partisanship leeches into so many creative issues, starting with what data participants need to have if they are to play the budgeting game well.

Several participants expressed interest in pursuing the entertainment-show concept but noted that the group lacked an experienced game designer and would have to seek further advice before fully fleshing out the concept. One possible place to go is MIT's Center for Civic Media, which has developed an augmented reality game on the issue of climate change in a simulated pivotal election.[19]

Social games have emerged as a major phenomenon. CityVille, Facebook's leading social game, had more than 75 million users in September 2011.[20] The fastest-growing game, the Sims Social, had more than 66 million users that same month.[21] Clearly, there is an opportunity to enter the exploding social-game market and create a game for virtual citizens.

RECOMMENDATION 6. *Go Global: Bridge Cultural and Spatial Boundaries*

The first recommendation was to "go local." The last recommendation is to "go global" as well.

FOCAS devoted one plenary session specifically to global politics. Several conference members brought a vast experience with global affairs to the table, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Ushahidi's Juliana Rotich, influential Egyptian journalist and blogger Wael Abbas, Senior Advisor to the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Jean-Christophe Bas, the Rendon Group's John Rendon, the Personal Democracy Forum's Andrew Rasiej and Al Gore, in a guest appearance.

Until the last half of the last century, citizens mostly lacked the ability to learn about natural and political disasters happening in distant places in real time (and when they did, it was often through news and wire services, not through the current army of citizen journalists online and on

social-networking sites giving eye-witness testimony to history), much less the capacity to give immediate response and aid. ICT has exploded time, space and distance barriers to global communications. The circle and concerns of citizenship will—and ought to—expand to act on the global knowledge we now have of everything from earthquakes to famine, from repression to rebellion. And yet, as Sparked.com's Rigby remarked, there is a paradox: re-"tribalization" is proceeding apace with the growth of the global village.

Recommendation 6A: Encourage Collaboration not Confrontation between Civil Society and International Organizations

Civil society's response to economic and financial globalization has undergone significant changes since the 1990s, when movements adopted what the UNAOC's Bas described as an "anti" or confrontational stance. There have been the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999, demonstrations at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund annual meetings in Prague in 2000 and attempts to disrupt the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001, among others.

Social media and ICT promote collaboration rather than confrontation between civil society and global organizations. The new global citizen has ways to influence international policymakers that previous generations lacked.

Jean-Christophe Bas

Bas credits social media and ICT with promoting collaboration rather than confrontation between civil society and global organizations. The new global citizen has ways to influence international policymakers that previous generations lacked. For example, this new collaborative stance has taken shape with humanitarian assistance after the earthquake in Haiti and after the Tsunami in Japan; the TED (Technology, Entertainment, Development) conference's objective of "ideas worth spreading" and its $100,000 prize to support an extraordinary individual's "one wish to change the world";[22] and the Avaaz.org website that mobilizes four to five million people across the world on international campaigns (like freezing deposed Egyptian ruler Hosni Mubarak's assets in Swiss banks), to name a few.

Recommendation 6B: Encourage Media to Cover World Events as Marathons rather than as Football Games

The media would be a better friend of global citizenship if it sustained our attention to international events. Secretary Albright pointed out that most news networks covered events in Egypt as if they were a football game, when in fact they are more akin to a marathon. The news cycle declared a winner in Egypt and then moved on to the next story. Little attention is being given to the continuing marathon—the struggle to achieve democratic governments in Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab Spring nations. What global citizenship requires, in Albright's judgment, is a longer attention span.

Most news networks covered events in Egypt as if they were a football game, when in fact they are more akin to a marathon.

Madeleine Albright

Recommendation 6C: Develop Apps to Monitor Censorship

Technology can change politics by crowd-sourcing efforts to monitor the political process. The best real world example of this may be Ushahidi, a technology originally used to monitor election violence in Kenya.

Reflecting on their experiences in Kenya and Egypt respectively, Rotich and Abbas stressed the role ICT played when there were too few journalists on the ground to get the news out. By standing watch, global citizens can provide dissenters some amount of protection simply by showing or telling the world what is occurring. By opening up channels of communication abroad and insisting that multinational corporations not cooperate with authoritarian regimes' efforts to close down Internet access within their own borders, the global citizen can use ICT to keep borders open to the free flow of information. One specific recommendation is to develop or support existing "apps to monitor censorship"—perhaps developing them as mobile apps for the global citizen.

