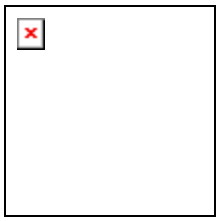

CIVIL TECHNOLOGIES: THE VALUES OF NONPROFIT ICT USE

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>
> B. Resources. Available funding is limited, partially because grant makers developed a post-dot bomb aversion to technology, but also because the kind of support that ICTs require challenge traditional grant maker practices.
>
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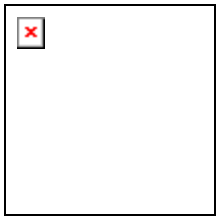
4. A Way Forward: Collaboration: By initiating and facilitating collaborative ICT projects among nonprofits, civil society leadership could make a significant contribution to the sector.



Civil Technologies: The Values of Nonprofit ICT Use

by Ken Jordan and Mark Surman

Overview

This report gathers the stories of eleven exemplary Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects undertaken by civil society organizations around the world. Its purpose is to demonstrate the potential of ICT to contribute directly to achieving the missions of nonprofit organizations, and to express this potential through the voices of people who helped guide these projects. It is a sampling of what is possible. But more than that, this report highlights how the values of nonprofits are reflected in the digital technologies they use to achieve their goals. As the subjects in this report communicate through their enthusiasm for these tools, ICTs, when appropriately deployed, can embody the values of connection, communication, and respect for the individual that are at the heart of civil society.

These subjects were chosen because they represent a cross-section of ICT use by nonprofits in the U.S. and across the globe. They come from a variety of sectors: health, environment, community development, human rights, and the arts. They operate not only in New York, Seattle, and Washington, DC, but also in Nigeria, Kosovo, Burma, Afghanistan, and Malaysia, among other places. Quite remarkable are the shared approaches and concerns between organizations from separate sectors in vastly different locations regarding their use of ICT and the advantages digital tools bring to their work. There seems to emerge a commonly held set of assumptions and attitudes toward ICT, about its potential to empower the voiceless and challenge traditional hierarchies, regardless of the context in which the technology is being applied. This report is only capable of alluding to this fascinating topic, which bears further study.

Most of those interviewed here would not consider themselves technical experts; only a few can write a line of code. But in the course of their public interest work they became familiar with how computers expand our ability to distribute information, to interact with others, to self-organize into social networks. These individuals, like a growing number of their fellow civil society professionals, chose to acquire basic knowledge about ICTs so they could use these tools to achieve well defined objectives. In most cases, it should be

noted, resources (time, budgets, staff) were slim, and yet appropriate ICT solutions were found that met the needs of the project.

These stories, and others like them, are too rarely told. Yet without this storytelling, and the in-depth analysis it should lead to, the role that ICTs might play in civil society can scarcely be appreciated. The sector's inability to clearly see its digital landscape has led nonprofits to largely fend for themselves in their selection, development, and deployment of ICTs. Moreover, the lessons they have learned from their experiences are not being shared.

As these stories demonstrate, nonprofits are doing their best to find their own way through the thicket of digital options. At times the results are genuinely innovative. However, these successes only hint at the positive impact that the sector would experience were it to dedicate sufficient attention and resources to the strategic use of ICTs. The opportunity exists for civil society to promote technology use that expresses the values of the sector, particularly if deliberate and strategic collaboration between nonprofits can be encouraged to meet common ICT needs.

Background

Civil society has made use of ICTs since the tools first became more widely available in the 1980s. Pioneering efforts include the founding of PeaceNet (U.S.) and GreenNet (U.K.) in 1985, two early efforts to provide electronic networking for civil society organizations. 1987 saw the establishment of WorkNet (later SANGONeT), a South African email service and bulletin board, and NIRVCentre (later Web Network), the first nonprofit computer network to serve public interest organizations in Canada. The internationalization of projects of this kind was marked in 1990 by the launch of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), a global initiative by civil society e-networking operations from seven countries on five continents.[1]

These networks were used for email and discussion boards, which initially were useful because they cost less than long distance calls and faxing. By the early 1990s they grew to become an active platform for policy discussions, and played a key role in preparations for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro, as well the for 1995 International Conference on Women held in Beijing. In the years before the World Wide Web became popular, organizations like the Worldwatch Institute regularly published documents through the APC network, making them more easily available to an international audience.

When the Web first attracted public attention and became a mass medium in the mid-1990s, nonprofits were again among the early adopters. Major Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, and Human Rights Watch, launched informational sites on the Web, as did a great number of smaller groups. Some of these sites were implemented by a new NGO, OneWorld.net, which in 1995

[1]http://www.apc.org/english/about/history/english.shtml?cmd[384]=x-575-10343 (viewed 1/31/05).

aggregated content from these and other nonprofit online information sources and made it available through its own portal devoted to human rights, the environment, and sustainability.[2]

Today over 1,600 organizations provide content for a global system of OneWorld Web portals, which are published on five continents in 11 languages.[3] In parallel, APC has grown into a network of service organizations from 30 countries that, their website explains, pioneers "practical and relevant uses of ICTs for civil society, especially in developing countries. APC is an international facilitator of civil society's engagement with ICTs and related concerns, in both policy and practice."[4]

The striking expansion of OneWorld and APC -- and other similar initiatives -- has been made possible by the widespread, international adoption of ICT by nonprofit organizations. Not only are they posting relevant information to the Web (content that previously would have circulated to a relative handful of readers at a higher publishing cost), they use email and other forms of network communications to interact with their colleagues, constituencies and the public. An entire ecosystem of digital communications by nonprofits had emerged, reaching far beyond the immediate influence of APC and OneWorld.

Yet, a closer look at ICT use by nonprofits does not offer such a salutatory picture. In fact, while basic ICT use has become common, there is a wide divergence in quality and type. A random sampling of links from OneWorld to its affiliated NGOs can be revealing. Many of the sites are well done, frequently updated, offer a range of services (including links to timely reports and a donations page), are intuitive to navigate, and reflect a solid grasp of the technology. It is an impressive showing, compared to only a few years ago. But it is still not uncommon to find sites that are not as successful -- they have front pages that never change (because they do not use automated content management systems, and so are hard to update). They do not accept online donations. They have no search function. There is no forum for interaction with membership and allies. They have no audio or video. They highlight only a narrow range of the group's operations, like the press office, and do not serve staff at the grassroots. They have no password-protected area for collaboration and document sharing among colleagues. This is, of course, only a partial list of online features that are becoming standard in the corporate and governmental sectors. Not that every nonprofit site should be required to have all these features. Far from it. However, they ought to have access to the knowledge and resources necessary to implement features such as these, if they can be put to strategic use.

It is worth noting that the 1,600 NGOs affiliated with OneWorld are a self-selected sampling of the best, the online "cream of the crop." NGOs must apply for membership in OneWorld, and a good percentage pay a participation fee, so these are groups that have made ICT an internal priority. Too often, though, nonprofits are satisfied by rudimentary

[2]http://www.oneworld.net/article/view/67151/1/ (viewed 1/31/05)
[3]http://www.oneworld.net/section/editions (viewed 1/31/05)
[4]http://www.apc.org/english/about/index.shtml (viewed 1/31/05)

ICT applications, when the potential benefits of more sophisticated usage would be significant -- and within their reach. But many in the civil society sector do not recognize that an email account is only the first step on the ladder to strategic use.

In the SSRC report "Appropriating the Internet for Social Change," the steps on this ladder are described:

> "At the bottom... is basic access -- an Internet connected office computer, a cell phone with SMS, an Internet cafe. The next step is the adoption and development of basic skills needed to use technology in the ways in which it was intended. So, writing memos and reports with a word processor falls into this category. The final step is appropriation or strategic use, where an individual or an organization turns the technology to their own purposes, and makes it their own. Appropriation includes such things as putting local content on the Internet in local languages, or designing applications to meet specific organizational needs."[5]

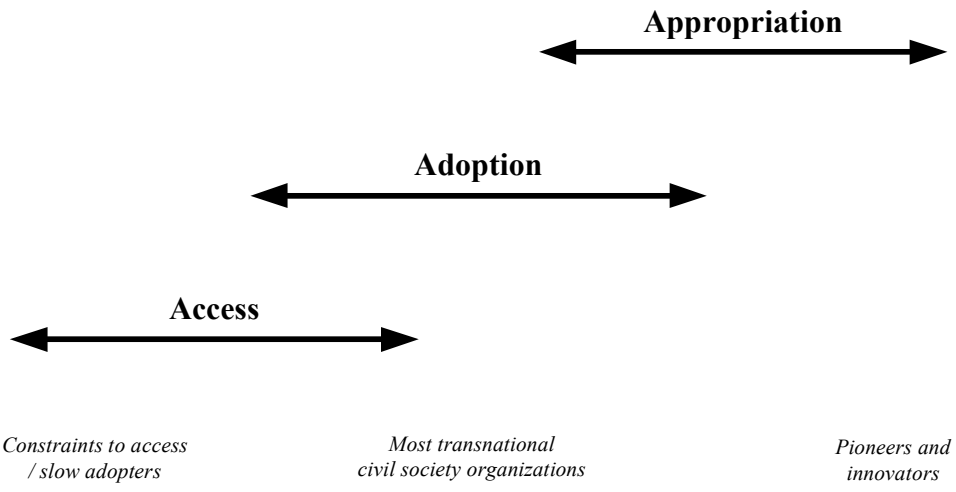


FIGURE 1: Access/Adoption/Appropriation Ladder

For many organizations, particularly those in the developing world or among disadvantaged communities, basic access is a major hurdle. Bringing the Internet to a Brazilian favela is itself a true achievement, as is providing PCs, word processing and spreadsheets to a small, largely volunteer community development effort in a North American inner city.

But civil society's challenge to take full advantage of ICT only begins on the access step of the ladder. A question too rarely addressed is: how to move an organization from

[5]Surman, M. and Reilly, K, "Appropriating the Internet for Social Change," http://www.ssrc.org/programs/itic/civ_soc_report (viewed 1/31/05)

"access" to "appropriation?" In most cases, nonprofits figure out how to do the basics and stop there. They only partially realize the range of things ICT can help them do, and so climb from "access" to "adoption" in a tentative, poorly planned manner. Often they do not even consider "adoption" options such as e-commerce, content management systems (CMS), donor relationship management tools, wireless office networks, interoperable online databases, web logs, streaming video, or sophisticated email campaigns -- because access to expertise about their proper use is hard to come by. As a result, nonprofit administrators may assume the technology is too complicated or expensive for their group to implement.

In fact, the opposite is increasingly true. A drop in commercial software prices, an explosion in open source software development, a growing technical competency among civil society professionals, and an emerging (though informal) system of sophisticated ICT services for nonprofits has made "adoption" far less daunting. As a result, a low budget organization like eHomemakers.net in Malaysia can put home businesses run by housewives onto the Web, allowing underprivileged woman who previously had no access to technology to sell goods online. As Chong Sheau Ching describes later in this report, these women once had difficulty maintaining an independent business while raising a family. Today they take part in the global marketplace. What made the difference? Informed adoption of existing, inexpensive ICT. A continually growing set of digital tools are becoming better, cheaper, and easier to set up. This message, however, still needs to be adequately circulated among nonprofit decision makers.

Adoption of ICT leads inevitably to considerations about the next step up the ladder, to strategic "appropriation." Once you become more familiar with how these tools work, you start to imagine ways to bend them, extend them, to more effectively meet your needs. The SSRC report "Appropriating the Internet for Social Change" focuses on the key issues involved in supporting strategic use, describing how civil society can engage creatively in the development of ICTs that address the specific concerns and opportunities of the sector. The needs of business are not the same as those of nonprofits, and so software developed by commercial vendors is rarely designed with nonprofits in mind. In some cases this makes no difference, but in others the poor fit of business software in a nonprofit context is a real problem. Moreover, the nature of civil society and the values it holds create opportunities for innovation that are not available to government or business. We will return to this point later. Suffice it to say that a sector-wide "appropriation" of ICT is necessary in order to ensure that civil society has the tools it needs to meet the demands of mission-driven initiatives.

This paper explores exemplary instances of nonprofit ICT appropriation, while drawing attention to lessons learned from these pioneering efforts. While seeing these projects side by side, some principles for successful ICT use become apparent. These can help to frame our expectations for a successful strategic embrace of ICT, the final step up the ladder. Intriguingly, differences between civil society and corporate approaches start to emerge, differences that have much to do with the challenges facing the nonprofit sector as it regards how best to support new technology. In this report, we hear from the dedicated people who have come to appreciate the contributions that appropriate ICT use can make to their respective missions. In the process, we see how climbing the ladder to

appropriation reflects the core values associated with civil society engagement. Far from being value-neutral, ICTs can give nonprofits new ways to integrate their values into the work they do.

The Challenges

What has prevented civil society from fully embracing ICT? A number of studies have arrived at similar findings, which can be reduced to three main issues: planning capacity; resources; and research and evaluation.[6]

* Planning Capacity. *Organizational leadership, including CEOs and other senior management, have not prioritized ICTs within their organizations, and so lack comprehensive policies and strategic planning for ICTs, while the civil society sector, unlike the business and governmental sectors, has not thought about strategic ICT deployment to benefit entire fields.*

Senior management is generally not conversant with information technology, and as a result undervalues the contribution it can make to an organization's mission. Managers who are not ICT-proficient do not lead or participate in important discussions about technology use. Often ICT is relegated to the category of "infrastructure," treated as part of the telephone service, rather than as an asset to be used strategically in a campaign or in donor development. The governing assumption is that once an organization is "online" it has met its digital obligations, and little attention is then given to the objectives of that online presence, or evaluating whether those objectives are being met.

Frequently, nonprofits do not have a dedicated ICT manager in house or on contract. In these cases, responsibility for ICTs is often distributed across organizations to those with little internal status. No single person or team that represents ICT issues is in a position of power and responsibility, so staff or budget allocations are not the result of a reasoned process, while critical decisions are made by inexperienced, lower level staff in isolation from the priorities of the rest of the organization.

At the same time, the institutions that provide leadership to the civil society sector as a whole have not dedicated resources to the development of ICT strategies that would benefit a wide range of participating organizations. Such a strategy would include, for example, the deliberate writing and dissemination of open technical standards that would enable distinct organizations to make their data interoperable, or the cultivation of low cost or open source software tools that would meet the shared needs of many different, under resourced organizations, so they can more fully participate in the benefits of the digital age.

During the e-business push of the late 1990s, corporations invested heavily to integrate ICT into their operations. While some of that spending was extravagant and reckless, its

[6] While the issue areas are commonly mentioned by analysts, the points elaborated in this report and their relative importance are the opinions of the authors.

ultimate effect was to restructure how the corporate sector manages its information resources and communications practices. A similar transformation is taking place with the rise of e-government, as state-held information is put online and an increasing array of public services (from voter registration to unemployment compensation to driver's license renewal) are available on the Web and through automated phone lines. Driven by significant (admittedly sometimes wasteful) investments, two parallel ecosystems of services and standards emerged to meet the ICT needs of business and government. The components of these ecosystems include consulting services, specialized software, standards bodies to promote interoperability between diverse systems, and widely acknowledged best practices promoted by service organizations.

While civil society has not actively developed a comparably extensive support structure, an adhoc system of services to nonprofits has begun to emerge.[7] However, this network is still nascent. Whether it can mature into a dependable resource like that available to business and government remains to be seen. Civil society is in a position to learn from the experience of other sectors and apply those lessons judiciously -- at far lower cost. But without deliberate leadership by nonprofit senior management it is unlikely to occur.

* Resources. *Available funding for ICT deployment and innovation is limited, partially because grant makers developed a post-dot bomb aversion to technology, but also because the kind of support ICTs requires challenge traditional grant maker practices.*

The strategic deployment of information technology is a gradual, iterative process. An initial success with, say, a simple email petition leads six months later to a more elaborate email campaign, which can later lead to house parties coordinated through a group's website. Most ICT projects are meant to either accumulate information (such as databases of contacts, press releases or reports) or build personal relationships (through online forums or email lists, for example). For this reason, they tend not to be discrete, with a clear beginning and end. Rather, the completion of one project becomes the natural starting point for another, which is able to leverage the databases or relationships previously built, sometimes by adding new software to the existing infrastructure. Often, what might superficially be seen as separate projects are actually components of a larger, continuing effort. To site a more obvious example, is MoveOn.org an organization that leads a series of distinct initiatives, or is it an ongoing campaign with evolving components? The line here is hard to draw.

For this reason, once a nonprofit has invested in ICT and has seen some success, it is compelled to devote resources to it far into the future. What might have begun as a six-month project, funded by a grant that covers technical implementation and limited staff time, transforms into an ongoing expense.

Many nonprofits are poorly equipped to plan for the cost of updating Web content or managing online communities, let alone the maintenance of software and hardware. But grant makers are also challenged by the peculiar administrative demands of ICT, because it requires them to commit to longer funding cycles than are the norm. Private and

[7]Peizer, J., The Dynamics of Technology for Social Change (forthcoming, 2006).

governmental organizations can make long-term investments in new technology, if they expect an ultimate return on investment or public benefit. In contrast, the grants given to most nonprofits are tied to short-term projects. Funders tend not to have much patience for the tedious, incremental innovation that ICT favors -- which includes evaluation and renewal cycles for technical systems. As a result, many nonprofit ICT efforts stall in their development, unable to tweak existing code or add a critical new piece of software until, after much arduous fundraising, the chase for donor dollars proves fruitful. In too many cases, of course, it doesn't. In fact, while the evidence is anecdotal, funding for civil society technology seems to have eroded.

Grant makers tend not to make long-term investments, regardless of the project type. But since the collapse of the dot-com bubble, large investments in ICT are particularly hard for advocates to champion inside grant making institutions. During the 1990s, business and government spent relatively extravagant sums on "sexy" technology, some of which proved to be hyped, oversold. Civil society did the same, but its pockets are not nearly as deep. So when it became apparent that many nonprofit ICT initiatives did not deliver as promised (though this assumption too is based on anecdotal evidence, since there is no comprehensive research), grant makers turned their attention in other directions. Funding for nonprofit ICTs continued, but NGOs had to make clear that their projects were not "about ICT," that rather they happen to employ ICT to reach a programmatic objective. While technology planning should always reflect the practical needs of those who will use it, this way of framing technology further deters strategic, long term investments in software development and related infrastructure by burying technical issues within funding proposals to be read by program officers with expertise in community development, health, or hunger -- but not technology.

It is then not surprising that the strategic creation and dissemination of appropriate technical tools occurs rarely in civil society. There is little encouragement to compare the technical needs of an array of civil society efforts to one another, to share technical knowledge adequately, and to develop technical tools that might meet the needs of, for example, community organizers as well as arts organizations. Their common technical requirements are rarely identified and discussed in a deliberate manner. It is true that in recent months, the informal sharing of this kind of information is starting to take place, particularly among software developers in the open source community. For example, engineers who are expert in the open source publishing environment, Drupal, have recently announced the first open source Customer Relationship Management package. Called CivicCRM[8], it is intended to meet the needs of a wide range of membership-based organizations. But initiatives of this kind are too few and far between.

Unlike the private sector, there is no true risk capital available in civil society. There are few funds for experiments that are meant to spark innovation of specifically technical nature, even though they might end in failure. There is little scope within civil society for the kind of entrepreneurial effort that can drive new categories of strategic ICT. In the corporate world, such risk taking led to innovations like customer relations management (CRM) tools, which produce a significant return on investment for companies that use

[8]For more on CivicCRM, go to: http://objectledge.org/confluence/display/CRM/Home (accessed 12/20/05).

them. Civil society, at best, is left to adopt corporate tools to the needs of NGOs. However, the sector would be better served if it encouraged deliberate attempts to produce technology that pursued a social return on investment (SROI) from the start.

As mentioned above, the nonprofit technology field has seen the emergence of a growing number of intermediaries who assist civil society organizations in their use of ICT. Unfortunately, much of their attention goes toward narrowly defined, under-funded technical deployments that satisfy the short-term objectives of their clients. They are rarely able to step back from the immediate demands of the task at hand and develop more powerful technical infrastructures that would meet the needs of many organizations at once. A strategic approach to the coordination of information sharing and open source software development among these intermediaries could have a profound impact. There is a growing body of expertise regarding the specific ICT requirements of civil society, but there are few instances when it is gathered and channeled.

A groundbreaking, U.S.-based initiative that has begun this deliberate coordination of nonprofit technology development is Aspiration[9]. It has taken an innovative approach to bringing technologists from the nonprofit sector into contact with each other so they can share knowledge and establish ongoing professional networks. In addition, Aspiration facilitates some open source software development efforts. This model deserves study and replication.

