

Notes on Technology Innovations for the Arts
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I wanted to share some ideas about newly developing technology that I think has relevance to our work. These concepts are brand new, as many of them are an outgrowth from the extensive use of the internet during the 2004 campaigns (not just federal, but state and municipal as well). As you'll see from the attachments, there's a logical bridge from the campaign oriented software that encouraged activism and donations to work in the arts to increase participation and public value.

The first document¹ describes the rapidly evolving use of technologies to encourage "first person voice", like asking people in third world villages to rate the level of service derived from international aid organizations. These could have implications for us as we listen to the voices of our publics and learn how they're being served.

The second document describes a project for Leveraging Investments in Creativity. It will develop websites for artists using CivicSpace and Drupal.² One of the examples on the CivicSpace <http://civicspacelabs.org/home/> site is the North Carolina Democratic Party <http://www.ncdp.org/> or New York City Parks <http://www.parks1.org/action>

The third is a summary of a just released report Power to the Edges - Trends and Opportunities in Online Civic Engagement <http://www.evolvefoundation.org/> documents the implications for civic engagement and suggests potential strategies for other nonprofits including artists and arts organizations.³

The fourth talks about the websites for government agencies, the, "brand still has a considerable unfilled potential: to make our hearts excited. What better place to start than most people's first point of contact, the website."⁴
http://www.brandchannel.com/print_page.asp?ar_id=230§ion=webwatch

¹ **Two fundamental changes**

In the last half century, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have gotten better, cheaper, and more widely available. In addition, social scientists have honed their theories about social capital and social processes of identification and learning, and there is growing awareness of these social science theories among practitioners, funders, and policy makers.

Together, advances in ICTs and in understanding of social processes have enabled two fundamental changes in society. First, more voices can now be published and distributed. The second change is that self-organizing processes can be used to make sense of all those voices. Information can be aggregated and attention can be allocated through participatory, democratic processes. These changes are, on the whole, socially beneficial, because they empower individuals and local communities, who generally have the best information about their own conditions, to speak on their own behalf and hold other actors to account.

Societal opportunities: democratic forms of accountability

There are also new opportunities for individual voices to play a role in creating accountability for organizations and other individual actors. For example, on-line systems now gather and publicize user feedback about everything from consumer products to hotels to professors. On eBay, buyers and sellers routinely leave feedback for each other. At Slashdot, reader feedback causes some comments to be hidden from view. The knowledge that there will be publicly visible feedback creates accountability. Keystone explores new mechanisms for NGO accountability that take advantage of feedback from various stakeholders, including those served by the NGO.
<http://www.accountability.org.uk/research/default.asp?pageid=114>

Changing roles of intermediaries

A major new role for intermediaries will be to create platforms that enable first-person voice in production processes and self-organization in allocation and accountability processes. This will be a major role shift for advocacy groups who have been accustomed to speaking on behalf of those previously unable to speak for themselves. It will also require a role shift for organizations whose major role has been to select and monitor funding recipients. For example, donors may be able to directly monitor what intended beneficiaries have said about provider organizations, rather than relying on the judgments by intermediaries. While ICTs will disintermediate certain roles, we shouldn't expect them to eliminate the need for intermediaries entirely; one important new role will be providing the platforms that enable first-person voice in production processes and self-organization.

Relying on the voices of many rather than the authority of a few, we have unprecedented opportunities to democratize the production of news, culture, and other public information goods and processes of resource allocation, sensemaking, and accountability,

² Notes for a New Century, What Leaders Need to Know - No. 1

How can innovations in blogging, the Howard Dean campaign, moveon.org, and meetup.com be applied to the arts? There's been a fundamental shift in how people, non-profits, advocates, governments and corporations use new technologies. As costs decline, more grassroots movements apply & appropriate technologies to increase participation in their organization, sell products, more deeply engage customers & increase earned and contributed income. Artists and the non-profit arts industry have struggled to keep pace with a rapidly changing communications terrain and are losing market share to others. However, new opportunities are available - artists and organizations can take immediate advantage and cost-effectively repurpose these methods, profoundly change our work and propel ourselves to unparalleled success.

One Example - LINC's Case Statement for Civic Space for Artists:

There are a wide variety of arts web sites and information services. But these sites and services often rely on out of date technology, are not adequately connected to one another to enable productive collaborations, and many are hard to find through standard search engines. Arts-related projects often rely on commercial IT services not tailored to the field's needs. As a result, access to state-of-the-art technology and methodologies is poor, leaving artists and arts organizations underserved. There's the risk that the arts may lose the active engagement of an entire generation of young people because the field is not taking effective advantage of information technology common in other sectors of society.