Recommendation 6D: Develop Prize Contests for Intercultural Innovation

As with the recommendations for domestic politics, contests should be sponsored for innovations designed to increase international understanding. Shortly following the conclusion of FOCAS 2011, Bas

informed the author of this report that the UNAOC had partnered with BMW to offer a monetary prize for initiatives that advance cross-cultural understandings. In addition to the money, the winning innovators will receive institutional support from the UNAOC and its private partners to help launch their policy proposals.

Conclusion

Democracies thrive when a vital civil society or public sphere stands between atomized individuals and the collective power of government. Civil society traditionally occupied public and physical space; people assembled at Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park or in town meetings throughout the United States. Civil society thrives in the meeting halls of all sorts of voluntary associations, from the Girl Scouts of America to Veterans of Foreign Wars to labor unions and from professional organizations such as the American Medical Association to nonprofit agencies such as Catholic Charities or Oxfam.

Civil society is ideally pluralistic, not monolithic, moving not by force of one all-encompassing majority but through the power shifting coalitions and compromises among competing associations working to achieve the common good. Prejudice and discrimination skew the workings of civil society when they exclude certain groups. Luckily, the trajectory of American history has been to work toward an ever more inclusive and egalitarian public sphere. White House Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Internet Policy Daniel Weitzner talked about the American ethos of volunteerism; civil society is the public sphere of citizen volunteers.

But as Madison appreciated even in his own day, connections among citizens are difficult to maintain in an extended republic. That is why the Founders were so wary of centralized government: federalism at least promised to decentralize power and to give citizens genuine opportunities to affect governments at all levels. But the costs of participation, even at the local level, have always been high, and today there seems to be a shrinking (or even deserted) number of public spaces where individuals with competing views meet—even for entertainment and recreational purposes, much less for political and social debate. As AEI's Ornstein argued, broadcast television for a time gave us an electronic public square in place of the old physical ones: three networks

delivering basically the same shared news and facts to all viewers. The above recommendations to take democracy online are aimed at restoring a common base and the habits of collaboration to our understanding of good citizenship.

None of the recommendations herein stand on technological solutions alone. However all of the recommendations require a well-designed platform for citizen democracy—a platform that supports numerous diverse groups at the same time, a platform that rewards ideas and promotes debates that prove persuasive across demographic divides. Digital citizenship must preserve what has always been the moral mission of good citizenship. The citizen practices politics not as a game with winners and losers, but as service to a common good that makes our lives together better.

Notes

1. Ashley Parker, "Spending on Campaign TV Ads Expected to Break Record," *The New York Times* (October 6, 2010). Available at: http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/06/television-ad-spending-expected-to-break-record.

2. OpenNet Initiative, "The Year in Review," (2010). Available at: http://opennet.net/about-filtering/2010yearinreview/.

3. As of August 26, 2011, 65 percent of adult Internet users reported using a social-networking site. See Mary Madden and Kathryn Zickuhr, "Social Networking" a Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project report (August 26, 2011). Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Social-Networking-Sites.aspx. Facebook claims 750 million users worldwide, 50 percent of whom log in on any particular day, spending a total of 700 billion minutes per month on the site. The average user has 130 friends listed. Twitter claims 100 million monthly active users worldwide, 50 percent of whom log in every day, generating 230 million tweets a day, according to Glenn Otis Brown, Director of Business Development at Twitter.

4. Tiago Peixoto, "e-Participatory Budgeting: e-Democracy from theory to success?" e-Democracy Centre (2008). Available at: http://www.edemocracycentre.ch/inner.php?lname=Publications&table=Working_Papers&parent_id=49&link_id=66&sublinkname=e-DC%20Working%20Papers.

5. The federal government alone maintains more than 24,000 websites. In announcing plans to cut that number to 2,000, President Barack Obama quipped that the government did not need a website devoted to "foresters who fiddle." See Macon Phillips, "TooManyWebsites.gov," *The White House Blog* (June 13, 2011). Available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/06/13/toomanywebsitesgov.