Increasingly, commentators are noting that ICT is well suited to support collaboration, and that digital tools reward collective effort among those with common goals.[10] (It is worth recalling that the original intention behind the invention of online communication tools, by Douglas Engelbart and his team at the Augmentation Research Center in the 1960s, was to facilitate collective engagement to solve complex societal problems.[11]) For example, as Jon Ramer discusses in his interview, turn out for events across Seattle increased when interfaith groups there agreed to participate in a single online calendar system. A simple tool to assist coordination between groups can benefit an entire community. Moreover, shared technical infrastructure for nonprofits with similar needs lowers upfront costs and maintenance expenses per participant. It is more efficient for a hundred groups to share one calendar system than for each to create its own. Donors, however, tend to encourage competitive behavior between nonprofits as a way to distinguish between them in the grant making process.[12] This tendency to dampen collaboration, coupled with donor discomfort with explicit, long-term technology investment, contributes to the challenges facing civil society in its strategic use of ICT.

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[9]For more on Aspiration, visit http://www.aspirationtech.org (Accessed 12/19/05).

[10]See Kearns, M., "Network-Centric Advocacy,"2003, accessed at http://activist.blogs.com/networkcentricadvocacypaper.pdf (viewed 2/1/05), and Rosenblatt, G. "Movement As Network," 2003, accessed at http://www.movementasnetwork.org/MovementAsNetwork-final-1.0.pdf (viewed 2/1/05)

[11]Engelbart, D. with Jordan, K., "The Click Heard Round the World," Wired magazine, January 2004, pp.158-61

[12]See Stuart, R. and Miller, J., "Network-Centric Thinking: The Internet's Challenge to Ego-Centric Institutions," Planetwork Journal, July 2004, http://journal.planetwork.net/article.php?lab=miller0704 (viewed 2/1/05)

* Research and Evaluation. *There is a dearth of sector-wide information about ICT use, no agreed upon evaluation criteria for measuring success, and few forums for sharing knowledge and best practices.*

Over the past decade, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on nonprofit ICT deployment. The figure is likely higher, but an accurate count is not possible, because no effort has been made to arrive at a definitive number. This lack of basic information is symptomatic of the nonprofit ICT field. Given the level of expenditure (which is certainly large), comparatively little has gone toward composing a picture of the relative effectiveness of these projects, and making the knowledge gained through their deployment available to others. Fundamental questions about the kind of technology choices nonprofits are making and the criteria guiding decisions remain unanswered.

Without this needed body of knowledge, and the analysis it would support, nonprofit senior management is unlikely to be convinced of the value ICT can contribute to their organizations. At best, they respond impulsively to widely publicized, anecdotal ICT success stories, like those of the Howard Dean campaign and MoveOn.org in the U.S. Intrigued by excitement generated by the online components of these campaigns, and their success at online fundraising, some U.S. NGOs are looking to incorporate "Deaniac" and related strategies into their operations -- whether they are appropriate or not.

This situation stands in marked contrast to the corporate and state sectors, which can rely on in-depth analysis of ICT use by independent research groups, such as Forester, Jupiter, Accenture, and Gartner. Business schools also facilitate research in the area of ICTs, which are considered a cornerstone of the 21st century economy. (Conversely, the lack of civil society ICT research means that there is little useful content on technology to include in nonprofit management degree programs.) The value of in-depth research not only lies in understanding what happened in the past; it informs future decisions and helps to place emerging trends (like MoveOn.org) in context. Without a view of the landscape, it is difficult to plot a course forward. This hazy view is particularly burdensome to nonprofits, because ICTs reward coordinated action and collaboration, which can bring costs down and extend organizational effectiveness (as will be discussed below). But when reliable information and analysis is difficult to come by, senior management is less likely to encourage these kinds of collaborations. This challenge is compounded by the fact that that rare knowledge that does exist is generally not available in an easy-to-digest format.

In addition, where information has been gathered, it is often buried in reports or databases that are not explicitly devoted to ICT, so they escape the notice of all but the most dedicated researchers. An initiative that focused on identifying potential sources of ICT-related knowledge within existing data sets could make a significant contribution to the field.

It is worth noting that the criteria nonprofits would apply to evaluate ICT use is likely different than that developed for the business and state sectors, since nonprofits are mission-driven and do not measure success in terms of either financial return or number

of citizens served. However, to date there has been no concerted effort to engage representatives from civil society in establishing appropriate evaluation criteria, without which it is difficult to draw sector-wide conclusions about effectiveness.

A lack of deliberative evaluation and knowledge sharing has contributed to misunderstandings about the nature of digital communications and its appropriateness for use by nonprofits. Long-held attitudes about the corporate or hierarchical nature of computing acquired almost mythic proportions in the years leading up to the dot com boom, and the subsequent bust did little to allay those concerns among many senior nonprofit administrators. They certainly did not pursue digital tools with the enthusiasm and dedication they gave to other aspects of their mission. Without in-depth research, and the effective distribution of that knowledge among nonprofits, these attitudes remain entrenched.

Nonprofit ICT Practices and Their Implicit Values

Civil society leadership has done little to point the way toward strategic ICT use. Yet examples of smart nonprofit technology abound. Practitioners across civil society have taken initiative, leveraging digital tools to pursue their organizations' missions. As the stories in this report demonstrate, even in isolated locales (such as rural Nigeria or among disadvantaged women in Malaysia), with miniscule budgets, ICT can play a catalytic role. The variety of these efforts is itself instructive. They show how flexible ICT can be and how well it lends itself to public interest work.

Common practices are emerging, approaches that prove useful in a range of contexts. Interestingly, as they are examined in juxtaposition, it becomes apparent how the values of civil society are reflected in these technical deployments. In and of itself, ICT is value neutral. But the ways that public interest practitioners bend ICT to meet their needs and bring out qualities available in the technology that some critics might not expect. After all, computers are often seen as the culprit behind the most exploitative aspects of corporate globalization, and as the enabler of an intrusive surveillance state. So some might find it a shade ironic that digital communications also lend themselves to grassroots instantiations of the values that offer the best hope to counter these troubling tendencies in society.

We identified five common approaches that contribute to successful nonprofit ICT use, and the values they reflect. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather a sampling based on observations by interview subjects during the preparation of this report:

1. Integrate online with offline.
Not long ago social critics fretted that the Internet would further isolate people from one another, leaving them transfixed by computer screens offering views of a "virtual" reality. Civic participation would keep dropping, the argument went, as ever more people would "bowl alone" (to use Robert Putnam's popular phrase). But the experience of successful online campaigns suggests the opposite may be happening. The Internet is proving to be an effective mechanism for engaging people in offline activities, attracting them to

meetings, involving them in campaigns, helping them to coordinate events in the "real" world.

* In his interview, Iain Guest of the Advocacy Project cites how the Afghan Women's Network in Afghanistan used online tools to "help launch a number of quite effective campaigns around the Afghan Constitution and the elections." Membership in the Network grew substantially during the two years the Advocacy Project worked with them, indicating that "improved information capacity" contributed to that growth.

* Chong Sheau Ching, discussing the work of eHomemakers in Malaysia, describes how they used email to organize conferences of middle class and disadvantaged women with home-based businesses, creating support networks of women who are able to become self-reliant through freelance work rather than rely on traditional modes of employment.

* In her discussion of Planned Parenthood's use of ICT, Ruby Sinreich describes how the 750,000 supporters of the U.S.-based organization are kept in an online database "which is part of our larger messaging and advocacy system.... You can go into that online database and export a walk-list for canvassing, or addresses for invitations, or a phone-bank list, or whatever. Our attitude is that it's all organizing." Online and offline are both aspects of "strategies that have to be integrated and support each other."

Value: *life is not "virtual."*

2. Design for engagement, not just information sharing.
ICT has been described as a marriage of the printing press and the telephone. It is interactive by nature, with many characteristics that distinguish it from broadcast media -- including the ability to easily copy and forward files, to submit content through forms on Web pages, to create hyperlinks to relevant material, and to participate in online discussions through email groups, forums, or web logs. For this reason, nonprofits are increasingly designing their online publishing programs to engage user participation in clearly defined actions. Content is presented in a way that gives people the opportunity to do something with it.

* Describing how Greenpeace approaches its campaigns, Brian Fitzgerald explains: "We think in terms of action now, not information. Our earliest Internet efforts were a part of our original mission of getting information about environmental abuses out there, then attacking the criminals via standard democratic mechanisms like treaty votes and legislation. Now we can put in people's hands the ability to take action directly as soon as they are informed of an abuse, and with a wider arsenal of democratic tools."

* The Center for A New American Dream launched an innovative online campaign to influence U.S. consumer behavior on targeted environmental issues. As Sean Sheehan describes it, participants in "Turn The Tide" would log onto a website and choose to join one of nine action campaigns: "The goal was for people to see the environmental impact of individual decisions, to see how your actions combined with others makes a real difference...They could go to action number three, about sustainability, which would recommend ways to make more ecologically informed decisions about what seafood to

eat. They would download Environmental Defense's seafood selector tool, which would recommend: don't eat shrimp. If they were ready to take that step, they could check off on the web page that says 'I'm not going to eat shrimp.' If 20 people from their church chose the same program, it would show how together they were saving 200 pounds of by-catch. And that together all the members of the Turn The Tide program were combining to save 28,000 pounds of sea life."

Value: *citizen empowerment*.

3. Incorporate user feedback.
The interactive quality of ICT creates opportunities for feedback from campaign participants, grassroots organizers, and organization membership. This valuable information can affect the planning and deployment of programs. If properly managed, people at the edge of an organization or campaign can become more active participants, helping to shape group operations and acquiring a sense of personal responsibility for a project's success.

* Ruby Sinreich of Planned Parenthood described how "we're now trying to get to know our membership list better, so we can give them things they want -- so there's a value for them to be on the list." To that end, they are using a Web service, Zoomerang, to conduct online surveys of random samples of their 750,000 members.

* Jon Ramer describes how the Inter-Faith Communication Network in Puget Sound created an online calendar system to coordinate regional events. Using the nonprofit online social networking system Living Directory, they began with a small group of participants representing faith-based organizations and extended invitations to others in the region. He explained, "We encouraged new members to invite others, so the inviting is a distributive function. It is truly decentralized in that way. There are 20-30 coordinators on the system and they all can invite others to join. Coordinators assume a higher level of responsibility because they have the ability to publish events, to broadcast messages. We had a couple of sessions where we invited people to become coordinators, gave them the authorization and training they needed to do this. Then they offered ideas and became part of the planning and invitation process. I'll tell you, it's been so wonderful to watch the thing grow."

* Brian Fitzgerald of Greenpeace captures the importance of user engagement: "The Internet provides an opportunity for your supporters to roll up their sleeves, step into your work environment, do things to help you, invent thing to help you, and invite their friends along to help. But it takes a lot more than email and a website. You need to create a sense of community around your mission, you need give to people some ownership of what you do."

Value: *trust the grassroots*.

4. Link the local to the global (and vice versa).
More profoundly than either television or the telephone, the Internet is making Marshall McLuhan's notion of the "global village" a daily reality. On the one hand, the Internet is

an effective mechanism for connecting those in remote locations to others around the world. A crafts Website from Bali can be easily accessed from Brooklyn, as if it were hosted in the brownstone next door. But just as important is the way in which local Websites contribute to a new, emerging map of the global. Not only does ICT open local communities to international audiences and information resources; it also reframes our global understanding of what takes place on the local level and how all the disparate pieces fit together.

* Chong Sheau Ching of eHomemakers described how using ICT changed the lives of women in Malaysia trying to maintain home businesses: "It enables housebound people to reach out to the world for all kinds of support. Homemakers have little status because unpaid work is not recognized. When homeworkers acquire IT skills and email, they learn that there is a whole new world out there. Surfing the Net for info that was not available or difficult to get is empowering for people who never had access to this information before."

* The Advocacy Project uses ICT to distribute reports from human rights hot spots, particularly where the international press corps is not in full force. As Iain Guest explained, their form of e-journalism began with email profiles of human rights advocates in the field, helping to communicate "the essence of what these groups were doing -- groups in Kosovo, Nigeria, Bosnia, the Roma in Eastern Europe. We found that we were able to disseminate and publicize their information in a way that they weren't," helping to focus global attention on extreme local conditions.

* Front Line Defenders relies on the global networks of regional activists that ICT makes possible in its efforts to protect human rights advocates around the world. Andrew Anderson of the Ireland-based group puts it succinctly: "We could not operate as a small NGO with five staff working on issues in all regions without the communications capacities brought to us by the Internet. We are in regular contact with hundreds of human rights defenders and we could not do this any other way."

Value: *we are one interdependent world*.

5. Expect challenges to organizational structures.
By putting more knowledge and better communications tools into the hands of grassroots staff and volunteers, nonprofits find that their traditional practices may be challenged by those who were previously outside the decision making structure. This offers the opportunity to draw more expertise from staff and extended community, while opening the organization to change as a way to adapt to new conditions in society.

* Planned Parenthood found itself having to make changes it did not anticipate, as Ruby Sinreich explained: "Technological changes are forcing organizational changes for which we are not totally prepared. For example, collaboration between departments. On our new Website, all of our information is mixed together -- which means for the first time we have to collaborate with people in other departments to keep things straight." In the past, every department had a different internal procedure for maintaining information, which

made it impossible for the entire organization to analyze its own information and see where there might be holes or duplications. "Now we'll all have to use the same kind of database, so that stuff can be accessible through the Web portal. Technology is forcing some organizational change, even if it isn't happening intentionally."

Value: *embrace constructive change*.

A Way Forward: Collaboration

The anecdotal evidence suggests that civil society can indeed benefit from a more deliberate, sector-wide approach to information technology. But without the driver of the profit motive and investment capital, as exists for business, or the massive budgets of the state, how might civil society pursue this potential?

We suggest that the sector start by looking to its own strengths: its values.

As shown above, ICT use can be wholly consistent with the principles and practices of the public interest sector. Moreover, information technology rewards a value that was only alluded to above: collaboration. The growing open source software movement is a reflection of ICT's ability to reward collaborative behavior. Open source software is continually maintained and improved by a decentralized community of volunteers, who contribute their time and expertise to the open source project, benefiting the "commons" of people who use that software. They also donate their intellectual property -- the original ideas they have to solve problems and provide solutions. Why would so many professionals donate their labor and IP to participate in a collective endeavor of this kind? Because ICT is complex stuff, and it only improves after lots of people play with it, test it, and add new features to it. Of course, one or two people can write a wonderful, proprietary application on their own. But for more ambitious software projects, intended to serve in a wide range of environments, and to be continually updated over time, there are strong advantages to collaboration.

By initiating and facilitating collaborative ICT projects among nonprofits, civil society leadership could make a significant contribution to the sector. The costs of ambitious technology implementations could be defrayed across many participating groups, rather than carried by one or two institutions. Knowledge within the sector could be aggregated and shared, in order to support NGOs with little internal ICT expertise. Standards for sharing important information through the use of ICTs could be spearheaded by collaborative efforts.

It is time for civil society's leadership to acknowledge that mastering information technology is crucial to the health of the sector. Moreover, it offers an extraordinary opportunity to extend the reach of public interest work. As this report shows, numerous examples of successful ICT use are there for all to see, thanks to the pioneering efforts of a dedicated few who are already demonstrating the potential.

Authors

Ken Jordan

Ken Jordan is a writer, theorist, and information technology consultant living in New York City. A pioneer of independent, commercial, Web-based publishing, in 1995 he led the development and served as founding editorial director of SonicNet.com, the first multimedia music webzine and digital music store. SonicNet was named best website of 1995 by Entertainment Weekly and won the first Webby award for music site before becoming a property of MTV. In 1999 he co-founded the public interest portal MediaChannel.org, in partnership with Globalvision and the international civil society network OneWorld.net; it was OneWorld's first U.S.-based project. In 2002-2003 he was Director of the Art and Culture Network, a nonprofit initiative to create a Net-based infrastructure to support artists and contemporary art institutions. Recent clients include the New England Foundation for the Arts, WITNESS, and netomat. He is currently leading the CivicSpace for Artists project for the Ford Foundation initiative Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC).

He is editor of Planetwork Journal, an online publication for exploring the intersection of information technology and the political future; is co-author of the influential white paper "The Augmented Social Network: Building Identity and Trust into The Next-Generation Internet" (2003); and co-editor of Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality (W.W. Norton, 2001). He has written for Wired, Index, First Monday, Paris Review, and other publications.

Mark Surman

Mark Surman has been championing the use of technology to empower grassroots organizations and local communities for more than 15 years. He is currently the managing director of telecentre.org, a CA$21 million, joint initiative of IDRC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Microsoft Corporation.
Before joining IDRC, Surman spent six years as president and senior consultant at the Commons Group, a research and strategy firm focused on collaboration, community building, and social technology, where he regularly advised community-networking leaders and practitioners in Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Americas. He has facilitated international workshops dealing with community needs assessment, capacity building for community networks, and business planning for social entrepreneurs.

He is the author of Choosing Open Source: A Guide for Civil Society Organizations and Commonspace: Beyond Virtual Community.

Appendix of Interviews

Iain Guest, Advocacy Project

Interviewer: Mark Surman

From the Advocacy Project Website (http://www.advocacynet.org/mission.html):

The Advocacy Project was formed in 1998 to serve the needs of civil society -particularly community based advocates for peace and human rights. We give special attention to helping new networks become self sufficient in the use of information and communications technologies. A non-profit organization, The Advocacy Project is based in Washington DC.

Advocates are remarkable people - strong, brave and incredibly effective. Despite this, their contribution is often misunderstood and even devalued by the international community. Advocacy is seen as an "add-on." We consider it to be central and essential to a strong civil society. It also has distinct strengths and needs.

Information is the lifeblood of advocacy, and we try to help our partners use information, and information technology more effectively. We do this with great care, because outsiders can do tremendous damage when they impose "capacity building." This can be the quickest and easiest way to stifle the qualities that are essential for advocacy - commitment, energy, and conviction. As a result, we do not offer our services. Partners reach us by visiting our website, reading our newsletter, or hearing about us from others.

- *How did the Advocacy Project get started?*

The project began in 1998 on a purely informal basis when we were asked to cover the Rome Conference on establishing an International Criminal Court. Many of the people were not in the position to get to Rome but were very concerned about the issues -- war crimes, crimes against humanity, all sorts of questions of impunity and accountability. We produced about 80 reports providing easily readable updates on the conference, which we sent out by email to a worldwide distribution list.

While this was a bit of an experiment in terms of human rights information, the general feeling was that it was successful coverage. We were able to get timely information out to people both at the conference and around the world. And, the conference itself was a success -- we got a tough statute passed, with NGO lobbying playing a key role in this.

- *Has the work you do changed since you started up?*

From there, we decided to evolve our e-journalism approach by going out to profile human rights advocates in the field. We put out those reports by email and posted them on our website in a visual and easily accessible format. This helped us to really get the essence of what these groups were doing -- groups in Kosovo, Nigeria, Bosnia, the Roma in Eastern Europe. We found that we were able to disseminate and publicize their

information in a way that they weren't.

As an example, we worked in Nigeria with a women's consortium in the year 2000, helping to put the issue of human trafficking on the map in Nigeria. The group's own capacity to get the message out was very limited, so we went out, we produced a series of articles about the work they did. We got into the village, we interviewed trafficked victims, and they were widely distributed in Nigeria itself. They were run in the main newspaper. This gave us a sense of how useful we could be by helping grassroots groups with limited means to disseminate their own information.

However, we quickly realized it was not sustainable to have a bunch of outsiders come in and write up a campaign. To be really sustainable, we needed to help campaigners produce their own information, do their own outreach and manage their own websites. That was the final shift in our work -- understanding that our main mission would be to help human rights advocates who are working in communities on the front lines to use and manage information themselves.

- *If you boil it down, how would you describe the model you are using today to support these groups?*

As we've moved forward, we've developed three basic components. The first is to get on the ground with support that also builds capacity. Our e-riders help by installing and training people on information technology and websites. And then we have i-riders who deal with news matters, work with the press, develop content for the website. Both of these types of people help with strengthening capacity.

The second part involves putting their news out through our own press releases, website and extensive lists. That outreach is something we're trying to expand and extend. The third element is that we send out interns in the summer to work. The interns sort of serve as our bridge and also help them on various aspects of their work.

- *Can you share a story where this model has actually helped a group on the ground?*

It terms of building the capacity to use information, I think one of the most effective examples is the Kosovo Women's Network. In 2002, we went in and we found a local web designer to help them design their website, so that would make it sustainable as opposed to it being from a distance. We trained a Kosovo e-rider to work with the members of the Network to teach them computer literacy. We also trained them to produce a weekly newsletter.

It was our first attempt to do comprehensive, integrated, community-based support. They found it impossible to sustain the newsletter initially, but it's come back now and they have found money to support a person writing it. Now, they've formed new partnerships and they're producing a rather sophisticated newsletter.

They've used information technology very well, and it has helped them become quite a

force in the post-war rebuilding of Kosovo. And, they are really doing this on their own now, we're not really involved. Which is one of the things we like.

In addition, we had a very productive year with the Afghan Women's Network in Afghanistan. We sent out an experienced journalist who worked with them, she served as sort of a combined e-rider and i-rider, in that she had to restructure their organization and help their board to work better. The organization was split between Pakistan and Afghanistan, so that was quite a task. But getting those two parts of the organization to work together was key for the information process. They used the information training to help launch a number of quite effective campaigns around the Afghan Constitution and the elections in Afghanistan.