Yet there's emergent opportunity for action to make current communications technologies useful and widely available to artists and the arts sector as a whole. In recent years costs of information technology have significantly decreased. At the same time, best practices for using low cost software are ever more available, as is a growing network of professional technologists dedicated to applying state-of-the-art practices to public interest projects. During the last year alone, online efforts such as those of the Howard Dean campaign and MoveOn.org have demonstrated the extraordinary, barely tapped potential of the Internet to engage citizens in new ways with messages and content that matter to them.

Experience has shown that technology by itself is never the answer to a challenging problem. For artists and arts organizations to be better at connecting with audiences, distributing artwork, cultivating supporters, selling tickets, and extending the presence of the arts in our communities, the answer is not simply to give them websites. However, effective use of the Internet, selectively appropriating strategies that have served the commercial and governmental sectors well, could be an important part of the answer.

Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) is collaborating with the technology pioneers CivicSpace Labs and CivicActions to create CivicSpace for Artists, an open-source software platform² for artists and arts organizations. By using open source software, LINC's CivicSpace for Artists will produce "source code" for website publishing systems to meet the express needs artists and which can be reused by any individual or organization for no licensing fee. (To see examples of this software in action, go to <http://civicspacelabs.org/home/civicspace/in-action>)

LINC's CivicSpace for Artists is a relatively small project with an ambitious objective: to make it easier and less expensive for artists and arts organizations to connect with each other and their audiences in the digital age. Our strategy is to build a core set of website publishing tools, make them available inexpensively (or free, depending on circumstances), train selected partners in their use, and develop training materials that could be used by other artists or arts organizations. Our intent is to catalyze an effective online

communications system for the arts that can ultimately be used by hundreds of organizations and thousands of artists.

The first phase of the project focuses on artists support organizations. During phase one, we will design and implement a network of state-of-the-art community web sites that can be easily and inexpensively used to publish on the Internet; improve ties with supporters; make transactions online; and collaborate together to reach audiences (without having to know HTML). The software package will be a toolbox of sorts which, for the first time, will give arts organizations and artists the power to build and use webpages, email, galleries, event calendars, event listings, ticket sales, and online conversations in an interoperable environment that supports collaboration. Each site will be part of an arts website network which will enable participants to aggregate relevant audiences, build collaborative events calendars, and coordinate outreach and information sharing.

³ What Do Leaders Need to Know? From Power to the Edges - Trends and Opportunities in Online Civic Engagement.

The increasingly connected nature of society and increased pace for social engagement are [overwhelming traditional models](#) for planning, funding and channeling public interest. New models of civic engagement require a different set of benchmarks, skills and training. In fact, [the changes have very little to do with the internet and everything to do with building entirely new organizational cultures](#). Page 21

[What's required to make these new models succeed may well be a world-view shift](#). A similar shift in thinking took place when painting moved from two-dimensional representations to the use of the "vanishing point." which gave images depth. "A renaissance is a dimensional leap, when our perspective shifts so dramatically that our understanding of the oldest, most fundamental elements of existence changes." Networked business requires a shift away from the two-dimensional model of company-to-consumer to a third dimension that engages the buyer in the design and delivery of the products. Page 20

"The killer apps of tomorrow's mobile 'infocom' industry won't be hardware devices or software programs but social practices. [The most far reaching changes will come, as they often do, from the kinds of relationships, enterprises, communities and markets that the infrastructure makes possible](#)." Page 21

["in an environment where speed is critical, networks make sense because they reduce transaction costs by combining flexibility of markets with the trust relationships of hierarchy"](#). Page 28

["People in leadership need to take more responsibility for the technological aspects of their organization](#). For too many people, the Internet is an afterthought. Currently, the people who are hired to implement technological solutions are hired by people who do not understand the problem; they're neither able to hire the right people nor able to evaluate their work." Page 22

FUNDRAISING has long been dominated by the traditional "rule of thirds": the top ten gifts accounted for one-third of all money raised; the next third came from the top one-hundred donors; and the top five hundred gifts accounted for 90% of all money raised. The increasing willingness of individuals to make online transactions plus the significantly lower transaction costs of online giving has flipped this longstanding rule on its head. As a result, organizations and campaigns are experiencing an increase in the number of smaller contributions. For example, Dean for America raised more money than any Democratic presidential primary campaign in history, all with donations averaging less than \$100 each. [This shifting of power from large dollar donors out to the average citizen may have profound affects on the political system](#). Page 19

PUSH POWER TO THE EDGES - Perhaps the most important outcome of the recent developments in online civic engagement is the extent to which organizations and campaign organizers are changing the nature of their relationship to and with the citizens they seek to engage. This phenomenon, frequently referred to as "pushing power to the edges," seeks to take advantage of the individual's increased power (due in large part to new technologies) to engage actively in campaigns - with the same information and tools-as campaign professionals. [Instead of "pulling" individuals into membership and defined and controlled roles of engagement, organizations will need capacity to "push" skills, analysis, tools, arguments and resources out to individuals and communities online and offline](#). Page 23