6. Aaron Smith, "Home Broadband 2010," a Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project report (August 11, 2010). Available at: http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Home-

Broadband-2010.aspx. According to a Pew tracking survey, "High-income and well-educated internet users are much more likely to use government services and information online." Moreover, "Whites are significantly more likely than either African Americans or Latinos to participate in the online debate around government issues or politics," whereas racial divergences in the usage of e-services websites are far more modest. For more, see Aaron Smith, "Government Online," a Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project report (April 27, 2010). Available at: http://pewinternet.org/~/media/Files/.../PIP_Government_Online_2010.pdf.

7. Alongside the traditional fourth estate, bloggers now comprise what Google's Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen call the "interconnected estate." See Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen, "The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Diffusion of Power," Foreign Affairs 89, no. 6 (November-December 2010). Available at: http:///www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66781/eric-schmidt-and-jared-cohen/the-digital-disruption.

8. Evgeny Morozov, "Political Repression 2.0," *The New York Times* (September 2, 2011): A-21. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/opinion/political-repression-2-0.html.

9. See Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (New York: Perseus Publishing, 2002), 160-164. One example of online communications tapping into the knowledge base of the citizenry at large is the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's (USPTO) "Peer-to-Patent" review program, in which patent applicants voluntarily submit their applications for review by "citizen-experts" in the general public. In the words of the patent office, "The peer-to-patent system creates a framework which makes use of an on-line system to merge the technologies of peer-to-peer communications, networking and collaborative filtering to offer expertise in identifying relevant literature which informs both patent applicants and the USPTO's patent examiners." White House Open Government Initiative, "Peer-to-Patent: Better Information for Better Patents," (2007). Available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/innovations/Peer-to-Patent.

10. See Ben Shneiderman, *Leonardo's Laptop: Human Needs and the New Computing Technologies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002); see also Ben Shneiderman, Jennifer Preece, Peter Pirolli, "Realizing The Value of Social Media Requires Innovative Computing Research," *Communications of the ACM* 54, no. 9 (September 2011): 34-37. Available at: http://cacm.acm.org/magazines/2011/9/122795-realizing-the-value-of-social-media-requires-innovative-computing-research/fulltext.

11. For a summary of the government's e-services programs, see Aaron Smith, "The internet gives citizens new paths to government services and information," Government Online, a Pew Internet & American Life Project report (April 27, 2010). Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org//Reports/2010/Government-Online/Summary-of-Findings.aspx. The report found that 82 percent of Internet users (61 percent of all American adults) have looked for information or completed a transaction on a government website in the 12 months preceding the survey. A recent example of e-government is the development of a mobile telephone app by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help people on the East Coast prepare for and recover from Hurricane Irene in August 2011.

12. The E-Democracy Centre, at the University of Zurich, supports research on e-democratic initiatives throughout the world. See http://www.edemocracycentre.ch/index.php. See also Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Promise and Problems of E-Democracy: Challenges of Online Civic Engagement* (Paris: OCED Publishing, 2003). Available at: www.oecd.org/dataoecd/9/11/35176328.pdf. Finally, Steven Clift may have been the first person to use the term "e-democracy" when he founded E-democracy.org in Minnesota in 1994.

13. Aaron Smith, "Neighbors Online," a Pew Internet & American Life Project report (June 9, 2010). Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Neighbors-Online/Part-1.aspx.

14. Damon Centola et al., "The Spread of Behavior in an Online Social Network Experiment," *Science* 329, no. 1194 (2010). Available at: http://dcentola.scripts.mit.edu/docs/Centola%20Spread%20of%20Behavior.pdf.

15. Recently, Sparked.com announced a partnership with the Points of Light Institute to create exactly this sort of volunteering portal for the city of San Francisco. The platform will match citizens to the volunteering needs of local businesses, nonprofits and city departments. Volunteering can be online ("desktop volunteering") or in-person. The project will earn money for San Francisco through corporate sponsorships and through sales of the platform to large corporations in the city, which can use the site to encourage their own employees to volunteer.