- *What were some of the outcomes of those campaigns? How did those campaigns unfold?*

In the case of the Afghan Women's Network, their grassroots membership expanded very quickly. Their membership has gone from 800 individuals and 25 organizations in 2002 to 3,000 people and 65 groups in 2004. They have grown substantially in the time that we've been working with them, and there has to be some cause and effect between their improved information capacity and that growth.

In terms of campaigns, our main concern was to get women's rights into the constitution process -- issues like early marriage, the right to divorce, violence against women. That was something they succeeded in doing, not just this group, but Afghan women in general. The Afghan Constitution is quite impressive when it comes to enshrining rights of women. That was a very successful campaign in Afghanistan because we organized community meetings throughout Afghanistan and in the camps in Pakistan and engaged women in that discussion and in the drafting of certain principles that had to be in the new Constitution.

What we'd like to see is groups develop the tools where they can conduct these campaigns and then tell the rest of the world about them because the whole goal here is to incubate greater respect for human rights and to get peace-building going at the community level. The Afghan Women's Network is an interesting example, and we need to share it.

- *You've talked a lot about the e-rider and i-rider parts of your program. Where does your direct information delivery fit in?*

We've done a lot of direct information work for a group in Nepal called the Collective Campaign for Peace. This is another network of about 25 or 30 organizations that have been very much involved in the conflict between the Maoist rebels and the government. Our contribution has been in disseminating information, getting information out.

There has been surprisingly little international interest in the Nepal war, even though it is brutal and horrible. Civil society is trying to raise issues around torture and human rights abuse by the government, and Collective Campaign is very much at the forefront. At the

beginning of this year, the head of CollCam was surprised at night…he came back to his house and was badly beaten up by security people. We passed a petition, an on-line petition, we got about 1000 signatures which we too around to the Nepalese Embassy. We put up press releases and we did a dissemination campaign around that. The person who had been attached said the publicity around that event had forced an end to that kind of late-night raid. He thought it had a tremendous impact.

- *Where does the internship program fit in?*

The internships are something we started a couple of years ago. The idea is that the interns go out for two or three months to work with our grassroots partners. The interns report regularly to blogs to our website, giving the interns a chance to write about themselves and our partners. It poses a kind of discipline on them, gives great play for the partners work.

One of the organizations that has derived most work from the interns is a group called Shono, which is a Roma news service that works from Prague. Our interns helped them to write articles for a community a radio station and their networks, and also to help connect up with the United Nations. Very few Roma organizations have actually affiliated to the UN, and this is one of them. The idea is to help them get their message out within the UN system.

- *What's different about this tool that you've offered these organizations than traditional journalism or traditional academic case studies? And how does the Internet play in that difference?*

I wouldn't just distinguish between our approach and that of academics and journalists, I would also distinguish between our approach and governments and donors in general. This starts with the fundamental premise that anybody who's interested in this kind of work -- working with grassroots human rights groups -- has to take the time to understand what they need and to help them on their terms. This is the fundamental point. You have these groups spinning up all over the world in these countries. There are literally thousands of NGOs in Nepal, thousands. There are 1200 or so NGOs in the Palestinian territories. So, you have this emergence, this eruption of civil society since the end of the cold war. My idea is that if you're really going to support them and strengthen them, we have to do it on their terms and not on ours.

- *What would it look like if you could roll out your grand vision for the Advocacy Project?*

The first thing is that it would have to come from these groups. Somehow we have to help partners to understand the importance of information. That's becoming easier as more and more groups are beginning to understand the power of the Internet in reaching an audience. We've raised I think somewhere around $90,000 indirectly for our partners from donors that have come to our website and seen our write-ups about them and have funded them. So that sort of thing helps us go to them and say look, this shows you that

taking information seriously can have direct benefit for you. But if you don't exploit information, it means having real IT capacity.

In an ideal world, all of our partners would have some kind of e-riding project to build that capacity, somebody who would get out and who would train e-riders in that group. Those e-rider would then be able to provide constant not only IT troubleshooting, but also advice on launching campaigns, integrating IT into the group and the community.

The idea is to make it really local, community-based and sustainable. So, that's first, that all of the partners would have some kind of e-riding project. Second, they would clearly understand the link between organization management, information strategy, and the importance of regular production of materials. That requires a change in organizational thinking and structure and priorities, which is extremely difficult to do. I'm not sure that any of our partners have gotten to that point. They have to really understand the connection between organization and management on the one and effective use of information on the other.

- *What does it take to get them there, and maybe not just them, but yourselves, and funders?*

We've gone through lots of stumbles here, we've put up websites that haven't been maintained, we've formed networks that haven't been sustained, we've made a lot of mistakes and our partners have made a lot of mistakes. Based on this experience, I would like all of our partners to have a very clear information strategy, in which there's a role for IT, there's a role for dissemination, the funding is clear, the management is clear, the program organizational structure is clear. I'd like for them to have a consortium of donors who work together to help that partner. These donors understand the importance of IT and where it fits into the capacity, and they only expect one consolidated report rather than 20 or 30 separate reports.

- *If the Internet were to disappear tomorrow, would the Advocacy Project just close up shop, or would you try to do what you just described differently though other means?*

That's like asking a parent if you could imagine what life would be like without their children. There was a time when we didn't have children. I don't know whether we were freer or not, but we just acted differently. If you can't un-imagine a child, then you can't un-imagine the Internet.

Let me put it this way, my own personal commitment to these community-based activists would be just as strong as ever. I've been a journalist that's worked in these countries for 20 years and I absolutely believe that these groups are the heart and soul of the whole rebuilding process in places that have gone through war or human rights crises. So I personally would find a different way of helping them, but I don't think the model that I just tried to explain to you would be possible without the Internet.

The Internet has facilitated the emergence of civil society in this form. This is very

important. I don't think it's a complete coincidence that the international human rights movement moved from being the sort of Amnesty's and Human Rights Watch's to this community-based, grassroots, modern advocacy that I've described at precisely the same time that the Internet came of age. The Internet was born in 1993 in its current form and the human rights movement really morphed into this community-based phenomena around the same time. The two have fed each other ever since. The Internet and IT are legitimately linked to this emergence of civil society in communities, which I think is an incredibly important phenomenon.

Chong Sheau Ching, eHomemakers.net (Malaysia)

Interviewer: Mark Surman

eHomemakers (formerly known as Mothers for Mothers, www.ehomemakers.net) was founded in 1998 by a grassroots volunteer group to network homemakers and homeworkers together for economic, gender and social empowerment through ICT. We did barter exchange with the corporate sector when we first started the network with conferences and the entire organizing committed worked together virtually, forming Malaysia's first virtual office unknowingly.

In 2002, eHomemakers was turned from a loosely coordinated voluntary network into a professionally managed social enterprise with the award of the one-year Demonstrator Apeopleication Grant (DAG) to build a trilingual portal for the ICT community.
The community members are varied: started with middle class mothers who know English, expanded to more who eventually acquire IT skills and learn email especially for communication; then expanded to the disadvantaged women, now i/3 of the e-members (more than 8000 of them) registered themselves as 'male'. It shows that what we started out advocating in 1998-- ICT for work and social development- and got ridicules and putdowns, is now catching on as a lifestyle trend.

For a developing country like Malaysia, it means that people, especially women, are starting to want to be self-reliant with the help of ICT, and starting to think on their own when they are on home based business or free-lance work on their own instead of relying on the traditional mode of employment.

- *If you could pick one example of how the Internet helped the people that you work with through eHomemakers, what would it be?*

Email. It is efficient and fast. It enables housebound people to reach out to the world for all kinds of support. Homemakers have little status because unpaid work not recognized. When homeworkers acquire IT skills and email, they learn that there is a whole new world out there. Surfing the net for info that was not available or difficult to get is an empowering for people who never had access to this information before.

- *Were the Internet and computers always a part of your vision for eHomemakers? What made you decide that the Internet could be helpful in your work?*

Yes. Mothers for Mothers started out with the core volunteer group organizing conferences using email and phone without meeting each other. We were strangers until the day of the first conference. We saw the Internet as our way out because we are mostly housebound due to our circumstances. Without it, we wouldn't have been able to organize ourselves free of grants and cash sponsorships. We were able to organize ourselves voluntarily because email doesn't cost as much as telephone calls and transportation for face to face meetings.

It's important to note that we are very different from other civil society organizations focused more traditional women's issues such as violence against women. We started out advocating working at home using ICT because we wanted choice and economic self-reliance, without begging and with dignity.

- *What did some of your earliest attempts to use the Internet with the communities that you serve look like? What did you do?*

Most women thought that only the very educated -- especially those with Western education -- would be able to learn Internet. Or, that they have to be young girls to learn such technology.

We kept on doing what we believed in -- organized working @ home conferences, coming out with a book, and telling women that working at home does not mean only using IT. We made the point that they could still do the traditional female business like tailoring, but using the Internet to market. Some women slowly got the idea. Now, I see more and more women with websites selling things from cakes to herbal soap.

- *What kind of work were the early homemakers and homeworkers doing? Who were they working for?*

The early homemakers consisted of a core group of organizers who could use the Internet and had home-based service businesses, and then a larger group of members involved in food and other more traditional businesses. They saved their families from going under in 1997 during the Asian economic meltdown. Husbands were retrenched, and the homemakers' little catering business saved the family. After 2000, many more families saw the good side of home business and our network grew. These women work for themselves on a small scale, but the economic impact at the family level is significant.

- *Beyond the type of people that registered, are there also differences in the kind of work being done now (compared to earlier)?*

More women are now taking risks and entering business areas that are not traditional for women here, like IT services, marketing homemade products on the Web, and even selling directly over the Internet. For example, a wife who wanted to help supplement her husband's income started selling organic vegetables and free-range chickens. The income started to pour in so much so that the husband quit his job and joined her a year ago. We are seeing women changing their husbands' minds when they become successful -- earning more income than the husband, all from home using ICT!

- *Can you offer a story of a particular woman or home business that provides an example of how things are different now*?

A mother with three kids came to one of our conferences and learned that she could earn money taking care of her kids. She read our book and followed the steps on identifying

options by doing things one likes to do, not just something to make money. After five years, she now has a viable, English marketing website selling Islamic children's books with customers from around the world.

- *Can you say more about how your conferences work? How do they relate to the work you do online?*

From the beginning, we have organized working at home conferences with speakers who are successful home businesswomen. The conferences provided these homemakers with a chance to speak up about their frustrations, their aspirations and, most of all, their fears.

Our society has seen an increase of divorce and single moms, so women are afraid of their destiny more than ever. At the conferences was can say to them, "You have a choice, you don't have to cry like our grandmothers and mothers did. You can learn to work from home and set up a home business to be self-reliant." This is a powerful message. It changes the power relations in the family when women start to think for themselves.

- *Do you think the Internet has influenced how eHomemakers operates as an organization?*

We started out advocating ICT usage right from the start, which is very unusual for Malaysian NGOs. People ridiculed us. Whoever heard of housewives using the Internet? In Malaysia is well connected and it is the powerful that can get things done. NGO leaders have advised me to get official patronage from powerful people for the network to survive. But, this would mean changing our whole grassroots culture to cater to the patron. As it is now, our events are down-to-earth, with no VIPs, with all the things women want to hear, and everyone sits on the same type of chairs. There is no status difference. And, because of our nature, we were not supposed to survive as a network. After all, how does one growing a network without funds?

Well, the network is sustaining itself with corporate ads and partnerships on small projects, and by keeping a lean and efficient virtual office. Also, I am able to reach out to the unreachable -- local people in important positions and international people from development agencies. All this is afforded by the Internet, the phone and other ICT tools.

- *Do you your network approach makes you a new kind of civil society organization?*

I don't know. Maybe we are unique. What I do know is that women hold up half the sky. With direct access to ICT, women can reach the other side of the sky and turn on the switch of change without men knowing.

I personally agree that the coming century is the women's century. Because of ICT, homemakers like me who used to be stuck at home or have no other work choice can actually develop ourselves through self-learning on the Internet. We can reach out and

meet good people and gather information and work that we otherwise could not get. In Malaysia, there are more girl graduates than boy graduates. Combined with the developments in ICT and homework, this means the Malaysian landscape is set for a change. Young women graduates will increasingly decide to work from home using the Internet because they want to have a more stress-free life without commuting. They want to nurture family and earn income at the same. They will make this switch in droves, especially as they see that 'old' women like me can show them a thing or two about working at home.

I think we are going to see some interesting gender paradigm shift in Malaysia. Business and government will have to start thinking about catering to a mass of women who want the best of both worlds, and who can type out an email to complain directly to some higher up when things in the neighborhood are not satisfactory. Gone will be the silent grandmothers who are fearful of speaking up.

- *What do you see as the next opportunity or cutting edge of Internet use by eHomemakers? What will these new approaches offer to your organization or your communities that you don't have now?*

We are now testing a web-to-SMS application called www.justmarketing.info that will be used to market-disadvantaged women's home-based products using mobile phones. Also, we want to participate in inventing technology suitable for us to use at home, technology that is not developed by men sitting in the basement somewhere in the US. We need technology for a woman with children and house chores in a tropical setting, where lighting strikes are frequent and household interruptions happen all the time. This is technology that allows us to think in our own way.

Information technology is not user-friendly as far as I am concerned. It is developed for profit-making instead of to make life easier for people who are not American geeks. As a homemaker, I multi-task. IT as it is makes me sit by a desk until I get carpal tunnel syndrome. It is not developed by people like me who want to use it for inspiration. I personally want to be involved in making hardware that is flexible, thin, light, mobile, bendable, foldable, easy-to-clean after spilling curry over it when I cook, wireless, unbreakable, and that allows me to multi-task. I want to reply to email as I cook my curry and watch over my kid's homework.

- *What are the biggest challenges in going to this next level, in building more appropriate technology? Are there also opportunities bundled into these challenges?*

There are barriers to our participation put up by people who live in the in the old paradigm. They don't want us to upset power relations. "Who ever heard of homemakers helping to invent things?" We will need ICT4D research agencies that are convinced that we have brains, and are willing to find funds to get us involved. Right now, I see barriers all over.

- *What is the role of funding agencies in overcoming challenges like these?*

I think funding agencies need staff from the grassroots. They need to invite the grassroots for lunch, and sit on the mat with us instead of on chairs

John Dada, Fantsuam Foundation (Nigeria)

Interviewer: Mark Surman

From the Fantsuam Website (http://www.fantsuam.org/):

Founded in 1996 in Jos, Nigeria, Fantsuam Foundation is a non-profit organization aimed at pioneering gender and youth focused micro finance and ICT services and development in rural communities of Nigeria. The objective is to empower women in rural areas of the country to work their ways out of poverty, promoting the use of ICT in support of traditional Governance in rural development, education, rural-urban-rural and rural-rural connectivity, eCommerce, IT transfer for the manufacture of tropical solar-powered computers in our rural areas, accessibility.

- *If you could pick one example of how the Internet helped the people that you work with through Fantsuam Foundation, what would it be?*

Communication with diaspora members for remittances. For example, there is a Nigerian who lives and works in London. He needs to send money for his aged mother and fees for his siblings in Nigeria. He credits his Fantsuam account in the UK and instructs us by email on who/when/how much to give to his family in Nigeria. If an emergency need arises in the village, the family comes to the Fantsuam offices to send him an email, and they have a credit facility, which they can draw on to, meet urgent needs pending when he sends money from the UK.

- *Why is this is so important?*

Before we had local Internet access, we had to take handwritten messages from members and traveled five hours to the nearest city-based Internet facility to send emails, check websites for information. We would travel to Jos, Abuja and Kaduna to send these messages. On arrival at the city, we would join the queue of customers at the cafe, and there have been occasions when just as it was our turn to use the computer terminal, we were told that the server no longer has connectivity for that day. That means the whole day has been wasted and we have to make a return trip.

- *What are the other services that Fantsuam is providing?*

There is a micro-finance department that offers financial services to the foundation and the community in the form of collection of deposits and making them available on demand, provision of loan and other micro-credit facilities to rural women and other small businesses, and advising customers on available business opportunities and how to harness these opportunities.

On the technology side, we a have a Cyber Café that has computer systems to provide Internet facilities for browsing to the public, as well as a Community Learning Center

that offers academic opportunities and training to youths and other members of the community. There is also a computer maintenance laboratory, a Cisco networking academy and a Linux Users Group. The Linux group is working on localization of five of the languages in our region.

- *Obviously, the Cybercafe helps with the remittance services. But how else has it benefited the community – socially, economically, otherwise?*

Students and teachers use the Internet for projects, etc. The café attracts visitors to the village so small shops and food vendors are making some brisk business.

- *Who does the Computer Maintenance Laboratory serve? Just the cyber café and the academy or also other local people?*

CML is for Fantsuam as well as clients from outside. We provide 3-months after-sales support for the refurbished systems, which we provide for civil society organizations. The CML takes care of this.

- *Were the Internet and computers always a part of your vision for Fantsuam Foundation?*

Affordable and accessible means of communication was always a strategy within our poverty reduction portfolio. Wireless Internet access was the only option that was sufficiently deregulated for a rural-based NGO to aspire top use.

- *Why was wireless the only real option?*

There are no landlines, and none of the mobile telephone operators has an interest in extending their coverage to rural Kafanchan in the mistaken belief that the poor cannot pay for these services.

- *Can you say more about how you are using wireless Internet?*

Fantsuam has a VSAT facility primarily for the Fantsuam Academy and the community has access to the Internet through the cyber café in the premises. The VSAT facility is now being extended by mesh networking to communities within 15 miles of the VSAT. Beginners courses in use of the Internet has been held for primary and secondary school teachers in these rural communities so that they can incorporate them into their teaching curriculum. Students of the three tertiary institutions would often travel to Fantsuam offices to do Internet search for their term papers and projects. Now they don't have to travel so far.

- *Do you charge people for access to your Internet services?*

Our charges are lower than our city-based competitors and our connectivity is better. We charge N250 per hour, they charge N300 (3 USD). We charge what we consider as

affordable for the community, and this does not cover our costs. We are now working on a business model, which will make the services profitable. It is our policy that ICTs should not add to the burden of the rural people. Instead, it should and can be made to be a source of income for the community.

- *Can you say more about the business model you are working on?*

It is imperative for any infrastructure we put in place to generate more revenue for the community - not "rob" the community of what little it has. There is a value to what ICT can provide but if this value costs more than a community can afford how could this be a net gain?

The reality is that the current offering of VSAT connections are overpriced and highly profitable for the supplier. We hope to help share our one VSAT link already installed with several more locations very inexpensively. VSAT is not a very good solution but rather the connection of last choice. Ideally, we would like to build out an infrastructure and connect it to the fiber optic trunk that is available in Nigeria. If we can build out a nationwide (or near nationwide) wireless infrastructure that ties back into the fiber optic network then we can create one of the fastest and least expensive communications networks on the continent.

- *What are some of the ways that your services are impacting the community?*

With increasing popularity of the Fantsuam ICT services, we have seen a steady increase in the number of youths coming back from the cities for their training in rural BayanLoco. We think this is the beginning of a reversal of the urban drift. In order to make rural life more challenging and rewarding for youths, we expect to start the local assembly of cutting edge ultra low power Solo computers in the villages in the New Year.

- *What Fantsuam activities are drawing them back?*

The various ICT training programs including the recently introduced Computer Maintenance Lab and Video/CD Production Training are pullers for the youth. Those who train with us stand the chance of being employed in the Solo Assembly Base. We have found our self with three successful ICT businesses, and have started the process of franchising them out to groups of youths under our Business Incubation Service. This again creates a pull for enterprising youths who want to learn to run their own ICT businesses

- *What do you see as the next opportunity or cutting edge of Internet use by Fantsuam? What will these new approaches offer to your organization or your communities that you don't have now?*

Extending the Fantsuam bandwidth to remote and rural communities so that they do not have to travel to Fantsuam offices for their access, provide ultra-low powered computers, Internet-enabled for these communities.

- *How many communities do you serve now? How many do you want to serve?*

We now work in eight chiefdoms of Kaduna State. We would like to reach the remaining 20 chiefdoms with our services. These are all located in just one of the 36 states of Nigeria.

Appropriate, affordable and profitable Internet technology, which we can roll out, eventually to the rest of Nigeria, remains a major challenge for us. At present we pay a monthly subscription bandwidth cost of 1,800 USD per month. This is clearly not sustainable unless we implement alternative access strategies within the shortest possible time.

- *Making ICT affordable and accessible is a very big challenge. How do you overcome it? Is it possible?*

By starting viable pilots in Kafanchan, we are demonstrating the viability and profitability of our ideas. We believe the success of our pilots will do the talking for us where it matters. We are doing what the Government wants to do, more cheaply and more efficiently. We've had CNN and the World Service BBC interviewing us -- we hope these exposures will persuade the Government to listen to this rural-based NGO working from the middle of nowhere and achieving results.

- *What are the biggest challenges you face with your use of ICT in the future? How do you think you will overcome these challenges?*

Making ICT affordable and accessible to all rural and remote communities in Nigeria, and we believe this can be achieved at far less cost than the Government is currently proposing. Our challenge is to be able to convince the Government that there are cheaper and more affordable options - but we are only a small rural NGO, with no powerful links to the corridors where these decisions are being taken.