[The "organization-centric" model that has traditionally dominated the civic engagement landscape has begun to show cracks](#). Often organizations serve as the primary intermediary through which citizen engagement occurs. The pressure that these organizations experience to build membership and revenue in

order to sustain their activities competes with their ability to engage and listen to the very individuals they need in order to accomplish their mission. Page 8

Narrowcasting. The low cost of the internet and the inexpensive and easy ability to target defined communities of interest allows organizations to move beyond the general public or their loyal membership and reach into new markets to further their cause. Page 16

Build Network-Centric Leadership - Page 25

Traditional	Network-Centric
Canvassing: Volunteers organized and sent out from central headquarters.	Individuals enabled with technology from their homes are synchronized to canvas their own neighborhoods.
Communications: Dedicated staff manage all outreach and response.	Collaborative space for formation of key communications distributed and managed by a connected team of volunteers.
Data gathering: large purchase of data and voter information from vendors for access by select campaign staff.	Distributed creation, collection and verification of many data sources by many volunteers.
Campaign committee: small tight group meeting primarily across a table in a smoke-filled room.	The grassroots becomes the campaign committee participating in calls, decisions and functions of the old inner circle.

To be successful working in this new environment requires flexibility in how and when we ask people to participate in activist efforts. Instead of forcing participants into a form of "membership" or some carefully defined role, it is widely anticipated that the next generation of volunteers and activists will expect to be voluntary "free agents", able to engage where and when their passions lead them. The next generation organizations, those that serve their constituents well, will view this as an opportunity to provide easy and convenient access to meet their interests and styles. Page 24

Cultures don't change easily. Yet, once acceptance of these values takes hold, organizations will no longer cling to the size of their budgets, membership lists, and staff as measures of success. Rather, these changes can bring about greater returns on investments as smaller, leaner organizations use their networks. ["Be prepared to think in a more visionary way. Invest in people who are building tools that are meant to empower users, not just tools that organizations will use to prop up existing centralized practices."](#) Page 29

Lead with a new set of facilitative skills Page 5

[A new generation of field organizer needs to be trained.](#) New ideas about "credit" and recognition need to be developed and adopted. New leaders need to focus on breaking campaigns into a series of small, actionable items that ad hoc communities can claim and complete. New strategic views of timelines and organizing need to emerge. The civic engagement community will need to commit some of its best talent to measuring network throughput and network efficiency rather than merely organizational-based benchmarks such as number of dollars raised, number of members joined. Page 27

⁴ The World Bank is a peculiar brand and a good challenge for brand managers. From the (mild) transatlantic rift over the candidacy of Paul Wolfowitz to the bank's presidency, to the thoroughly built argumentation of Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz against the bank in his bestseller *Globalization and its Discontents*, the World Bank's name is regularly assaulted from all sides. The institution, on the other hand, charges itself with a noble cause: "to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world."

If one side of the coin displays the sweet likeness of a compassionate Cinderella, the dark flip side is never far from the surface of the collective consciousness. That dark side might be best summarized as

"Washington bureaucrats in bed with heartless bankers." No wonder that the Bank's website <http://www.worldbank.org/> has a page called "10 Things You Never Knew About the World Bank."

Besides its language capabilities—such as Arabic, Chinese, German, English, Spanish, Persian, French, Hindi, Japanese, Kannada, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Telugu, Turkish, and Vietnamese), the World Bank's website is actually quite impressive.

If brand managers may rue a lack of balance between functional and emotional benefits, scholars and other fact seekers will be impressed by the sheer size of its information banks.

WorldBank.org's design looks like a portal, with links scattered all over the place. A few thumbnails, pictures and other graphics enhance the experience. Keeping images sparse certainly helps the downloading speed for slow connections, but a little more indulgence here could contribute to enhancing the emotional appeal of the Bank. The few positive visual examples tend to fall short, such as the "Africa Gallery" that works like a slideshow presentation, conveying all the excitement of an edition of the BBC's "Newsnight."

By comparison, the Red Cross' US website welcomes the visitor with pictures of smiling faces (usually children) and Doctors Without Borders is similarly full of human faces (no smiles though). [Different missions perhaps, but the World Bank could benefit from learning how to immediately connect with viewers by seeing how these sites do it.](#)

That lack of emotional connection aside, the World Bank provides an important service, and that service is conveyed well here. The more we surfed the World Bank's web presence, the more we were impressed with the extraordinary depth of data, facts and information.

Branding is a matter of focus as much as balance between functionalities and emotions. Offline, if the functionality is there (and according to many sources, the Bank's actions are much improved over disastrous lending policies of the past), **the World Bank brand still has a considerable unfilled potential: to make our hearts excited. What better place to start than most people's first point of contact, the website.**

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