16. For online discussion, see Twitter at #gofranklin.

17. Joe Moore, "Participatory Budgeting: You Have a Date with Democracy—Decide How Your Tax Dollars Will Be Spent in the 49th Ward," (2010). Available at: http://wwwward49.com/participatory-budgeting. See also the Participatory Budgeting Project's website, http://www.participatorybudgeting.org, for a description of citizen participation in budgeting in New York as well as in Chicago.

18. In 2009, the town of Evanston, Illinois, experimented with inviting citizens to propose ways of closing a $9.5 million hole in the next year's budget. Proposals were posted for online voting and public-access television channels broadcasted four budget workshops. Nearly 1,000 residents voted online. See Mike Shedlock, "Evanston Illinois Social Experiment to Solve Budget Deficit," *Mish's Global Economic Trend Analysis* (December 31, 2009). Available at: http://globaleconomicanalysis.blogspot.com/2009/21/evanston-illinois-social-experiment-to.html.

19. Eric Klopfer, "Timelab 2100," *MIT Center for Future Civic Media* (2008). Available at: http://civic.mit.edu/projects/c4fcm/timelab-2100.

20. Joe Osborne, "Top 25 Facebook Games—September 2011: Rise of The Sims Social," *Game News* (September 6, 2011). Available at http://blog.games.com/2011/09/06/top-25-facebook-games-september-2011-sims-social/#0_undefined,0_.

21. Seth Schiesel, "A Game to Make Zygna Nervous," *The New York Times* (October 7, 2011). Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/arts/video-games/sims-social-is-an-astonishing-success-on-facebook.html. The article cites data that in one month there were 20 million more visits to the Sims Social game than there were purchases of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* over the last 60 years.

22. For more on TED, see https://www.ted.com/pages/about.

APPENDIX

Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society

Networks and Citizenship

Aspen, Colorado · August 1-4, 2011

Participants

Wael Abbas
Egyptian Journalist, Blogger and Human Rights Activist

Jeffrey Abramson
Professor of Law and Government
The University of Texas at Austin School of Law

Madeleine Albright
Chair
Albright Stonebridge Group

Jed Alpert
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Mobile Commons, Inc.

Joaquin Alvarado
Senior Vice President
Digital Innovation
American Public Media

Stephen Balkam
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Family Online Safety Institute

Jean-Christophe Bas
Senior Advisor
Strategic Development and Partnerships
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

John Bracken
Director of Digital Media
Knight Foundation

Glenn Otis Brown
Director of Business Development
Twitter

Donna Byrd
Publisher
TheRoot.com

Steven Clift
Founder and Executive Director
E-Democracy.org

Craig Dubow
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Gannett Co., Inc.

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

Mickey Edwards
Director
Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership
The Aspen Institute

Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
Communications and Society Program
The Aspen Institute

Lewis A. Friedland
Professor
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Wisconsin

Archon Fung
Ford Foundation Professor of Democracy and Citizenship
Harvard University

Will Griffin
President and Chief Executive Officer
Hip Hop On Demand

Reed Hundt
Principal
REH Advisors

Alberto Ibargüen
President
Knight Foundation

Rishi Jaitly
Program Director, Detroit
Knight Foundation

Paula Kerger
President and Chief Executive Officer
Public Broadcasting Service

Michael Maness
Vice President of Journalism and Media Innovation
Knight Foundation

Andrew McLaughlin
Executive Director
Civic Commons

Craig Newmark
Founder and Customer Service Representative
craigslist

Michael Oreskes
Senior Managing Editor
The Associated Press

Norman J. Ornstein
Resident Scholar
American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research

Andrew Rasiej
Founder
Personal Democracy Forum

John Rendon
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Rendon Group, Inc.

Nicholas Reville
Co-Founder and Executive Director
Participatory Culture Foundation

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

Graham Richard
President
Graham Richard Associates, LLC,
and
Co-Founder
Portals 4 High Performance

Ben Rigby
Co-Founder and Chief
Technology Officer
Sparked.com

Juliana Rotich
Co-Founder and Executive
Director
Ushahidi Inc.