- *What about small challenges at the local level? You have achieved a lot, and plan to achieve a lot more – this can't be without struggle?*

Local elites are a problem in some of the communities. We work hard to convince them that we pose no threat to their social status and are willing for them to take credit for the successes.

If the Internet and computers completely disappeared from the face of the earth tomorrow, what would Fantsuam Foundation look like? What would happen?

Our services have gone beyond the stage where it can be crippled by the disappearance of the Internet and computers. The level of awareness we have facilitated is the driving force that will bring up alternative and better coping strategies. Take the microfinance service, we still rely a lot on face-to-face contacts with our clients, as this program depends a lot on that level of interaction, if it is really to meet the specific poverty needs

of the people. Our health services in HIV/AIDS and Sickle Cell are people-driven, facilitated by the Internet yes, but that factor alone is not a make or break for their sustainability.

Andrew Anderson, Front Line Defenders *(Ireland)*

Interviewer: Mark Surman

From the Front Line Defenders Website (http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/about/):

Front Line was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the specific aim of protecting Human Rights Defenders, people who work, non-violently, for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Front Line aims to address some of the needs identified by defenders themselves, including protection, networking, training and access to the thematic and country mechanisms of the UN and other regional bodies.

Front Line's main focus is on those human rights defenders at risk, either temporarily or permanently because of their work on behalf of their fellow citizens. Front Line runs a small grants program to provide for the security needs of defenders. Front Line mobilizes campaigning and lobbying on behalf of defenders at immediate risk. In emergency situations Front Line can facilitate temporary relocation.

Front Line conducts research and publishes reports on the situation of human rights defenders in specific countries. The organization also develops resource materials and training packages on behalf of human rights defenders as well as facilitating networking and exchange between defenders in different parts of the world. Front Line projects are generally undertaken in partnership with specific national human rights organizations.

Front Line promotes awareness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is working to ensure that the principles and standards set out in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders) are known, respected and adhered to worldwide.

- *If you could pick one example of how the Internet had a positive effect and helped your organization or the people you advocate for, what would it be?*

Quick and cheap communication. We can be much more easily in touch with more people. They can more easily alert us when they are in danger. Quick action does save lives. People are most at risk in the first hours after they are detained, and if there is a quick outcry it can save their lives or reduce their ill treatment. Obviously, limitations on access to the Internet mean that the Internet can't help this where everywhere. But mobile phones make up for most of the places where there isn't Internet access.

- *You've been around human rights for a while. Can you remember some of the early experiments using the Internet for human rights? What did they look like?*

I can remember being in an office where several people shared one PC, email was a new curiosity and we still sent urgent appeals by telex because faxes had not yet penetrated large parts of the world. This was only 10-15 years ago.

Things started to shift in the early 1990s. One example of this was the campaigning around the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, which saw a marked increase in the level of organization and coordination of NGOs at regional level. Some governments -- China, Indonesia, Singapore -- were trying to push the "Asian values" line to excuse their abuses of human rights. However, the strength of the voice coming from a broad range of Asian civil society groups successfully defeated them. I think email was a key factor, alongside good strategy and a lot of hard work, in achieving a coordinated reaction from the Asian NGOs. Email ensured that the reaction was visibly from Asian NGOs and not mediated through international or Western NGOs.

There was also a revolution in terms of access to and ownership of information. Where once Amnesty might have been one of the few NGOs providing information on human rights cases at the international level there was an exponential growth in the availability of information. More local and national human rights organizations could get directly to international audiences like the media and the UN. Where once there were a few illustrative cases coming out at the international level, you could now receive daily information on killings in Colombia or torture in Turkey. Of course, this posed new challenges in terms of effective campaigning and overload.

- *How do you best tap this deluge of information?*

In a way, it is more democratic to have lots of people having access, communicating what they want to communicate without their messages going through the editing of an international partner. Donors and others looking for a simple life are often pushing more cooperation between groups. However. I think that cooperation should be driven by the needs of local reality and not to make life easier for people looking in from the outside. Of course, if you want to have an impact with your information and advocacy you need to find ways to get to the right audience with a message they can digest. It probably comes back to building relationships and trust. The Internet can help to develop and sustain such relationships, but it is often easier to start with personal contact.

- *Do you think the Internet has influenced how Front Line Defenders operates as organization? What about human rights organizations in general?*

Yes, yes. Front Line could not operate as a small NGO with five staff working on issues in all regions without the communications capacities brought to us by the Internet. We are in regular contact with hundreds of human rights defenders and we could not do this any other way.

We have also recognized that access to the Internet and the security of electronic communications are key factors in the protection of human rights defenders at risk. This is why many of our small grants are communications related and why we are developing training activities and materials on electronic communications and security.

In terms of human rights organizations more generally, I think the Internet has had a democratizing effect at the international level. The digital divide is real, but so is the non-digital divide. In spite of all the technical and resource limitations, many human rights organizations in the South are able to use the Internet have more of a voice on global issues. They can get their own message out in their own words. We are not yet in the Promised Land, but there has been a marked shift and it will only get stronger. Of course, at a national and local level, there are still huge issues about access to resources.

On the other side of the coin, the immediacy of communications -- which is as much about the media as the Internet, although of course they also overlap -- might have promoted a move to a more reactive, less substantive reaction to human rights issues. There is a risk that quick info isn't accurate info.

- *Can you provide a specific example (or two) of small communications grants that you have given? What impact have these grants had on the ground?*

We gave one grant for computers and phones to an NGO working clandestinely in Burma. They say that it has contributed to their safety, enabled them to respond quickly when people have been detained and, with the funds from Front Line, this organization has been able to function quite reasonably using mobile offices for coordination and advocacy work.

A defender in the East of the DRC who we provided a grant for mobile phones and a computer said: My security and the one of my colleagues would have been in permanent danger and compromised. Thanks to this grant, we have been able to reach higher authorities in charge of security to save the lives of our colleague's human rights defenders, arrested by security agents locally. This is thanks to telephone contacts.

- *What do you see as the cutting edge of Internet use by Front Line Defenders? What will these new approaches offer the people you are trying to protect and advocate for?*

Getting more skills on the ground to empower human rights defenders. One project is to provide secure access to ICT for human rights defenders in the Eastern Congo. This the three-year project will include training, technical support and the provision of technology appropriate to the environment. The training will range from basic IT use and maintenance to use of software and programs that will enhance the security of storing and communicating information.

- *If the Internet and computers completely disappeared from the face of the earth tomorrow, what would Front Line Defenders look like? What would be different?*

We would probably have to switch to working on just a few countries, our phone bill would grow hugely -- as would our filing cabinets. We might have to invest in carrier pigeons. It is hard to imagine really.

Brian Fitzgerald, Greenpeace

Interviewer: Mark Surman

From the Greenpeace Website (http://www.greenpeace.org/international_en/aboutus/):

Greenpeace is a non-profit organization, with a presence in 40 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific. To maintain its independence, Greenpeace does not accept donations from governments or corporations but relies on contributions from individual supporters and foundation grants. As a global organization, Greenpeace focuses on the most crucial worldwide threats to our planet's biodiversity and environment.

Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organization that uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and force solutions for a green and peaceful future. Greenpeace's goal is to ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity. Greenpeace has been campaigning against environmental degradation since 1971 when a small boat of volunteers and journalists sailed into Amchitka, an area north of Alaska where the US Government was conducting underground nuclear tests. This tradition of 'bearing witness' in a non-violent manner continues today.

- *If you could pick one example of how the Internet helped Greenpeace achieve a campaign goal, what would it be?*

Probably our campaign to get Coke to get climate-killing chemicals out of their refrigeration. We launched a campaign against them during the run up to the Sydney Olympics in 2000 (the "Green Games") highlighting how un-green their refrigeration was, which is still online at http://www.cokespotlight.org. Heavy promotion by Adbusters and various pockets of activism on the web meant that it generated enough heat to the CEO that he pledged a phase-out before we could get to the conventional land-based action. Brought McDonalds and Unilever along when they finally delivered on the promise this year.

What exactly was pledged by Coke? And how did all of this extend to pulling McDonalds and Unilever into the picture?

They agreed to stop using HFCs in their refrigeration and switch to the Greenfreeze technology that we pioneered, which runs on butane and doesn't harm the Ozone layer as HFCs do: http://www.greenpeace.org/international_en/news/details?campaign_id=3937&item_id=504623. McDonalds and Unilever joined in the initiative to remove HFCs from their refrigeration as well. I believe this was at Coke's invitation.

- *Can you say more about the 'heat' that was generated? What role did the web or*

email play in generating this heat?

We created a funny (hugely important), tongue in cheek brand attack on Coke that included stickers people could download and put on Coke machines, postcards which mocked the Coke logo next to starving polar bears, and an email attack which people could join in carrying our appeal direct to the CEO. I believe around 100,000 emails to the Coke CEO were generated.

- *From the web and email side of things, what did you do right on this campaign and what would you have done differently??*

It was humorous, it targeted a corporation (brand vulnerability, quick to react) rather than a government body or treaty mechanism, it had an achievable 'ask', the economics were such that Coke had to ask themselves if the billions they spend on brand equity and warm fuzzy associations for Coke were worth risking for the relatively small cost of shifting technologies.

In those days, we didn't capture email addresses to an ongoing list of cyber-activists as we do now. When the campaign was over, the participants were not pulled in to a larger effort and repurposed. We didn't ratchet the campaign up ourselves to hit McDonalds and Unilever next.

- *What did some Greenpeace's early experiments with the Internet look like? How did folks across the organization react?*

Wild and all over the place. Our first major action was publicizing the route of a "secret" shipment of nuclear waste on our website, and sending a press release about it direct to a printer in the office of Le Monde. (The IP address was discoverable!) Then there was the banner-hanging hack in which we dropped a virtual banner complete with tiny virtual activists with a Stop GE message over the logo of a mock-Novartis site. During the Brent Spar campaign, in which we were head-to-head with the UK government and Shell Oil over the dumping of an oil platform, we discovered half of our visits were coming from inside Shell itself.

- *What's different about the first online campaigns that you did and the campaigns you are doing now? Think mock Novartis site vs. CokeSpotlight.*

We think in terms of action now, not information. Our earliest Internet efforts were a part of our original mission of getting information about environmental abuses out there, then attacking the criminals via standard democratic mechanisms like treaty votes and legislation. Now, we can put in people's hands the ability to take action directly as soon as they are informed of an abuse, and with a wider arsenal of democratic tools.

- *With all these years of experience behind you, what about e-campaigning has gotten easier and what has gotten harder or more complex?*

Corporations have globalized, so running global campaigns against them has become easier. Demonstrating double standards in the Northern/Western world as opposed to the developing world is far easier. We were an international organization long before the media and corporations had internationalized, so we were on a good footing to use and attack those forces when they caught up.

However, the traditional Internet petition or email or fax attack is a dying form. Politicians have found ways to Teflon-coat themselves against public pressure from the Internet i.e. US senators won't accept email from you unless you live in their district so the need to be more creative and more audacious to make an impact has risen.

- *Do you think the Internet has changed Greenpeace as an organization? How?*

It's starting to. Our campaigns are beginning to factor in how they can harness our online activists, with some great results. For example, the Iceland government backed down on a plan to kill 500 mink whales this year after we mobilized more than 50,000 people to pledge to visit Iceland if the government stopped the policy. That represented more than 50 million USD in potential income against a whaling industry that was worth 2-3 million annually in its heyday. So, we set the issue in a nice contrast and lined up the tourist industry with us as an ally.

- *What did it take to get Greenpeace to the point where at least some campaigns effectively use e-activism? Was it individual champions within Greenpeace? Money? Luck?*

A couple of risks and a couple of successes. We're a meritocracy, in some respects, and campaign wins have a "me-too" marketing effect internally. But, the organizational instinct has been to treat the web the way we treat conventional news outlets, as a place to cover news about what we're doing to save the planet rather than an interactive environment where we can actually motivate folks to help us achieve our goals.

- *What is it going to take to shift this and how would Greenpeace think about and use the Internet if a successful shift could be made?*

It's just going to take more wins and time to make the shift, and pressure from folks who want to help us and are demanding we fill that need. There's also a need to widen our traditional toolkit a bit -- Internet and consumer activism is highly affective against international brands and multinational corporations, more so than governments in my view, and while there's glimmers of understanding of that it's not a widespread recognition yet.

- *When you say 'widen our traditional toolkit', what are you imagining?*

We need to find ways to pressure what I call "power constituencies" more. As governments become more beholden to corporate interests, turning corporations into allies in our efforts becomes more essential. In the case of Icelandic whaling, we made

the tourist industry our power lobby by having our cyber-activists offer them incentive to do what we wanted. The government of Iceland listens to the Icelandic tourist industry in ways it does not listen to foreign eco-freaks.

- *Are there ways in which widening the toolkit also means partnering more and working beyond the Greenpeace brand? Has the Internet helped so far with this kind of collaboration?*

I've got folks up in London this weekend meeting with a wide swath of other NGOs to compare notes about e-campaigning. This is a follow up to a similar meeting we did last year in which we all learned we face pretty similar challenges and learned a lot from one another's experiences.

The open source model has helped in particular. The CTO of Red Hat heard about a set of international activist tools we were developing and gave us a donation in a personal capacity to help fund it. He earmarked part of the donation for a conference to promote the tool kit to other NGOs. Our Mailing List Manager was picked up by the campaign of a democratic congressional candidate in Oregon.

- *What do you see as the cutting edge of Internet use for Greenpeace?*

Instant data access informing individual actions that collectively shift corporate and government policy. Getting activists to cluster around particular campaign goals in ways that move share and brand values (see http://www.greenpeace.org/international_en/features/details?item_id=266699 for some edgy stuff about smart boycotts that I think has a future.)

- *What will this cutting edge enable you to do as an organization that you can't do now?*

If we could put a barcode reader in a mobile phone that a consumer could set to Greenpeace preferences, they could get a red-green rating for products at point of purchase, and make their grocery list a campaign contribution. The move of the Internet onto handheld and personal devices will be a big enabler for these kinds of campaigns.

- *If you had a huge, virtual busload of activists and all the techies you needed to build your dream e-campaign, what would it be?*

Wow. It would be a massive, internationally-branded campaign to shift energy efficiency savings in the west to renewable projects in the developing world. You could sign up to do as simple a thing as turn off the standby mode on your TV for the next year. A website calculates your energy savings in euros and carbon and you have the opportunity to donate part of your savings to solarizing a small Indian village. Your carbon savings go into a massive, centrally calculated database of similar efforts and displays results in terms of power plant builds avoided. Or, you agree to boycott Pepsi until they endorse the Kyoto protocol and a worldwide financial and consumer axis actually forces hedge fund

investment in Pepsi because they are projecting sales losses worldwide as a result. Pepsi caves, you move on to the next corporate target. Or, you join in a day's boycott of BP until they kick 50 million into a solar panel factory in China, joining a campaign in which you're getting people to pre-order panels that the factory will produce for their own home or sponsoring panel purchase for villages in the South. (BP itself launched a study years back that said a 500 million investment in solar panel manufacturing capacity would drive worldwide costs down to a tipping point in cost-effectiveness).

- *A lot of NGOs -- and funders -- don't seem to see the fact that there is both a lot of potential and a lot of hard work still rolled up in the Internet. They figure, "We've got email and a website, no need to invest further." What would you say to these folks?*

The problem as I see it is that the "frontier mentality" about the Internet got largely subverted by the dot com boom. So much talent and so many resources went into developing the commercial possibilities of the web along a simplistic shopping mall model that when it all went belly up folks thought the idea of the Internet changing the world was suddenly demonstrably flawed. It wasn't the medium that was flawed, it was the message, which amounted to, "Shut up and buy."

But, the way political campaigns in the US (particularly Howard Dean's) have struck out and created whole new ways of fundraising and activism proves that there's massive undiscovered territory out there involving how people relate to each other and take action on the web, how they cluster and arrange themselves, how they set up bridges between the online world and the real. All that's slowed it down has been a diversion of resource into commercial models and a failure of creativity. Should NGOs be happy with a website and email? Would an advertiser be happy with a billboard that could accept phone calls? Of course not, The Internet provides an opportunity for your supporters to roll up their sleeves, step into your work environment, DO things to help you, invent thing to help you, and invite their friends along to help. But it takes a lot more than email and a website. You need to create a sense of community around your mission, you need give people some ownership of what you do. Communities need to be fed and watered, trained, stroked, disciplined and rewarded. Unless you invest heavily in those things, you'll be standing all alone at the back of the dance hall decked out in a bunch of pretty pixels with no place to go.

Jon Ramer, Interfaith Project

Interviewer: Ken Jordan

The Interfaith project grew out of a group called Unity Project Seattle, which was formed following 9-11. For the first anniversary of 9-11, a large inter-faith gathering was convened and, since then, three Interfaith Leadership Summits have taken place to build local interfaith cooperation. Their events encompass a broad expression of faith and interfaith work not only in the Abrahamic tradition with Christians and Jews, but also with Hindus, Buddhists, Celtic, and Wiccans among others. The Interfaith project believes that there is some shared calling, that all life is sacred, interdependent and growing to fulfill its potential. The Interfaith project seeks to encourage people to "connect to their similarity and innovate to their diversity."

- *How did the Interfaith Project get started? Were there a series of face-to-face meetings?*

Yes, the meetings were all face-to-face and the first year we did a pilgrimage series. We had meetings every month at different churches, synagogues or mosques around town. We were taking on third-rail issues…things that people did not want to talk about. One of the things that became apparent is that there isn't a good level of cooperation amongst these different groups around town. That oftentimes events would get scheduled and there wasn't a good way to know about other activities so there would be conflicts. We decided to establish an infrastructure to supports that, which gave rise to the Interfaith Communication Network (IFCN, http://livingdirectory.net/IFCN/).

- *Did the group set a specific objective of what it was intending to do?*

Yes, the group's objective was to build local interfaith cooperation. All these groups make programs or event's calendars to publicize their events so that people know about and participate in them. We thought that this was a tipping point model, for example, I'll promote your event to my community if you promote my event to your community. And, we thought why not improve the level of organization and coordination between us to avoid redundancy and conflicts in terms of scheduling events.

- *Were they using the Internet or just newsletters?*

No, people were just getting together a place here called Camp Brotherhood, which was started about 25 years ago. There was a television program with a rabbi and a Catholic priest where they talked about the issues of the day from a religious perspective. They collaborated and bought this land about an hour outside of Seattle. And, believe it or not, they've never had an interfaith event there. Unfortunately, the rabbi died in an accident about 15 years ago, but Father Tracy held the vision, and about two years ago was the first Interfaith Leadership Summit. That's when this idea got hatched. I had experience with open space technology. We brought all these leaders together, about 150 leaders from different groups from throughout the Peugeot Sound, which is a little broader geographic definition of Seattle, a couple different counties, Bellview and Seattle are part

of King County.

In open space, basically, you have a topic and a theme, which was building local interfaith cooperation, but you don't have an agenda. If you haven't heard about this, you're going to love this, it's amazing. You convene in a circle, and, in this case, you have two concentric circles. There are four principles and one law to open space. The principles are, first, whoever shows up are the right people. The second principle is whenever it starts is the right time. The third principle is whatever happens is the only thing that could happen. And the fourth principle is, it's over when it's over. You get together and you have a wall that's designated to become your agenda. It's based on passion and responsibility. It takes a few minutes to set it up and, basically, if anyone's interested in hosting a session, you come into the center of the circle, you get a piece of paper, and you say I'm Jon and I want to talk about building an inter-faith communication network. You announce it to the group and post it on the wall. Your agenda gets self-organized and created in about 20 minutes. And, no one has to host a session and anyone is free to. But, the one law that makes this whole thing work is called the law of two-feet. If anytime during the open space, you find that you're not giving or receiving value, you exercise the law of two-feet. And, you're mirroring nature, you act like a bumble-bee and you cross-pollinate between different groups, or you're a butterfly, you go out and look pretty, or you go take a nap if you want to. So, no one's being done-to, it's all by choice. It really works great because if you host a topic and no one else is interested, then you realize then this is time to work on it alone. Or, if during the session, someone's dominating and people start walking away, you have immediate feedback.

So, at this first open space that we did, one of the ideas was that of a communication network. And, a couple of my colleagues and I determined that we could do it. I had had exposure to the Living Directory (http://www.livingdirectory.net/) and I thought this would be a good start because here people could have a profile of themselves that they could share with others with their interests. I had been using it for a while and it's one of these things that makes a lot of sense theoretically, but people have not taken to it. The idea is a social network directory. An on-line directory of people in which each individual is invited to participate in it, privately and securely. You establish a personal profile for yourself that includes defining your interests so you have a number of these little tabs with your professional contact information, like a business card, but then you can declare specific skills and interests, organizations you're associated with, any needs you have or offerings you want to make to the community at large. You can use a tab to supply a little bio about yourself and you can find people. The whole purpose of these directories is description and discovery. You know, describe yourself in such a way that you can be discovered and you can discover others because, for example, people are looking to get volunteers to help them work on these inter-faith related projects.

- *Using Living Directory, how do you find others whose interests you might share?*

The idea is to get everyone to use a common set of keywords or terms. So, we posted a set of keywords. It started as a directory for single groups and morphed it to Living Directory to support multiple groups. So, we were a group of groups. I have about 30 coordinators because the key thing that I knew that was going to tie everyone together

was the event. There are probably over 200 events have been posted in the IFCN. It was a way for us to share with each other. You know I share my event, and you'll be able to promote them to your community, you promote your event, we'll put it out to our community. The key thing about the directory that really works well is that you can broadcast out to that community. We, as a collective, created a shared rolodex as well. Every time someone gets an invitation, weather they accept the invitation or not, they're now in a class of users that you can mail out to. I can send it out to everyone that's active in IFCN. There have probably been about 12-1300 people that have been invited and there are about 600 people who are active. Those of us who are coordinators, have the permission to be able to share notifications, broadcast messages out to the community at large at anytime. And, there's no question that participation has grown dramatically as a result.

- *What was involved in actually setting up the Living Directory?*

We hosted a few meetings and realized that it wasn't really easy for people to understand how to add events. So, using this mind-mapping tool, I built a couple of maps to show people how they could add events into the Living Directory and how they could send the broadcast messages.

- *Did you find that some of the people at Interfaith didn't immediately embrace the technology due to a lack of training or other obstacles that you had to overcome?*

It wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be. Email is fairly ubiquitous and people know that if you want to stay in the loop, you've got to have an email account. I was expecting that to be a bigger barrier but, in Seattle, our community centers and libraries all have Internet access. So, you use email to invite people to events and encourage them to invite others. The inviting is a distributive function and it's truly decentralized. There are probably 20-30 coordinators on the system and everyone on the system can invite other people onto the system as well. But, coordinators assume a higher level of responsibility because they have the ability to add events and do broadcast messages. We had a couple of sessions where we invited people to become coordinators, to get authorized with the permission they needed and get trained to use this, and it's been so wonderful to watch the thing grow. And, at the last Interfaith Summit, we built a map of the open space topics. When people break off into the topical groups, they come back and provide a report, a basic summary of who was there and what got discussed, what commitments got made. Those were posted up to the map, which was published to the web and distributed out to IFCN. More than half those groups that started there are continuing to do things in the community.

- *How many people were in the initial IFCN Living Directory group on-line?*

About 150 people attended the third leadership summit meeting. There were about ten of us that broke off at the Summit to talk about having an Interfaith communication network. And that core group of volunteers has stayed intact.

- *If you didn't have the Living Directory, would you have been able to do this?*

Yes, there were other programs at the time. We were thinking of using MSN or Yahoo but I thought that it would be better if it was free to use, commercial free and secure because in order to use MSN you had to get a Microsoft Passport account. That was a deal-killer for a lot of people and I knew it would be and should be. For us, the idea that such a resource was available, it just naturally became the one to use. I had enough exposure to it and knew enough about it that I could say that with confidence.

- *Do you have any idea what it cost to make the Living Directory resource available?*

It was made available for free by a non-for-profit and it didn't cost anything to maintain. There is no support desk and, basically, we assume the responsibility for taking care of the users. The technology is there no and it works. For social network software, the idea of having people's pictures on the site makes a big difference and it really works. I've run into people who I thought I knew or looked familiar because I saw their photo inside the Living Directory. The effect is definitely there. It is important, groundbreaking work.

- *When you started with those 10 people, how many people joined when you launched the Living Directory service?*

About 3/4 of the people at that summit accepted their invitations to join the Living Directory so about 125. Now, there are about 600 community leaders and members listed. And, there have been a couple hundred events posted. So, you could go there and see a very rich collection of different events across different states. The theme is building local interfaith cooperation. The people that really become active are information repository, networkers in their own communities. We haven't done a lot to promote this. It's a word of mouth thing and I get emails from time to time from people who say, "we heard about this and we want to be able to post something there, what do I need to do?" It's grown really organically.

You don't need to be a member of the Living Directory to see the event calendar. When you post events, you can choose to make them pubic or private. If they're public, someone could just navigate to the home page for Living Directory IFCN and see the events that are there. The events organized Unity Project Seattle have been extremely well attended. This year, 9-11 happened to fall on the Night of Good, which is the night of forgiveness of Jewish tradition, it worked out that way. We were at a facility that held 300 people, and 600 people showed up. Its only promotion wasn't IFCN and not everybody there was a member but, there is no question in our mind that the Living Directory played an important role. In fact, we're doing this faith-forward event at town hall, and one of the reasons that we were urged to participate is that we're seen as people who have this network, which we can get people to come. And, everyone wants their event to be well-attended and their programs to be used.

- *Has the IFCN project changed the way that the interfaith community group sees itself as an organization? Has it changed the way that it operates as a network?*

It's a generous act to the community at large. It's great when people ask and find out that the IFCN project is a volunteer effort that's being done to support those in the community who want to build interfaith cooperation. One of the groups is called Together We Build, this kind of multi-faith Habitat for Humanity. And, part of the reason that those events are happening here is because it is perceived that the Northwest is a strong interfaith community. I don't know enough about how many events were going on before, but I do know that leaders in the community have been honored and we've received some awards. We're going to do this walk on New Year's Eve around Green Lake. There were about 2000 people there last year.

All of these events are being announced though the IFCN network. It's really the events, the personal profiling and people finding each other. The thing I really rely on it for is to help people get their events posted and to broadcast messages out to people to make them aware of activities. The profiling creates a sense of trust in the network because if you're posting an event there, there's a link to your profile so that people know who you are.

- *Are you thinking about ways that you might extend the program?*

Yes, a number of things are in the works. Part of my motivation is that we want to reach 50,000 people through the churches, synagogues and mosques. I've been working with the American Society of Muslims and they have a lot of bi-local consciousness. This is going to evolve to include economic activities to support the local community as well. And, obviously the technology will evolve when there are more resources to provide. For example, having a broader directory so that you know the local businesses. We believe that there is a divine call to social action. A lot of people who volunteer for social justice and those kinds of issues feel a spiritual longing and a spiritual motivation. I'm very inclusive in my view about that, I don't think there's any right religion or wrong religion. Religion itself has been a real mess and caused a lot of problems. I consider myself to be a holistic Jew and holism is an interesting emerging phenomenon. The idea here is to allow for that expression to do good in the community and to have a community of others who share that view and who want to work together.

- *Is the value of getting the free resource that you were able to do something that you may not have been able to do had you been stuck with only commercial services? But, the flip side of that is that you're relying entirely on Living Directory continuing to develop their service so that they can extend capabilities as the technology improves.*

Yes, the commercial service would have been a turn off. But, in terms of using Living Directory, at the moment, there aren't any additional capabilities that we need. The thing that really compliments the networking well is the mapping. One of the most empowering things you can do for a group is to document and record what happened and I use Mind Manager to do this at all the meetings I go to. Basically, mind-mapping

software is a visual tool. It allows you to build topic maps. You have a central topic. For example, each open space session was a topic. The central topic was the Interfaith Leadership Summit and then there were sixteen different sub-topics. What's nice about it is that you can email it and its functional granularity i.e. it goes as deep as it needs to go. You can put in as many sub-topics as you need to. We built a little template to support that. We got in who was participating in the session, what was discussed and what commitments that were made. The chart shows the relationships between different projects and individuals. Many times people go to conferences and nothing happens afterwards or you don't know what happened afterward. We post these maps on the website after the meeting so that people can see that there's action happening on each one of these things. Some of these projects are pretty inspiring, like the Interfaith Mentoring or the God Squad, which is sent in by community leaders to help resolve a conflict.

- *For the IFCN, the basic Living Directory and the calendar of events, how much maintenance time did it take?*

Very little. Every now and then I get a request from somebody who needs some help because they're new to it and they don't know how to do it, but I don't spend much time with it at all. It's distributive so it really runs itself. There is no need for a moderator since the people who joined were essentially trustworthy and there were never any complaints about other people's posts.

- *Are there communities in other cities that might be interested in using the technology?*

Yes, my partner has been in touch with communities in other cities who might be interested in using the technology. On the IFCN website, you can see the wide variety of events that have been posted by our members.

- *How do you and your community measure the success of this project?*

There are three distinctions that might be helpful in measuring the success of the project. They are structural, relational, and cognitive. We have a structure that we share and through that we can start to build relationships with each other. The groups' measure for relationships growing is the number of participants and their programs or events. The cognitive aspect is really knowledge-sharing including the building of maps in collaboration either together or in small groups. So, making people aware is the cognitive aspect of this. In the short-term it's learning, in the medium term, it's action and in the long-term, it's conditions. We're trying to set the conditions for cooperation such that we can get 50,000 people using these cards. To be clear, it's not a technical problem to get people to use these cards, you must have the will as well as the way.

- *Did you find that there were community organizations, that didn't seem to embrace the on-line calendar at first?*

Yes, there were, and there were some groups who were threatened by it. For example, at

first, Interfaith Alliance of Washington saw this as redundant of what they were doing evolved. They had a single person who had a network of people who were sharing some events and they would post them. But, a central point-person can't really do as good of a job as a decentralized model. As they evolved, they ended up becoming another node in the network, their events are on their own calendar, plus they're shared here. That's what I want, I want to do this information commons and syndicate it so they can put it up on their own calendar, and then have an RSS-feed. It would be easy then for any individual to post some events and then get an aggregated view across any of the different groups that they want to tune into. IFCN is not sponsoring these events, we're facilitating or supporting or helping these other groups sponsor their events so we immediately went to the limits of IFCN because we had multiple coordinators and events.

Sean Sheehan, The Center for a New American Dream

Interviewer: Ken Jordan

From the Center for a New American Dream Website: The Center for a New American Dream helps Americans consume responsibly to protect the environment, enhance quality of life, and promote social justice. We work with individuals, institutions, communities, and businesses to conserve natural resources, counter the commercialization of our culture, and promote positive changes in the way goods are produced and consumed. Helping people live consciously, buy wisely, and make a difference. At the Center for a New American Dream, we feel that:

Living consciously means getting more of what really matters in life, being aware of what's going on around you, finding balance, and having a little fun while you're at it;

Buying wisely means becoming a positive force in the marketplace, using your purchasing power to support business practices that are safer for the environment and better for people;

Making a difference is all about making sure your citizen voices are heard, being active in your community and letting policymakers know where YOU stand.

- *How has the organization been influenced by its on-line work? Has it changed or extended its mission in any way? Does the organization see itself more as a connector between environmental organizations because of its on-line presence?*

Yes, the Center has extended the mission in a couple of ways. Certainly one, with respect to connecting with other organizations, it's very easy to establish links through our website through on-line programs, more so than if we were strictly an off-line organization, which would be more restricted. For example, the Conscious Consumer section of our website, launched about a year ago, is about reducing consumption – getting people to buy less stuff – which is about half of our mission as an organization. There are a lot of people in the world that are under-consuming, but a big section of the United States is consuming more than they need to, more than is making them happy, and it's having a big impact on the environment. The other half of our mission is recognizing that we all have to consume, that we're all going to consume, so how can we shift our consumption and our consumer choices in a direction that matches our values whether they be helping the environment or promoting social justice. The Conscious Consumer site is a marketplace where people can find organizations, companies and products and the impact that they have on the environment. For example, 100% recycled paper, back-to-school products, or paints. As a small organization, this was something we recognized that was a tool that would be very hard for us to provide if it was off-line. It would also be very hard for us to provide individually, not having the research staff to do it, and not being experts in all these consumer areas. Our technical and editorial staff focused on finding trusted organizations, trusted allies of ours who were experts in a given area and linking to them. For example, Co-op America has their green pages guide and searchable green pages on-line, which offer a large number of products and stores. We were able to

point to them as the experts in that area with various fair-trade organizations etc.

- *How did Turn the Tide begin? Did it begin as an off-line program initially and then you started thinking about how you could bring it online?*

Turn the Tide, launched in 2001, was always thought of as a core part of our website. We simultaneously released tools, a web book, and classroom materials. But, it was really designed to be an on-line program. That was really the focus of the program. The goal was for people to see the environmental impact of their individual actions, to see how they combined with others to really make a difference. The web is really the perfect medium to give that immediate real-time impact and feedback. There are currently about 20,000 people in the Turn the Tide database.

From the start, we've tried to focus our messages to people because the issues we are promoting are so overwhelming. It's easy for people to think, "I'm just one person. What I do doesn't matter. I can't make a difference." We try to hone in on the messages, whether it be our "Simplify the Holiday" campaigns, or more environmental messages, to convey that 1) what you do matters, and 2) you're not alone, there are a lot of other people feeling the same way, acting the same way and all together we can make a real difference, both individually, and in pushing businesses and governments to do their part. First, we wanted to quantify the impact of simple steps people can take to help the environment, like putting in a compact, fluorescent light-bulb. We wanted to develop a program, a small number, not to overwhelm people, not 101 things you can do for the planet, but just a small number, nine things. We did research and we talked to a lot of environmental scientists and leaders in the field and asked them what individual steps would be the most powerful. We came up with a big list, defined which ones had the hardest statistics based on government numbers tied to them, and selected nine that had the biggest impact, were the most solidly-quantifiable, and were the easiest to do in the course of the daily life. For example, to move to a smaller house near where you work would have a huge impact, but not something everyone could turn around and do. They were things like trying to replace one car-trip a week by combining trips or car-pooling, eating one-less big meal a week, and getting off junk-mail lists. And, we provided tools as to how to take each of these actions, and why it was it important. And then, when they reported, "I skipped a 25-mile trip," we quantified how many pounds of carbon dioxide they had reduced their emissions by.

We invited people to sign up for a program that they would go on. They had the opportunity to give other information if they wanted. For example, if they were part of a local church-group that was doing this, they could list their group affiliation. They could also request to get on more advocacy email alerts and contact the media etc. But, basically they signed-up, got a username and password, and logged onto the sites. They had their own personal profile with the nine actions listed. They could go to action number three, which is sustainable: don't eat shrimp and make ecological choices with your seafood. They could see tools, they could download Environmental Defense's seafood selector tool, or the Audubon Society's wallet cards. And then, when they were ready to take that step, they could check off, "I'm not going to eat shrimp." And, by

checking that off, it would say, "You're saving about 11 lbs. of sea life, by-catch they're reducing." Then, if there were 20 people at St. John's Episcopal Church doing the program, it would say, "Together you and your group are saving 200 lbs. of by-catch, and, all together, everyone at Turn the Tide is combining to save 28,000 lbs. of sea life." Then, they could go onto the next action, or they could log off and come back later when they were ready to take a different step.

- *What did you do with the information for an individual user who would come to the site? Did you gather the feedback that you were getting from the users in a certain way, either by circulating it in press releases or some other form, or was it strictly something for people using the site exclusively?*

No, we certainly used the numbers outside of it whenever they tied into other campaigns. We used the numbers for media campaigns and, for people who weren't necessarily logged onto the site, we had a box on the website where people could see, "Members of Turn the Tide are saving 1.1 billion gallons of water, 5 million pounds of carbon dioxide, etc." One of our other media campaigns that we often do in the summer is the "Declare your Independence from Junk-Mail" campaign. Everybody hates junk-mail and over 100 million trees per year go into producing paper that's largely thrown out. This campaign really tells our story well because it is about something that people don't want to consume, but the system kind of forces them to consume and they helpless and can't get out of it. In this case, The Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT) made a junk-mail opt-out site, where you could put in your information and it would generate letters to the credit bureaus, to the banks, to, depending on your state that you were in. You might end up with ten or twelve letters that you could print off and mail to get off the marketing lists and it would cut your junk mail down by more than half. We actually had been looking into building a tool like that to go along with Turn the Tide and with our "Declare your Independence from Junk-Mail" campaign. But, as part of that process, we always try to look around to see if anyone else is doing something similar so that we don't have to recreate the wheel. We found CDT, met with them, and we've partnered with them since for the last four or five years. We have a form on our site that links to their site and letters are generated from their site. No one's names or information from the opt-out form is kept. It would be antithetical to the purpose.

- *Did Turn the Tide have a viral effect by people forwarding emails to one another to bring new people in? Or, did New Dream have to do most of the marketing?*

Turn the Tide definitely didn't have as much of a viral effect as we wanted for several reasons. For example, of the nine steps, there were ones like the junk-mail that were just wildly popular, a lot of people were forwarding that to friends and we had related advocacy actions such as writing to Steve Case and then John Miller urging them to stop their metal junk-mail effort. And those were wildly successful too, and really went viral, a lot of people told their friends. But, with Turn the Tide and the personal actions, a lot of people were sort of loath to tell friends, to push it, because it was hard to do it in a way that wasn't preachy. They didn't want to come across as, "I'm saving all these resources why don't you come join me?" There was stuff that we worked on for a while that had

some success. For example, we found that third party validation and celebrity-type emails worked. We didn't really have access to big celebrities like some groups have but we did have Jane Goodall. She was very interested in the program and we got her to write a letter or support, an invitation, for people to forward onto friends. And, when we sent that out, that was probably the single biggest boost for Turn the Tide, it brought in a couple thousand people over a couple of weeks. That was pretty early on when the program was only a couple thousand people. It grew quite a bit right after that letter. That was part of the learning curve. The two biggest challenges we had in that program was, first, to find ways that weren't preachy, and that is part of the Center's tone to not be preachy, but with that particular program, spreading the word, going viral. And, the second challenge was to get people to report the actions that they had taken. We did some surveys and found that a large majority of the people that we were in contact with had heard about Turn the Tide, loved it, and had taken the steps, and probably about half, a smaller majority, had talked to friends about it as well. But a smaller, minority of people said that they had reported all the actions that they had taken. Most people said they had reported some, but not all. A lot of people said that they had taken most of the steps, but hadn't reported them. Most of them thought that their friends hadn't signed up. This was a challenge with personal actions. In theory, people can recognize the importance of trying to take actions that matter and joining together with other people to really make a huge quantifiable difference. But, still, when it comes to reporting, there's often a feeling that, "I just put in my compact fluorescent, and I ate a veggie burger instead of a hamburger two days ago, that is what's making a difference for the environment so I'm going to the use the few minutes I have to play on-line, to send a letter to President Bush rather then reporting this personal thing."

- *How do you get people to come back to the website again and again? How do you maintain their connection to the site so that they feel that the information is continually rewarding?*

The program was a success in the sense that the vast majority of people were taking these actions, a large number were telling friends about them and understood the importance. There comes a point that you see the impact that people are having and you say, "This is great, I want to be a part of this." They feel part of it, they do the actions with others and they know that they're making a difference. But, I think there's also a feeling that, "OK if these people are already saving 1.1 billion gallons of water, you know enough to fill 1800 Olympic swimming pools, what's sort of the difference between 1.1 billion gallons and if everybody in my town signs up it's 1.3 billion?" It is sort of the point for us with big numbers. How do you comprehend the difference between 100 million dollars and 500 million dollars?

- *How do you think your use of the Internet has changed or influenced the way that New American Dream sees itself and operates as an organization?*

Certainly, it has enabled us to be involved in more partnerships and to collaborate with other organizations, which is something that we saw as a goal before the get-go. We are somewhat playing the role of a hub for other justice and environmental organizations that are working on consumption. Through the Internet, a few years ago, we had a searchable

database on our website where people could find local and national organizations working on an aspect of consumption. We're going to be re-launching that database as part of our New Dream Community. We're really trying to help build that hub.

- *What is the New Dream Community?*

The New Dream Community is the new, interactive part of our site. It builds on and greatly expands Turn the Tide by allowing people to have their own blogs, find people in their area and get email alerts. We have over 60,000 people in that New Dream Community. It allows us to make a lot more connections with individuals, by letting them sign up for different email alerts and various resources from our site. Also, between individuals and each other, by allowing them to have their own blogs, contribute their personal statements about how they're living consciously to get more of what matters, how they're buying wisely, and how they're taking action to push business and governments. And, we allow them to put in a zip code search to find other people in their area who are interested in putting on alternative get-fairs or who are doing local action or fairs or events. Related to that, we're going to be re-launching our on-line database where we have organizations say what their mission is, what their focus is, how it relates to the consumption. Are they tackling commercialism, are they promoting green products, more efficient products, and what are they doing in this arena? And then, we put individuals in touch with those organizations.

We also have an events section where people can put in events that they're doing, and then, based on people's individual profiles there's an events page. It's all based on your zip code and will tell you what events are happening in your city, state and zip code radius. For example, this holiday season, we put out a guide just as a PDF, on how to put on an alternative gift fair where you invite charities to sell donations in their name i.e. for $50 you can give your cousin Johnny an acre of wetlands that is protected in the middle of Maine or a block change for a victim of domestic violence. We put together a how-to guide on that and, via email, encouraged our members who are interested in doing things locally and invited them to go onto the site to post their event in the event-section. We had a conference call to help guide them through the process if they were bumping up against challenges in planning the event. We had 29 of these alternative gift-fairs done in over a dozen states across the country. It made a big impact, people were able to find it through the events-section and raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for charities and helped people have a less material holiday, one less tie to throw in the back of the already overstuffed closet.