Jorge Reina Schement
Dean
School of Communication,
Information and Library Studies
Rutgers University

Neal Shapiro
President and Chief Executive
Officer
WNET

Ben Shneiderman
Founding Director
Human-Computer Interaction
Laboratory
University of Maryland

Jeff Smulyan
Chief Executive Officer
EMMIS Communications

Rachel Sterne
Chief Digital Officer
Mayor's Office of Media &
Entertainment
City of New York

Nancy Tate
Executive Director
League of Women Voters

Jenny Toomey
Senior Program Officer
The Ford Foundation

Daniel J. Weitzner
Deputy Chief Technology Officer
for Internet Policy
Executive Office of the President
The White House

Tracy Westen
Adjunct Professor
University of Southern California
Annenberg School of
Communication, and
Senior Research Fellow
Claremont Graduate University

David Westin
President and Chief Executive
Officer
News Licensing Group

Conor White-Sullivan
Chief Executive Officer
Localocracy

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

Staff:

Amy K. Garmer
Director of Journalism Projects
Communications and Society Program
The Aspen Institute

Erin Silliman
Senior Project Manager
Communications and Society Program
The Aspen Institute

Kiahna Williams
Senior Project Manager
Communications and Society Program
The Aspen Institute

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

About the Author

Jeffrey Abramson is a Professor of Law and Government and Fellow of the Frank Erwin Chair in Government at the University of Texas at Austin, where he teaches courses on political theory, constitutional law and civil liberties. He is the author, most recently, of *Minerva's Owl: The Tradition of Western Political Thought* (Harvard, 2009). Other books include *We, the Jury: The Jury and the Ideal of Democracy* (Harvard, 2000) and *The Electronic Commonwealth* (Basic Books, 1985). Professor Abramson has served as a Special Assistant Attorney General in Massachusetts, an Assistant District Attorney and as Law Clerk to the late Chief Justice Rose Bird of the California Supreme Court.

Previous Publications from the Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society

News Cities: The Next Generation of Healthy Informed Communities (2010)

Richard Adler, rapporteur.

News Cities details the best and worst of times for the news business. The best being the vast expanse of online information sources, from user-generated content to citizen journalists. The worst being the detrimental economic times. In this report, Adler concludes that society needs to encourage more experimentation with new models that provide credible information and encourage engagement, locally and nationally; ensure access to broadband services by all; and make certain people have the education in the multiple literacies they need to function fully as citizens in the 21st century. 78 pages, ISBN: 0-89853-546-3, $12.00.

Of the Press: Models for Transforming American Journalism (2009)

Michael R. Fancher, rapporteur.

Of the Press takes a closer look at ways to save American journalism and local democratic governance in our current financial crisis. With the many technological and behavioral changes taking place, news organizations face shrinking audiences and declining advertising revenue. *Of the Press* offers four areas to improve: transforming public service journalism; rebuilding public trust in journalism and journalistic organizations; promoting research; and pushing experimentation and collaboration. 60 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-521-8, $12.00.

Media and Democracy (2008)

Richard P. Adler, rapporteur.

Media and Democracy explores the role of media in enhancing social capital, civic engagement and democratic involvement. In addition to examining the state of newspapers and journalism against the backdrop of the 2008 presidential election, the report discusses proposed projects

for harnessing media to spur civic and global engagement. Among the ideas being implemented are the Online Peace Corps, Groundswell and the American Dialogue Initiative, as well as ongoing work by the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, which stemmed from the 2007 FOCAS. 58 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-503-X, $12.00.

Media and Values: Issues of Content, Community and Intellectual Property (2007)

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 (2006)

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 (2005)

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 (2004)

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.

Reports can be ordered online at *www.aspeninstitute.org* or by sending an email request to *publications@aspeninstitute.org.*

About the Communications and Society Program

www.aspeninstitute.org/c&s

The Communications and Society Program is an active venue for global leaders and experts to exchange new insights on the societal impact of 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 develop new networks for the betterment of 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 international digital economy), the impact of advances in information technology (e.g., "when push comes to pull"), and serving the information needs of communities. For the past three years, the Program has taken a deeper look at community information needs through the work of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, a project of the Aspen Institute and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. 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 engage 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; he has also served as Executive Vice President of the Aspen Institute. 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.