- *How has the organization's web presence evolved over time? And, what's the difference between your relationships with other organizations and how you're linking to their content?*

The organization's web presence has evolved over time as technology has evolved and as we've learned. For example, it has been getting somewhat more database driven. At the start, we had a more rudimentary website. We had a puzzle called the New American Dream Puzzle with various pieces including pieces on the environment, commercialism. By going to the various puzzle pieces you could read about our take on how that issue

related to the issue of consumerism, changing American consumption. And then, there was a list of links to resources provided by other organizations including books and websites. Our web presence evolved in a much more sophisticated way to give individuals more control over the types of information they're most interested in, when they make up their own individual profile, so they can control more of the content of their screens.

- *How many people work on some aspect of the website or other electronic information/services?*

There are about four people that work very closely on the website as a substantial part of our job, but probably 10 or more total (out of about 20 – 24 employees) if you include our institutional procurement staff. They have an email list and a section of the website on institutional procurement that they write content and drive design for. But, a lot of it goes through Jarred. The closest core team would be Jarred and Dave, Dave doing a lot the overall content for the site, Jarred doing the design and working with back-end programming, bringing in whoever is needed. Catherine, an associate who works with me, and myself oversee the email correspondence with members and all of the action alerts. We oversee most of the personalized section of the New Dream Community website. Sarah, our communications director, and Jen, who does our print newsletter, also have a good bit of interaction with the press releases and the media section of our site. But, for them, I'd say it's getting to be probably less than half of their job and the same with the three people on our institutional procurement team. Most of our administrative staff, who correspond with our dues paying members and our development people, have more interaction with the website and broad email correspondence than they did before, so it really depends on how you define it.

- Was there a point in the organization's history where there was a realization that the website needed to be integrated into the day-to-day activities of the operations of the entire organization?

That's right, and definitely being fully integrated is our goal of recognizing that there's an artificial line between on-line and off-line. We see the real change that happened as happening off-line, but we see the on-line potential in every facet to make a bigger impact off-line. There were definitely points where that was clear. There wasn't one epiphany moment. From the start it was, "OK, over here we're going to be making a website and we're going to be doing this, over there we're going to be making a print newsletter, connecting with our dues-paying members that way, over in another corner we're going to be corresponding with the media having these media campaigns, and back there we're going to be doing these advocacy campaigns, trying to impact government and business/corporate campaigns." On-line and off-line are not different and they're not different types of people we're dealing with. We're trying to tear down those walls. That's part of what we're trying to do with this on-line interactive New Dream Community. For example, we had the author Bill McKibben on the phone. It's an off-line event in the sense that it's bringing people together but it's an on-line event in the sense that it was totally coordinated that way, researched and posted on the website, people were advertising it through emails to their friends and finding the resources, the

tools on the site. And then, it's a conference call event in the sense that people are connected through phone. It's really seeing on-line, off-line, phones, all these different things as tools of bringing people together, making a difference, effecting the change we want and using different tools to varying degrees depending on the program, but not seeing it as an on-line thing here and an off-line thing there.

- *Were there certain challenges that you felt that you needed to overcome internally in order to get your staff to see the value in using information technology to achieve your organization's mission? If so, how did you manage that?*

Yes, for example, in terms of buying a desk or hiring an auditor to do the books, those are sort of prices that an institution and people in an institution know what it should cost. But, it is more difficult with technology, for example, if you are buying a new server and trying to make the case to the organization that you need a double rather than a single. There is not necessarily organizational resistance per se but just questioning about the value of the technology. What made it easier in the beginning was talking to people who had a lot of experience in this arena. Having a few people like that in different areas, weather it be hardware, information technology, Internet services, to be able to bounce proposals off of and talk things through with certainly helped. In 2000, we hired an IT person to handle our internal hardware, networking and website. At the time, we only had 12 or 13 staff people so it was a big deal to hire a dedicated staff person to handle IT.

- *Did the hiring of an IT person mean that the organization's administration understood IT was a frontline priority?*

That's definitely true. We had started working on a website before we were incorporated as a non-profit status. There was definitely that recognition from the beginning that a small organization, tackling a huge issue, trying to change consumption in the United States, with a small budget, we needed to reach out publicly and the web was a great opportunity for that. The website was the recognition from the beginning, but then as we started to do on-line interactive things, wanted personalized spaces for people, etc. The Turn the Tide program was a big part that helped make IT a priority.

- *Did your on-line presence help to contribute to the increase in the budget? Has it contributed to the organization in a way that has increased donations? Is there a direct link to that?*

It's more of an indirect link in the sense that we have a relatively small dues-paying membership. Very small actually, because we don't use direct mail. We certainly do have people that have given us money over the web and through email solicitations but it's probably only five 5 digits a year. Most of our money has come from foundations initially and shifted over to more large donors along with foundations. Our institutional procurement program does get some money from institutions and state and local governments but most of our money has been from large donors. But, there is some personal contact from our development directors.

Our website visits are comparable to a lot of the big environmental non-profits. On one side, our on-line presence did provide a lot quantifiables that we could take to funders. We could say, "This year, just the personal actions people reported taking just through Turn the Tide is equivalent to taking 5,000 SUVs off the road." Those types of quantifiables are powerful both in talking to the media and to our members in telling the story that what you do matters. But, it's also powerful in donors seeing that you're actually making a quantifiable difference.

- *If the Internet and computers just disappeared tomorrow, could you imagine what the Center for the New American Dream would look like?*

If we didn't have a large infusion of cash to replicate this correspondence through paper and phone, the only other alternative would be to greatly shrink. We'd have to really reconsider our focus. The short answer is no, I can't imagine that. Our media work could be done with faxes, press releases and polls, but, some of our institutional purchasing work has become very web and email list heavy so it would be very hard.

Matthew Deleget, New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA)

Interviewer: Ken Jordan

The New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA, www.nyfa.org) is a non-profit service organization that was founded in 1971 by the New York State Council on the Arts to do arts and education programs including programs that provide grants for planning and implementing programs to bring artists to school communities. The organization achieves these goals through fiscal sponsorship in order to channel funds to artists and emerging organizations in the form of grants, services and information. NYFA sponsors over 400 individual artist projects annually and 75 emerging artist organizations. NYFA was one of the first arts initiatives on the web beginning with ARTSWIRE in the early 1990s.

- *What was ARTSWIRE? How would you describe it in a couple of sentences?*

ARTSWIRE was an online arts community, which included a website, email, web hosting and technology planning and conferences. It was a special project of NYFA that continued until the late 1990s when NYFA's first big website went online in 1997. Prior to ARTSWIRE, NYFA was providing information and services in the form of grants including an artist fellowship program that was founded in 1985 by Penny Dannenberg. The artist fellowship program is the largest such program in the state and still one of the biggest granting programs in the country.

In terms of providing information for artists, NYFA has a couple of different programs. Many NYFA programs were started elsewhere at organizations that were being restructured. For example, NYFA Quarterly, a print magazine, was formerly a publication called FYI, which was run by the Center for Arts and Information. But that more or less went under and then came to NYFA in about 88 or 89. NYFA Quarterly was basically a newsletter that started out as a smaller publication and grew to a circulation of 30,000 this year both within and outside of New York State. We reorganized the newsletter into a magazine about the same time we launched NYFA Source in 2002.

A second information program for artists was ARTSWIRE Current, which was a bi-weekly digest of everything that was going on in the arts including announcements, news and advocacy initiatives. We continue to publish it, but we overhauled it earlier this year and renamed it as NYFA Current, which is a magazine for and about artists. Before, it was really an on-line newsletter for arts organizations with news, alerts, job listings, calls for artists, etc. This is the precedent of NYFA Source (http://www.nyfa.org/nyfa_source.asp?id=47&fid=1), which is the visual artist information hotline. It used to be run by the American Council for the Arts (now Americans for the Arts). They were going through some restructuring and, in 1996, this program came to NYFA. This program was started in 1990 by the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation, which has an advisory committee of some really well known artists like Chuck Close, Philip Pearlstein and Janet Fish. They brainstormed a bunch of projects

that would be helpful to artists right away that the Sharpe Foundation could start investing in. But, they didn't want to run these programs themselves, they just wanted it placed elsewhere so they just wanted to support them. So, this hotline got started. It was literally just an 800 number at the American Council for the Arts in 1990. It was a free number that any artist could call -- live, a couple hours of the day – to get answers to their questions. The questions were related to funding, marketplace, exhibitions, health insurance, or other types of insurance or legal issues. We still get a lot of questions regarding copyright problems and censorship issues. It really just started as a service for visual artists to call and get some help. I imagine that, at the time, there were some similar services for the performing arts. The hotline served about a thousand people a year, maybe a couple thousand in the next few years and, in 1996, the program came to NYFA. That is when I came on board and started assembling a database of resources.

- *What kind of resources were they using before to answer questions?*

I would imagine that they were using binders, collecting paper copies of information and filing it a really offline, low-tech way without a database. That's how they were doing it before. At first, NYFA built a very simple offline Access database in-house to start housing this information in a digital format. From that information, we started building what were called Fact Sheets. When it started, it had a couple of hundred resources on a couple of topics. There were about eight or ten topics including grants, residencies, health insurance, legal issues, etc.

During the development of this program, when people called us for grant information, we would take their mailing address and send them the Fact Sheets from the database. The need for and reputation of the program grew so quickly and we were spending a massive amount, around $20,000 on copying and mailing thousands of pages of paper every year in '96 – '97 and this continued until 2002. In 1998, we started making PDF documents of the Fact Sheets and posting them on our website for download. And, as a result, we realized that people were much more interested in getting that information via download than by mail because they could get it faster and people were getting more technology-savvy. When I first started, the usage of the program was about 3,500 people a year, and this increased to 8,000 immediately within a year from '98 to '99 according to the web measurements. The next year, it went to 16,000, and then to 24,000, and then to 36,000. Then, we launched NYFA Source, which increased it to about 67,000 and, currently, it's about 80,000 people.

There's a direct continuation from the hotline to what NYFA Source is doing today. The minute we went online the numbers increased and service was immediately applicable to anyone anywhere anytime, which is major because, before, the information needed to get channeled through a single individual person and that phone was only live so many hours a day. We also had a voicemail and would take messages. But, basically, anyone seeking information needed to go through a specific person to get that information. The minute we put it online was the minute there was a real sort of a shift on the dynamic in how that information was consumed.

- *How did the program grow into NYFA Source and what is it actually doing?*

When we built up the original database in '97 there were a couple hundred of resources on eight or ten different topics. For the first two years, by '99, I built up a database of about 36 topics with 2,000 programs for media artists including visual arts (photography, video, film), media arts and performance art. So, you could go infinitely more refined in the types of things you were looking for, like slide registries or fine art insurance, etc.

There was a lot of labor associated with it putting all of the information in a database but the comparison to NYFA Source currently, and the type and amount of information that we cover and track, and what we were doing back then was not the same. Back then, it was just like getting a basic description of this program with some contact information. So it was not well researched, comprehensive or checked with the organizations. Instead, we just called and went on people's websites to get information to build the database. There was no methodology to it. It was updated about every two years, but sometimes that wasn't possible because it was run by one person, me.

I was doing research, technical assistance, database maintenance, monthly updating of the Fact Sheets for mailing and posting to the website so that there was a freshness to the data.

- *At what point did the website itself become searchable so that people would be able to find content and answers to their questions by going to the website?*

That partially happened when we put the Fact Sheets up on the website. But, it was never interactive. It was very user-driven. They would come to the site, take what they wanted and that would be it. The landing page listed the Fact Sheets. And, we also started to develop Fact Sheets on each of the 50 states. Since '90, it was always conceived of as a national program but originally it was only for the visual arts. The more information we put into the Fact Sheets and on the website, the faster it was consumed. In '99, there was a real shift towards online over print and it got to the point where there were more people going to the site than calling us.

We built up this database on our site with Fact Sheets and the usage went up to 16 to 20,000 a year. Then, the Urban Institute decided to do a holistic study of the support structures for US artists in the country. It had a couple different components. One of them was a big national analysis of all the programs for artists in this country, which thoroughly and holistically analyzed the data on each program across the board and analyzed it to learn what it is, what does it look like, what does it do well, and what does it not do well. They came to NYFA after doing a lot of research online to see who sort of had this information available and it turned out that we had the best, most comprehensive information available, which could be adapted to their purposes. We were collecting data, although it wasn't in an academic way, we had a lot of data to start with so they weren't going to have to reinvent the wheel. We partnered with them in '00 to completely overhaul our offline database and create new fields that would be consistent with academic research. This is when we decided to expand the database into all disciplines nationwide. As it grew in its technological capacity, it also grew in terms of the types of information we were tracking to be as holistic and national as possible. Now,

we have an online administrative interface that we use still use.

At some point, there was a decision to move from posting un-searchable PDFs that were created from an Access database, which is available only in-house, on the website to making the database itself available through the Internet to anyone who wants to search through it. Our technology partner, the Carnegie Mellon University Center for Arts and Management Technology, was on board in this project from the beginning. It took NYFA and the Urban Institute a year to figure out what data we wanted to collect in terms of categories.

The purpose of this was to build a national information source with ontologies and taxonomies that lend themselves to the broadest possible usage by as many organizations as possible in a way that artists, academics and others will be able to use. NYFA is primarily concerned with the applied research side of things, which is why it took a while to determine what information we needed to collect and for what purpose. The beauty of the new database that we built is that it can be used for both academic and applied purposes. This was the first time we had a database that tracks every single program for any artist anywhere in this country and makes it immediately accessible to them. It also can be turned around and be completely crunched academically, which is what the Urban institute has been doing since we launched it. You can do runs off the data, see what the trends are, see what's changing, see where the holes are, etc. It's really serving two masters at this point but that's why it took it so long to determine what we were doing, what we were building. At that point, once we determined what we were building, we brought in Carnegie Mellon University to help us build it. They put the database online, albeit in a hidden, password-protected website with online administrative tools. This was the first time any of us had any experience with online dynamic driven databases at NYFA. After the database was built, we needed to start doing the research.

- *Were there any models of online databases for not-for-profits that you used as a model when you were designing?*

Yes, we looked at the Foundation Center database and a few others, but none of them did exactly what we wanted them to do or, if they did, only on a very small scale. But, this was the first time we ever had any experience working with an administrative database like that. In the end, we built something that has served us very well and that we've grown into over the past 4 years. Currently, if we upgrade the software, it will allow us additional functionality.

During the second year of the project, when we were working with the Urban Institute, we focused on the research and hired about 6 or 7 researchers. We did a massive training and wrote protocols and manuals. Basically, it took us about a year to fill that database with data before the Urban Institute could do their analysis. In summer 2002, we delivered an Access database of awards, services and publications for artists to the Urban Institute.

- *At what point did the online Carnegie Mellon technology project take off and how did the research with the Urban Institute lead to the building of this very large online resource?*

Carnegie Mellon came on board as our subcontractor about 9 months into the first year of the project to help us build a dynamic database with their experience. Unlike in the corporate world, where there are consultants that can help a company understand exactly what their needs are and what kind of service they might want to build, in the non-profit sector, that kind of consulting didn't exist in such an organized fashion.

Even with the Urban Institute's resources, it was difficult to figure out what was needed. It wasn't a priority for the Urban Institute to have the data online, they really just needed the data offline so that they could analyze it. But, our priority was to have it online so we built an online dynamic website from scratch. The thing that was most important to us was the distribution of this information to the field, to the artists.

- *What were some of the challenges you faced in making the case to build a larger web-based database?*

When we delivered the data to the Urban Institute in June 2002, we had a tremendously robust database with up to the minute data in it that we wanted to turn around and make available to the field as soon as possible. We had started work on that a couple months earlier in March 2002. We need to know how and in what format to take the data and put it online. For some odd reason, we decided to overhaul our entire website altogether, not just NYFA Source but the entire website and all the resources we offered on the site. From March to November 2002, we completely rethought the overall structure of our entire website in terms of how to deliver and maintain it. We built a dynamic database and administrative tool for our entire website using NYFA Source as the main resource. This all happened very quickly -- within a matter of seven or eight months. The Carnegie Mellon Center for Arts Management Technology was amazing. If there was anyone who functioned in consultant capacity, they did. They advised us on what was possible and feasible and prescribed what solutions were out there. The site was hosted at Carnegie Mellon until we purchased our own server when it when live.

- *What is NYFA Source and how does the program work today?*

In the past two years, we've learned a few things. First, currently, most people know what NYFA Source is, what's how to get access to it. NYFA Source is a national directory of programs for artists. Second, we don't specifically say that it is online, searchable, dynamic or interactive because two years ago those terms were confusing to a lot of people. In the first year after we launched NYFA Source, we prioritized marketing and advertising, and we learned very quickly that we needed to train people how to use the website effectively. Basically, it's a piece of software that helps you strategize your career so knowing how to use it effectively is important. We did a lot of travel to conferences, artist groups, and meetings to do demonstrations and training. That's been a

big priority for us.

Currently, we have two part-time researchers that just do updating of information in our database. They either update existing programs or add new ones year round. Their job is to cull through the listings. We have a freshness date on every single program in the database, which is the last time it was updated. The researchers work backwards by month, program by program in order to update the data. They go to the organizations website, update as much information as they possibly can, and then get in touch with the organization to confirm that data. That's part of the research protocol that the Urban Institute wanted us to do. The do online research, put it into our online program and confirm that data with the organization. In the next year, we're going to allow organizations to update their own information themselves, which will help in keeping the information up to date. Organizations have been asking us to be able to do that i.e. to be able to confirm details and submit information to us. Organizations that were very skeptical of whether or not this could even be done two years ago are now saying, "how can we get involved," and "how can we do it ourselves." There's been a big change in the last couple of years.

The researchers are part-time but I also have two other individuals who are full-time. They do research and run the training sessions. They tweak the interfaces on our website, change the language, develop new technologies for the site, and answer the phone and email. We still have the 800 number and an email address for questions. Over the past couple years, since we have been online with NYFA Source, the number of questions has actually gone down to about 1,500 calls and emails a year. The kinds of questions that have come in have also changed dramatically to questions that can no longer be answered with a list of resources out of a database. While before people would ask for a list of grants or residencies, now they ask much more specific kinds of questions that can't be answered online such as about realizing an international project, copyright theft or censorship. These questions are more difficult to answer and require more expertise. This shows the success of the NYFA Source database since it is able to answer the simple questions that artists had a very difficult time answering at all even five years ago. Now, they can go online and get that information directly from the website. They only need to contact a staffer directly when they have a more complicated question. As a result, more complicated questions come in. These are either related to a specific situation that could never be answered by a list of resources or there are technical questions regarding the use of the database itself. The live assistance part is still hugely important to NYFA even though we're online. The original essence of the visual artist hotline -- the phone with the person at the end of the line -- is still crucial and important and that's never going to go away.

- *How much information is in the database and how has it grown?*

After 9-11, there was a tightening of resources so it was difficult to tell if the number of programs was shrinking or not. We had seen some anecdotal stuff in the past couple of years saying that organizations had less money and were giving out fewer and smaller grants, or putting their programs on hold for a year to weather the storm. But, I can definitively say that there are more programs in the database than before. I can't tell you

whether or not these are new programs or not but, when we first handed it over to the Urban Institute, there were about 5,000 programs in the database and now we have about 7,600. So, in two years, it's gone up about 50%. We update those programs yearly and add new programs daily, whenever we come across them. The researchers are able to update about 50 to 75 programs a day. As a result of NYFA Source, more programs people are able to find out about more programs.

Organizations want to make sure that their data, including their application requirements and deadlines, is correct now that they are part of a very visible national project. There have been a few organizations that have wanted to lessen their visibility in the database because they are small family foundations that can't handle a huge influx of applications. We've also heard of organizations wanting to make their information less transparent so that they are not overrun with applications. We have others that have re-designed their guidelines to make them much more specific as a result of receiving too many applications. NYFA Source has pretty clearly increased the amount of applications that have come to grant programs from artists at least based on anecdotal evidence but nobody has done any research into how NYFA Source has impacted the organizations themselves. We've also had organizations wanting examples of related artist programs or public art programs so that they could develop or overhaul their own programs and we've been able to provide them.

In addition, perhaps as a result of NYFA Source, whereas, in the past, many organizations couldn't specify their application or eligibility profiles, now, organizations are starting to be much more specific in terms of whose eligible and who isn't. This is why, in NYFA source, many programs are listed as open internationally to any artist anywhere, because these organizations have never thought about it and they've said that to us explicitly. So, having the national system and asking them questions, prompts a kind of questioning internally that helps to clarify their own process. And that's what we we're hoping we would be able to do with this.

- *Do you have a national breakdown of where these artists are from?*

It used to be a lot easier with our old website because it was not dynamic. It's hard to track the usage of NYFA Source specifically due to our tracking software. That's one of the areas we need to expand upon.

- *How do you measure the success of the program internally?*

We measure success in a couple of different ways, mainly in the number of people who have come to the site, how long they've been on the site and how often they come back. In the past two years, since we went live in November 2002, it's grown substantially. It's harder to measure the total number of users because people navigate into the site differently – a year or two ago a lot more people were using our basic search pages. There were good usage all the way across. Our advanced search page was OK. But, currently, there are twice as many people using advanced search pages than a year ago so it went from 5,000 to 11,000 over the course of the year in each of the basic discipline search pages, which have each grown by 50%. The return rate is pretty standard. Our users come back multiple times and spend a good amount of time on the site. The

amount of time they're spending on the site, how they're clicking through, each step of the way the number is higher and higher so it's growing.

- *How has NYFA Source influenced the way that NYFA operates as an organization?*

NYFA Source has influenced NYFA pretty profoundly. When I started, the visual artist hotline was really a backburner program. It was a nice gesture and it did what it did. It wasn't breaking any records, but it was good and solid. But, now it's a core NYFA program along with our fellowship and fiscal sponsorship programs. In terms of support, it is a core program. It has a substantial staff -- two full-time, two part-time, a few interns and myself -- probably one of the biggest in the NYFA organization.

It's grown substantially and changed the way we function. We spend a lot of time online, we spend a lot more resources in developing our online capacities. We use the information in NYFA Source for publishing lists of opportunities for artists on our website and for publishing deadlines in the back pages of our quarterly magazine which we send out. All that is generated right out of NYFA Source. And it's such an amazing tool for handling live hotline questions because you can query the database by keyword. It's greatly improved the capacity to deliver personalized information over the phone and by email. There is no question about that.

The other way it's been really interesting too is in terms rolling out new programs for artists. We've been using it to seeing what other programs are out there and how they do it. For instance, I've used NYFA Source to find out what other organizations were doing conferences for visual artists, how long they were and what they were charging. I know our fiscal sponsorship and fellowship program staff has done programmatic improvements based on what they found in the database.

The analytic aspect of the database is really underserved and underused even though it has huge potential impact.

- *What is the next step for NYFA Source?*

Currently, we're rolling out two new interfaces with continued marketing training. We scheduled workshops, demonstrations and free, two-hour training sessions on how to use the database at NYFA every couple of months. It's been amazing. They've all been completely booked instantly with 20 – 30 people participating in each session. We are realizing that one of the next steps is to improve our personalized one-on-one or group workshop training session.

MD: And this is just local, were not offering these anywhere else, this is just in our office, we said, "well, I think we should start offering this", and they were booked instantaneously all of them. And that is something we want to expand upon. So we're doing this... um the marketing of course is a big one and we're doing a big print ad campaign in magazines, you know artists magazines, both nationalized and local. We're doing a big sort of mailing of postcards you know direct mail kind of a thing in the new

year.

In addition, we are going to be rolling out an organizational updater interface, which will allow organizations to come to the site, log in and update their own information. This will be fabulous considering that there are about 3,600 organizations in the database right now. Even if a fraction of them use it, it would save us so much in terms of money, time and resources. We are also rolling out a personalized artists interface, which will allow an artist to go into the database, register as a regular user, allow them to do searches of the database and allow them to tag specific programs fold into their own personalized online portfolio. So, rather than go in the database time and time again, they could tag programs and keep them in their portfolio to go back to whenever they want to see them again. This will happen in the second quarter of 2005.

- *How would a syndication system work?*

There are two syndication models that we have considered. In the first model, the NYFA Source database would feeding dynamic information that would be requested from an organization's website and appear on their web pages contextualized by their local content. This is all very specific to the organizations themselves, but the consumption of our data would happen through their website. It would communicate with what we are seeing in this parallel database that would be held on our server and it would feedback to their website. So, the NYFA Source database becomes a web services platform that feeds content to a wide range of artist's organizations websites. Our idea here is that we would like a couple organizations to be onboard as a beta test group so that we could really work through the obstacles. We could really create a web service that is robust, universal and readily applicable to a large number of organizations. In the second model, we are working with the Chicago Cultural Affairs Department in developing a syndication model that can be folded into their database. Their website is only for Chicago based visual artists, which is different than the NYFA website because we have not just NYFA Source, but also dozens of other information resources that share the bigger NYFA Interactive website with the NYFA Source module within it. In this model, NYFA Source content is actually going to be fed seamlessly into sections of their website as they've determined them. For example, if they have a section on grant programs, our grant program information will be fed directly to those pages in the way that they request.

The Chicago Cultural Affairs Department is dividing their site into big topics i.e. careers, portfolio, legal, exhibitions and integrating sections of NYFA Source into those topic areas. It's a decentralized searchable system on their site. These sites can be linked together to create a distributed national network of searchable websites for artists. Chicago and New York would be the first two hubs in a growing national network that could include other cities as well.

It is important to understand that NYFA Source could essentially have seeded the creation of a national network, where one never would have thought was possible a couple years ago.
This was sort of inconceivable a couple of years ago. When we first started researching, the organizations we were talking with were so skeptical that this could even be done that

they were not very forthcoming with their information for the database. Two years later, it's amazing not only that it been done, but we've maintained and improved it for two years and now we are going to be able to share this information with other organizations. It's just phenomenal. It's very thrilling to me.

- *Can you imagine what NYFA would be like if the Internet were to disappear tomorrow?*

It's unfathomable. Surrounding the NYFA Source database, we have built an information research department that was not there two years ago. This was something that was started in knowing the direction that everything was moving in. We formed this new department and brought all of our information services under one departmental structure in 2002 along with the launch of our new website, the overhaul of NYFA Quarterly and the new NYFA Source. Now, it's all under one big department and the big engine in all of that is NYFA Source. So it would be impossible for me to fathom how we would deliver information without the web, technology etc. It's really remarkable. It's really an about-face, 180 degrees around.

- *How have NYFA Source and all the Internet work extended NYFA's original mission?*

Since the very beginning, NYFA Source has always been a very big information provider whether we did it informally or later through formalized programs, publications or other resources. NYFA Source is at the center of NYFA's mission and it forwards NYFA's mission. NYFA was originally founded to be a New York state service organization but by putting up this website and, especially by putting up NYFA Source, we've gone from a state organization to one with a major national presence over the past two years. We've always sort of had a presence on the national stage and the programs that we ran at that time, like our fellowship program, was a really good national model. But, in terms of information, it's incredible. It's not just nationwide, but we've been doing six continents for at least five years. If NYFA could be not just an information provider to individual artists, but also the information provider to the information providing organizations. That, for me, is huge. That would be a huge accomplishment.

Ruby Sinreich, Planned Parenthood

Interviewer: Ken Jordan

From the Planned Parenthood Website (www.plannedparenthood.org):

Planned Parenthood Federation of America is the nation's leading sexual and reproductive health care advocate and provider. We believe that everyone has the right to choose when or whether to have a child, and that every child should be wanted and loved. Planned Parenthood affiliates operate more than 850 health centers nationwide, providing medical services and sexuality education for millions of women, men, and teenagers each year. We also work with allies worldwide to ensure that all women and men have the right and the means to meet their sexual and reproductive health care needs.

- *Could you tell me a little bit about Planned Parenthood?*

Planned Parenthood was founded in the nineteen teens by Margaret Sanger, a big advocate of family planning, which was something that was nonexistent before then. We have clinics in every state in the country. We a little over 120 affiliates, which vary from those that cover one or two counties in a particular area to those that cover an entire state and others that even cover more than one state. The affiliate structure is totally not systematic, but the organization has really grown up organically because a lot of these are actually organizations that existed themselves and then later chose to federate themselves with Planned Parenthood. As a result, we have incredibly strong grassroots infrastructure with these 120 independent organizations with their own leaders and advisory boards that make their own decisions.

I work for the federation, which works to serve those organizations and be their voice collectively. All of those affiliates, even the smallest ones usually have at least some program for public affairs and they have to be accredited to call themselves Planned Parenthood. The accreditation has to do with having correct medical and business practices etc. But, they are also required to do public affairs -- some do a lot of it and some just barely do it. Then, at the federation, we have a whole division called Public Policy Division and within that, our department is called Field Operations. This is interesting because the structure is really unique in my experience.

The independence of the affiliates is sort-of unique. But, the thing that I haven't seen before is having field operations located within the public policy division or even having a field operations department at all. I haven't worked for other national organizations, although I've worked *with* other national organizations, but Planned Parenthood has all these different divisions. Within the public policy division, there is, of course, a government relations department with lobbyists and legal researchers. There's also a C-4 action fund within our division. But, there's actually a litigations department. And, there's this field operations department. And, we're very grassroots oriented because we're looking at the field all the time.

- *What does the field operations department do?*

The field operations department does a combination of things because many of these things grow up out of other things. But, in the field operations department, we have field managers who work with different regions of the country. There are four field managers that work with all of the affiliates in their region. They help them do organizing, connect them with other resources, give them suggestions, give them trainings etc. Also, within field operations, we have national organizing programs that are constituency-oriented. Like Republicans for Choice and VOX, which is student and youth-oriented. We also do our national on-line organizing in the field operations department. The action center can be accessed through www.ppfa.org or www.staypro.com. The activations are written by our people and sent by us. We manage a national database of 3/4 of a million supporters that we send messages to.

Some of the strategies are on-line and some of them are off-line. The information for the 3/4 of a million supporters is kept in an on-line database, which is part of our larger messaging and advocacy system. But, they can also be used for off-line organizing. For example, you can go into the on-line database, export a list and make a walk-list for canvassing, invitations, or a phone-bank list etc. What we're trying to do is say that it's all just organizing and here are different strategies that have to be integrated and support each other.

- *Is there a particular Internet platform that was developed to support Planned Parenthood?*

Our national messaging is under the umbrella of the Planned Parenthood Action Network, which was established four years ago as the Responsible Choices Action Network. My work is oriented towards helping the affiliates use it and less toward the actual activists contact so, when I think about what's really useful, I think about what's useful for me in reaching them. The Action Network is really nothing extraordinary, every national organization has their list of people they write to on-line, and that's what it is, although it's not only used for on-line contacts.

The database is stored on-line because that allows us to share it. One of the really important things for an organization as large and dispersed as Planned Parenthood is that we achieve a lot of power through sharing information with each other. For example, if somebody in Missouri signs up for the Missouri Planned Parenthood Action Network, their name is also shared with us nationally, and vice versa. If we recruit someone nationally, and they're from Missouri, the organizers in Missouri also get that name and all the same information that we have about them.

- *How did the on-line component of the Planned Parenthood Action Network start? Did it being as an on-line mailing list and grow from there?*

We currently use GetActive (http://www.getactive.com/), which is a web-based tool that can be activated from any web browser. It has a built-in database component that stores

all the names and individual information about each person. We focus on two interactive modules for messaging and advocacy. The advocacy module allows you to set up an action, prompting supporters to send a specific message to some specific targets. It has built-in legislative targets that you can create for any custom target that you like, so that's really powerful. The messaging module allows us to send out rich formatted emails to any portion of the list that's in the database. GetActive also has built-in reports and tools to help you integrate this with the rest of your website. It's a fairly costly solution so I don't recommend it for everybody, but it works really well for our particular situation because it does allow us to have a hub where all the different organizing can take place. We have 50 different action centers that are shared by different affiliates as part of the larger system so almost every affiliate in the country is participating. This allows all 50 centers and120 affiliates to send local emails to supporters through GetActive. For example, in Ohio there are 10 affiliates, but each of them individually does not have huge public affairs capacity, so they collaborate and share resources. So, on any of their websites, they can say, "Sign-up here to get news and action alerts." As a result, they are recruiting people to the Ohio Action Network and the National Action Network. That allows us to give local affiliates credit for recruiting new members if they sign them up correctly although some of the technical aspects can be beyond the abilities of a typical user.

GetActive is really easy to use but most of the people at the affiliates who are actually doing the public affairs work might not even have average technical skills. Some of them are definitely above average, but some of them definitely are not. I was originally hired for a very singular task, which was to role out GetActive to the affiliates who wanted to use it. I would visit them through an all-day training and support them through phone and email. I did that for a year until something like 90 or 100 of our affiliates were using GetActive in some way, or someone was using it on their behalf. Again, some of them have their own solutions. And, some of them are not really ready to do on-line organizing at all so it varies. After the first year of implementation, I've been able to transition into seeking how people can use it more effectively than they're using it now, which means mostly a lot of basics. My title, which just changed recently, is On-line Organizing Manager. My mission is to help anyone at the state or affiliate level do better on-line organizing, which is pretty broad.

I was hired to do implementation for the eastern half of the country and my supervisor did the western half of the country. But, as other responsibilities grew, I've now covered the whole country. It's really difficult. One of the biggest challenges is I can't get really in-depth. I don't have a good sense of what individually different organizations are doing, or different affiliates or state-associations so I'm more big-picture oriented.

- *Are you using GetActive for campaigns in the more active, aggressive way? Are you getting people to sign up, send this email to a friend, lobby a congressperson or a legislature in that way?*

Yes, it is organizing so we are doing all of those things. Hopefully, our affiliates use it for sending announcements and staying in touch with their supporters. But, we're the public policy division so we want them to use it for advocacy. One of the things that I

have to remind a lot of our affiliates is that advocacy doesn't just mean targeting legislators and grassroots lobbying although that is a very important part of it. But, if your state legislature isn't in session, that doesn't mean that your reproductive rights stop being threatened so you need to continue to organize all the time. Last April, we were one of the major partners in organizing the March for Women's Lives. We brought over a million people to the capital. That's a perfect example of where a lot of the recruiting that we did to get the word out happened on-line, but the goal came together off-line. And, that's organizing too. I try to remind people all the time that all of these things are organizing, that every time you touch your activists, and tell them about an issue, that's organizing too because then they're primed to take action the next time. We're always looking for ways to get people to recruit their friends more, take more actions and be more engaged in general.

- *Do you have a way of measuring the effectiveness of the on-line organizing tools?*

There aren't a lot of direct measures. But, there are a lot of numbers we can look at to get a picture of the health of the network. One of the things that is really interesting is that just using the list actually grows it. There's a lot of focus at Planned Parenthood on recruitment and on building the list, always growing the list. People always looking at the numbers, how many people are on the list, which is an important thing to know. But, sometimes people forget the other side, which what to do with the people on the list. Are you just sending them a monthly newsletter? Are you tapping their potential? Do you know what they're interested in? What we've seen in our own experience and what I've heard from other people too is that actually using the list grows the list. It's not just growing the list so you can then send them actions that you want them to do, but actually giving people meaningful things to do, information that they think is important and/or entertaining as a way to grow the list in turn. It's very organic.

For example, the actions might be to contact your legislator about some important bill that's coming up that needs to be stopped and/or supported. That's one kind of important action and some people really want to do that. But, some people are a little bored with that, to be honest a lot of people rightly feel pretty disengaged from politics in general and maybe don't even see the point in contacting your legislator. Especially if their legislator is a Republican, they really might not feel they're making a big difference. There are a lot of other things they can do to help the cause. For example, they can tell their friends to learn about an issue, canvass in their neighborhood, volunteer in a local Planned Parenthood, or participate in an on-line community. What's meaningful is going to be different for every single person. One of the things that we're struggling to do right now is to get to know the list better so that we can give them things that they want and so that there's a value for them on the list.

- *What tools are you using to get to know the list better?*

There's currently an effort to survey some random samples of the list nationally and statewide. They'll probably use Zoomerang, which web-based survey tool. It's pretty flexible. Basically, it allows you to set up a number of questions on multiple pages, or on single pages. You can do it by invitation only or publicly with a static url. You can have

multiple choice or long-answer questions, all kinds of questions. A few times a month, I use it for on-line trainings through WebEx. Whether I do an in-person training, or an on-line training, I ask the participant to fill out a Zoomerang survey afterwards on the training. The survey includes numeric ratings that they can give i.e. how was my presentation, my knowledge, as well as long-answer questions where they can say what we can do to improve it. It's really useful because the numeric ones I can just get an average i.e. I got a 3.7 out of 4 average, so that's good. Zoomerang is free up to a limit depending on the number of survey questions/participants. Since we use it a lot, we have an account that we pay for.

In addition, I created an e-organizers listserv so that affiliates doing on-line organizing can help each other. This allows them to talk to each other directly so I'm not just a bottleneck. For example, they ask each other, "I'm having this problem, has anyone else had this problem? Does anyone have ideas on how to do this?" So, out of this list has grown the survey, it's not a specific on-going survey, but it's a specific effort to survey the group. The on-line organizer folks are developing the survey including what the questions should be etc. Currently, there are about 35 people on the list, which includes about 5 national staff people doing on-line organizing or working with the folks who are doing it at the states and affiliates. The other 30 people are working with local affiliates around the country and directly implementing the ideas that are being discussed at the national and local levels. They specialize in the on-line strategies. Some affiliates have full-time e-organizers including New York City, Chicago, Connecticut, Massachusetts and, to a lesser extent, the Pennsylvania and New York statewide associations. The Missouri association has a half-time e-organizer.

- *Among the other affiliates, do you think they are able to do effective organizing even with only part-time e-organizers?*

Some of them are able to do effective organizing, but some of them aren't. This is a particular issue that reaches across non-profits that most non-profit leadership doesn't have a great understanding of technology as a tool. This is true especially as a tool for external outreach. Sometimes internally their organization will understand the value of technology as a tool, but definitely not externally. As a result, they're not hiring people who have a great understanding of the value of technology as a tool either. They don't even think it's something that they need to do, and, if it is something they think they need to do, they have no way of telling who's able to do that and who's not. Thus, they really have a big handicap if they're even trying to hire technologically-savvy staff. What you see happening is it really just depends on the individual in the job, some of them understand but some don't and they're never going to. They just don't think this way. They may be great organizers, but they're never going to understand on-line organizing.

- *Is the national organization able to help local affiliates establish criteria for hiring e-organizers?*

Yes, that's exactly what I'm trying to do. In fact, we actually wrote an e-organizer job-description, which I sent out in the monthly newsletter to everyone that uses GetActive. GetActive allows us to easily communicate with everyone who has a manager account,

about 350 people. At each of the affiliates, there may be two or three different people who are using GetActive for different mailing lists and on-line campaigns. The way that they use GetActive varies as much as their own affiliate does. For example, the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts covers the whole state so they've got about one main staff person that uses it and then maybe one or two other people i.e. the lobbyist might use GetActive to get reports. The reports cover membership i.e. has the membership grown and from what sources, and messaging i.e. how did your messages do, how many people opened them etc., and advocacy i.e. how many people participated, how many targets did you contact, what's the click-through rate of your messages, etc.

- *Can you see by how many people and how often the message has been forwarded? What kind of success rates have you found?*

Yes. we're a little disappointed with the viral recruitment. But, our click-through rates and people taking actions, we consider them to be OK. It hovers around 10%, varying of course on the message, which is the industry base-line meaning that if we send the message to 10,000 then 200 click through or took the action that we requested. It's not great, but it's OK. The action is on the advocacy page. GetActive, run by Bill Pease, has a lot of other tools that we don't use. For example, there's a fund-raising module that's used nationally, but not very much with the affiliates and there's a whole content management tool, which we have no interest in. They also have community tools, which is an attempt at social networking, but it really doesn't work. Unfortunately, GetActive is so expensive that it's not right for every body, but it is right for us right now.

GetActive offers a lot of consulting. There are a few things that I really like about them. They have a fully staffed help-desk. One of the challenges is that because I've trained most of the GetActive users, when they ask questions they want to ask me. But, I don't want them to ask me, I want them to ask GetActive because we're paying GetActive all that money partially because of that awesome help-desk. It's a constant effort for me to re-train people to ask questions to GetActive. But, the problem is that the way we use GetActive is so complicated that a lot of the questions do need to go to me because the GetActive help-desk might not understand that if this is an affiliate in Ohio, it means that they're sharing the center with 10 other organizations.

I was pointing out the difference in the way these different centers are set up. At GetActive, they're called centers. Massachusetts has it's own center with a couple of people using it. Ohio has one center for the whole state, but there are 10 different affiliates there and there's a state office so you've got people using it at the state office and some of the affiliates are using it, but some of them are not. It completely varies.

- *How did Planned Parenthood evolve from essentially having no email capacity to getting to the point where it was willing to invest in GetActive?*

One reason I think you don't see as much intelligent usage of IT by the non-for-profit sector is because very few organizations actually went through the process where they made the right decisions that actually led them from not using IT at all to using it well. There's very little information sharing in the field i.e. what do you need to do, what do

you need to know in order to make the right decisions. We used a consulting firm called Deacon Fire, a consulting firm to choose GetActive. It was a very intensive process.

We are doing what a lot of people forget to do, which is to compliment the technology with humans. Many people just want to throw software or hardware at the problem, but the great thing about the way we're set up is that we're giving our affiliates the software and I'm here to continue to facilitate their use of it effectively.

Most of our affiliates generally love GetActive -- they get so excited, even people who aren't very techie and hadn't been doing it before. They get excited because the whole idea thing is so new, it's a whole new way to think about activism. Basically, they like the way GetActive integrates the things that they really like. It doesn't just do one thing. It's not like a listserv, a bcc list, or a database and it's not just on-line, but it's really combining those. When you use the advocacy module, you create the action that you want people to do, and then you create the messaging module to send it to the people that you want, tied into your database, which has the legislative database connected to it as well. It's very easy to use.

- *What is the difference between the advocacy module and the messaging module?*

The advocacy module and the messaging module are frequently confused because they work in tandem. It's hard to tell which part is going on at different times. Basically, anytime you send a broadcast message out through email or fax you are using the messaging module regardless of the content of your message. The advocacy module is very specific, it allows you to create campaigns and each campaign is basically a web page with its own static address.

Each web page has a letter, a specific target, information, a short and long description of why the activists and a form for the activist to fill out. Those are elements of every single advocacy campaign. The targets don't have to be legislative, but they can be whoever is your state senator, or the target could be all the members of the Health and Human Services Committee, or it could be a local pharmacist, or an editor of a local paper. Any of those things could be targets. The elements are a letter to be sent to them with an explanation of why to take a specific target. Each GetActive advocacy campaign is a particular web page that can be sent out as an action alert. You basically take the advocacy campaign and make a messaging campaign out of it. Then, GetActive sends the action alert message to pull the information from the advocacy campaign, but it's still a message. A message could be anything -- a newsletter update, an action alert, etc. People have a lot of trouble with those because sometimes they'll do one and not the other. But there are two pieces to the action alert.

The value of this is that you can market your advocacy out to your list of supporters, rather than hoping that they come to your website. And, you can send them messages that make it really easy for them to take action because you've already composed all the content to tell someone why, and show them the letter that you want them to send. GetActive makes it really easy to create that action alert by making an advocacy campaign into a message. It puts that all together for you. GetActive is always going to

ask you who to send it to. It asks you to segment your list in some way, or choose whatever sub-set you want to send it to, but a lot of times advocacy campaigns might target a weird collection of legislators, like everybody on a committee, or all the democrats in this body or something like that. It's a real pain in the ass to pick them out once as targets and then have to go pick out their constituents. That's very difficult. GetActive allows you to select everyone that's eligible to participate in this particular advocacy campaign, then it finds everybody who's covered by whoever those legislators are. It does a lot of things like that to make things easier. People really like the recording too because in the past they had no idea what people were doing. They had no idea if anybody was even doing it or not. Now, they use GetActive. The sacrifice is that emails are a little less effective than phone calls, but the supporters are also more likely to send emails than to make phone calls. Using GetActive, we can find out exactly how many emails or faxes were sent to each legislator. We can also go through and do things like: I want to find all the activists who've taken 10 or more actions this year or who've recruited 5 friends etc. All of the transactions are connected into the database so that's really useful.

Currently, the reports are probably the area that's lacking the most in GetActive so they're working on that. The reports are great for really simple analysis but we are looking for the meta-level analysis to get a better understanding of what individual people are doing so that you could go into any one of our 50 centers and look at their reports. If you go into the national level and look at an overall report you don't get a lot of useful information. It doesn't tell me anything if there have been 1500 messaging campaigns this year. The meta information isn't that useful right now. But, we're a huge client, so they make a pretty big effort to accommodate our needs, even though they don't do it very quickly. They don't move that fast. We can understand that because we're a bit of a dinosaur ourselves.

- *Have the on-line e-advocacy projects been seen as part of the larger organizing effort from the beginning or were they seen as distinct or separate from the off-line organizing?*

At different levels they are, but what's really important and unique is that we're dong this out of the field operations department of the public policy division, not the IT department. That's our context. Now, within that, there's a lot of division and it's a challenge.

In fact, Jan and I, our titles have changed recently, partially in an effort to get people to see us as more integrated to their work. We used to have the word technology in our titles, and, of course that gets ghettoized. That's why we changed my title to on-line organizing manager, to remind them that, if you're doing organizing, there should be an on-line aspect and maybe you should talk to me about it. Organizationally, at the big picture level, they're fairly well integrated. At least they're all in the right department together. But, this could be done better. At the affiliate-state level, there's a need to do better. We do a lot of work with them i.e. one-year strategic plans. But, if the on-line component doesn't get into the plan at that level, then it's only going to be an afterthought. That's still a struggle.

- *How do you think that the use of these on-line tools and the Internet-related work has changed the way Planned Parenthood sees itself and operates as an organization? Do you think it's had a strong effect?*

It has had a pretty big impact because one of the ways that the outside world knows us is through the messages they get from us or through our website. What people see is these messages – especially integrated messages from your state affiliate or from the national office – that really drives home the fact that we are a broad organization with tentacles at all these different levels. And, because we have a national list, we are able to articulate what our national voice is. But, the cool thing about Planned Parenthood is that we have all these local voices too who are relevant to their own communities.

For example, when somebody signs up for the local list in Cleveland, they get messages from the local and state affiliates and national office. But, if they're in Darke County, Ohio, they're probably not getting anything from their affiliates. They're only getting state and national messages. But, if they're in Cleveland, they might get local messages too because that affiliate has more public affairs capacity. And, they can tell the difference between the messages based on the wrappers, which are simple banners with the affiliate's name, but can also sent as html-designed emails that look like web pages. Each organization has it's own wrapper, which is set up to look like the organization's website. Most of the affiliates have totally distinct websites with a banner at the top with their name.

Currently, the websites of the affiliates are not all part of the national network of websites, but there's a page where you can link to most of them. There aren't a lot of shared resources between them at the moment, but we're in the midst of a huge portal project to bring them all back together under one web roof by subsuming them into the main site. It's voluntary, of course, because the affiliates are very independent. They don't have to do this if they don't want to. We're doing it in phases. The portal will include a re-designed www.ppfa.org site, but it will also include any participating affiliates. Their site will be part of the portal. It will look just like the portal, they'll basically brand their own sites by choosing particular color combinations and particular images, but everything else will be the same. There's going to be consistent navigation across the whole website, etc. There's a clinic-finder appointment-maker. The point is to share resources like health information, so each affiliate doesn't have to maintain current health information on their website when it's all the same for everybody. We have it all in one place. The idea is that this is a destination that people can come there and localize themselves by putting in their own zip code and find their local affiliates, etc.

- *Did the integration of the GetActive messaging and advocacy modules make it easier for different affiliates to see themselves as part of the national on-line network?*

It varies. The smaller affiliates with less capacity are happy to take advantage of any resources that we can make available for them. But, a lot of the bigger and older organizations have their own ideas about how to do things and may, for perfectly good

reasons, not want to be part of the portal. I see the benefits of unifying them into a portal, but I can also see why they may not see it as being in their best interest to participate in it. The interesting thing is that the GetActive was before the portal, and the people who developed the portal honestly didn't come from our division, so they didn't think about our work that much. It's very clinic, health and development-oriented and not public policy. There are a lot of challenges. It will take a few years of growing pains. If you're an affiliate using GetActive, you can continue to use it whether you're using the portal or not. We're working on coordinating GetActive with the portal a bit, but it's got to go both ways. Some of the affiliates are in the portal, some aren't. Some of them are sharing their GetActive with someone who's not doing the same thing they're doing so it's very complicated right now.

- *On a national level, is the organization is totally comfortable with its embrace of IT?*

Yes, I think people like the idea. There is a gap in the understanding of on-line stuff at non-profits. Terry Grunwald, author of Making the Net Work, has a chart that gets to the heart of the problem. It's a matrix with four blocks in a square. On the vertical axis is technological change with old technology at the bottom and new technology at the top. On the horizontal axis is organizational change with old culture on the left and new culture on the right. Terry says that a lot of people move up to the new technology without moving to a new culture or a new way of using technology in the organization. Thus, they're in the same old patterns and they don't understand why technology isn't changing their life. She calls this the technology trap. I wrote an article about the technology trap in my last newsletter, which is available at www.ppfa.org/ppmanagers. The technology trap is a constant problem and our portal project is a perfect example of that because with it comes huge changes in the way we do things. For example, prior to the implementation of the portal, we weren't sharing names between public policy and development, but this change was necessary as part of the portal.

Technological changes are forcing organizational changes for which we are not prepared to address including collaboration between departments because technology really encourages collaboration. On the website, all of the departments are mixed together, which means that we have to collaborate with people in the other departments. Each department has it's own culture, objective, structure, database etc. Technology is forcing some of the organizational change, but since it isn't happening intentionally it's going to have to get rehashed at some point so that someone can do it on purpose and come up with conclusions that we want and need instead of things that we just have to do.

- *Would Planned Parenthood still be able to be an effective organization if the Internet disappeared tomorrow?*

No way. For an organization as large as we are, even internally, we're dependent on it. But at this point, you can't do advocacy nationally without using the Internet because it's so much cheaper. You could do it but you wouldn't generate the number of responses that you want. The Internet is a much cheaper way to get bigger numbers. The result is that is it's less personalized, which is less effective and engaging for activists. We have

to always be thinking about how we can balance that out. It's really an important part of what we do.

There is some resistance to the use of technology but, overall, there's increasing interest in the Internet thanks to Howard Dean etc. Every day my co-workers and the director of our department are more and more interested in doing things on-line. We used to have to drag them kicking and screaming, but they're increasingly understanding that it's important. But, they are really not integrating it yet because they suffer from the same thing we were talking about with the other organizations, they weren't hired to be on-line savvy either.

- *Was there a particular campaign that got their attention internally?*

There's a campaign that I use as an example a lot to remind people that this isn't just for grassroots lobbying, but that it's an important organizing tool. On the day of the March for Women's Lives, Karen Hughes, who's a Bush advisor, made a statement on TV that people who are pro-choice are like terrorists because we don't value the culture of life. Of course, this is exactly the kind of thing that we don't like to hear, but, it's perfect, I love it. She should say that everyday because it doesn't effect legislation and it pisses off our activists. We immediately set up an on-line petition to request an apology from Karen Hughes and allow people to write their own letters to her. The Karen Hughes petition got almost 35,000 on-line signatures from one mailing to our list, which has about 4 to 500,000 good emails on it now but it had less at the time. We easily got about a 10% response rate and recruited 4000 new members who signed up to take that action. Action is a recruiting tool. People sign the forms and decide to join our network. You should always have something for people to do, even if it's a generic petition to your governor that says, "I'm pro-choice." You're missing an opportunity to recruit somebody if they come to your site and there's nothing to do. Karen Hughes is one of the best examples because 35,000 is 10,000 more than the next best national action that we did this year. It was far and away the thing that people were the most excited about. A lot of people are stunned when I tell them this because they think the list is only for contacting legislators, but it's organizing that energizes the base. I use that example a lot to remind them of that.

Allen Gunn and Audrey Driver, Ruckus Society

Interviewer: Mark Surman

From the Ruckus Society Website (http://www.ruckus.org/about/index.html):

The Ruckus Society provides environmental, human rights, and social justice organizers with the tools, training, and support needed to achieve their goals. Working with a broad range of communities, organizations, and movements - from high school students to professional organizations - Ruckus facilitates the sharing of information and expertise that strengthens the capacity to change our relationship with the environment and each other.

The Ruckus Society sees itself as a toolbox of experience, training, and skills. We provide instruction on the application of tactical and strategic tools to a growing number of organizations and individuals from around the world in skill shares and trainings that are designed to move a campaign forward. We do this work in strong collaboration with our partner organizations, working together to define and create the training agenda.

The Ruckus Society was formed in 1995, sparked by the intersection of the passage of a federal anti-environmental law, Greenpeace budget cuts, and two infamous nonviolence practitioners. The Timber Salvage Rider, an anti-environment, pro-logging bill was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in the spring of 1995, the passage of this bill catalyzed a large, vocal, and well-organized response from activists. Leading environmental organizations called for an all-out effort to stop timber sales and shut down the agencies that permitted them and forest defenders took to the woods for blockades on the ground and in the air.

- *Do you have an example of how the Internet has helped Ruckus achieve a campaign goal?*
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GUNN: We had a really good idea, which were the Iraq War Profiteers cards. With those cards and a really well designed website, we generated something like $100,000.

DRIVER: We did a lot of PR, working with Democracy Now and others. This pushed people to a site where they could download and print the cards, order the cards or donate. We also had lots of stuff on the front page explaining how the deck originated, how we set up the suits of the cards and where you can go if you wanted more information.

- *What else was interesting about the web in that picture, beyond just a way to pump cards out the door and take orders?*

GUNN: Well, it went viral, which was fun to watch. It was picked up on tons of political sites and blogs, a lot of them outside the US.

DRIVER: There's no way we would have been able to reach as many people as we did without the website -- listings go on the web they become popular and go viral. The impact is just beyond anything you could do through the mail. People just passing stuff along to their friends is the best kind of advertising that one could get.

- *What led to this success?*

DRIVER: Having the cards advertised on progressive radio. If we had the cards and we had this great website, but nobody really knew about it, it wouldn't have generated so much traffic. Democracy Now gave us a supportive advertisement and used our cards for their fund drive as a premium. By word of mouth, people then spread it around and went to the website to see what the cards looked like.

- *Is the War Profiteers project typical of the kind of Internet strategies that Ruckus employs?*

GUNN: I'm not sure that I would say that Ruckus has ever really done an innovative Internet strategy. They're good with media, and photographs on their website, but they don't really have a process around that organizing.

- *But what about the SMS stuff? That seemed pretty strategic.*

GUNN: We've just always been sort of state-of-the-art when it came to using various forms of communication here. Take the example of using 2004 Republican National Convention in New York. Basically, this started with one person who thought text messaging was a good way to do on-the-ground organizing. In New York, he started playing with SMS with Ruckus and other partners. It was really powerful what the cell phones did in New York.

- *What was it that was so powerful?*

GUNN: The RNC was very much non-violent. But, sometimes, the cops will still use tactics like blocking off four exits around an intersection, and then push everybody towards the centre of the intersection and create this massive crush. At this point, there's some push-back from the crowd and then the cops start kicking the shit out of people, and then they arrest them for attacking. What we were able to do with the text message stuff was, alert people when this seemed to be happening. When we heard the cops doing stuff, like pushing people down the street, we could tell people, "Hey, cops are pushing down on block #34, we recommend you get out of the area." So people could avoid getting bottled in and otherwise having those ugly situations being created.

DRIVER: Also, SMS was used by people who wanted to act as a witness and for the communications people to tell folks where different marches were taking place. It was pretty useful. The number of people that actually got hurt was pretty low, and it wasn't at all like what happened during the WTO. A lot of that was there was more information out for folks.

GUNN: In a simple sense all this was an exercise in collective intelligence. It was these little cell phones actually making people a larger organism in a really trippy way.

- *How has the SMS stuff evolved from New York?*

GUNN: When it all went so well at the RNC, everybody was like, "Holy shit this stuff is working!" So, this fed into an activist SMS event in September. The event helped create SMS blasters and a two-dimensional communication system, so that people could use their cell phones to report information into the system. This fed into something very active, using SMS for get out the vote and election monitoring. A really cool thing they had during the election was that messages could be personalized with your polling place data, which is actually quite a feat with all the different pieces that had to emerge to actually pull it off. That's something that I think is really cool now and how I continue to be enamored with the technology.

- *What's needed to keep this innovation going?*

GUNN: Partly, it's an owner and a sponsor, someone that writes checks and keeps people talking about it. There's a pause in the movement right now, because of the question of where to put resources now that the election is over. There are a lot of conversations being had that sound like, "Hey, let's think of what these things could be used for in a bigger space than just US national elections." What's next is a very open question. You'll at least see is more adaptation to this stuff in legal and regional campaigns.

- *What are some of the barriers to this kind of innovation?*

GUNN: There is definitely a usability barrier that makes it really unlikely that anybody could adapt from what's been done so far. The SMS tools are beautiful, but quite cranky. And there's also a complex factor which is all of these technologies could be used for evil, in the form of cell phone spam and calling phone spam, and there's just all kinds of nasty stuff. It's a really interesting debate within the community how to make these technologies open for people to use, but how to prevent people from using them to do all kinds of other stuff. We've got to think of a check-and-balance system that prevents this from becoming the new frontier of spamming.

- *One of the first things you did with Ruckus was an activist tech camp. What was that about?*

GUNN: The Ruckus Tech Camp was an attempt to establish a sense of community among people who were doing tech for activism. Because it was Ruckus, it was focused on direct action, but there was also a lot of web and old school organizing people there as well. It was basically conceived as a skill-share. It was at first total anarchy, because when people showed up we told them they were making up the agenda for the first part on the fly, which actually worked pretty well. This format is powerful enough to create a glee party with 200 geeks totally tripping each other out. The second half was conceived

more as a training, not in the old school point-to-point sense, but much more in participatory sense. There were five tracks -- secure collaboration, wireless and radio, e-organizing, security and a policy track where people were talking about privacy and open-source and things like that.

DRIVER: The tech camp seemed like a watershed moment for activists. It brought together technical support and campaign support in a new way. Campaigners had a chance to talk and meet with techies about what they needed. About 150 activists came from most parts of the world, Europe, Asia, North and South America. A lot of people that went to tech camp moved on to do some pretty amazing political stuff.

- *Did the tech camp lay the foundation for some of these other things that are going on now?*

GUNN: Yes, absolutely. The tech camp generated some really interesting collaborations and convergences. For instance, activist tech people in Seattle regularly get together and have meetings, which is something that came out of the Ruckus tech camp. There was also a whole radical group of techies that got a lot of dialogue time and had a much richer infrastructure as a result. So, there were a bunch of professional relationships that came out of the camp, and a lot of really cool friendships that got started. I think for a lot of people, it was a total "Ah ha" moment that this tribe existed.

- *Who is this tribe and what's the connection between this activist techie tribe and the broader set of social movements that Ruckus is connected into?*

GUNN: I think the tribe is people doing tech for social organizations or for their own social change causes. But, you have an isolation dynamic. If you are doing tech in a non-profit, the odds that you have another techie within the same four walls that you work are close to zero. If a non-profit can afford one tech person, that's a miracle. So, when you get all these people together, they go, "Ah ha, we're all using tech for social change. I didn't realize they had so many allies, and I didn't realize they already had done stuff I'm just trying to figure out." That's the tribe, it's people who use tech for social change.

- *If the Internet -- the web, SMS, cell-phones -- disappeared tomorrow, how would that change what Ruckus is, and how they do it?*

GUNN: That's an excellent question, and I don't have an intelligent answer in the sense that it would screw up things pretty bad. Ruckus uses communication technology in a way that allows them to be a very agile and distributed organization. So, without the Internet they would have to develop a new set of tools to communicate with each other. That being said, I think they instinctively do rely on a set of old school tactics, banner hangs and so on. The technology piece just magnifies and helps coordinate. It's rarely the core action.

This is something that Ruckus has wrestled with a lot: how do direct-action principles translate into cyberspace? Mostly, it has been through creativity with visuals, like in the

War Profiteers or the Earth-to-Bush / No War in Iraq campaigns. And in Seattle in 1999, with the image where Democracy was pointing one way, and the WTO was pointing the other. They are masters of the message to image.

DRIVER: The 2004 RNC banner hung at the Park Plaza New York is another example. The banner had the word 'Truth' with an arrow going one way, and the word 'Bush' with another arrow pointing in the opposite direction. Immediately after the banner had dropped, a woman in a wheelchair down on the street was wearing the sign around her neck. And somewhere else down in Manhattan someone had already sprayed it on the side of a wall. People saw it immediately and imitated it. We quickly created a flash video of all the imitations that people had done, which went a bit viral as people sent it along to their friends.

GUNN: All this said, I don't think Ruckus has figured out how to use it as a true tool in the spirit of using the master's tools to disable the master's house. They've not figured out a way to use the Internet as a tool against the people that they are opposing. So, when you ask, what happens if they pull the plug, there's a part of Ruckus that would be really happy to get back to the trees and blocking logging roads. However, there is a part of Ruckus -- the part that's virtual is very cool, and essentially it's a networking organization -- that would basically just stop in its tracks.

Maureen Fair and Randall Terada, St. Christopher House *(Canada)*

Interviewer: Mark Surman

St. Christopher House is a multi-service neighborhood centre serving downtown west Toronto. We serve all age groups and a wide range of immigrant groups, people with varying abilities and many low-income households. St. Chris is not a religious organization, despite its name. We integrate community development approaches into all aspects of our work and we believe in addressing the root causes of social problems affecting our community. St. Chris receives funding from many different sources, including various levels of government, the United Way, donors and foundations as well as charging sliding scale fees in some programs.

Community development for us includes: Creating a sense of belonging to a group/s or identity linked to a group/s instead of isolation. Increasing participants' involvement and power in the House and community. Public education and advocacy on systemic issues affecting the Community. An example is an individual who is receiving individualized "service" from St. Chris who then is encouraged to participate as a volunteer on a Program Advisory Committee or Members' Council who meet and discuss/decide improvements to program activities and also do advocacy on issues affecting many of the other participants in that program.

- *If you could tell one story that shows of how the Internet helped St. Chris or the people it serves, what would it be?*

TERADA: There is a good example from the adult literacy work we do, and how it connects in to computer skills training. One of the people in our program, Richard, enrolled in a privately offered $9000 course to learn graphic design, which was paid for by the government's Ontario Disability Support Program. He lasted two lessons and dropped out. He came back to St. Chris and was hooked up with a community tutor, which offered him a learning environment that was quite different. He still had the goals of wanting to be able to publish on the Internet. We provided him with simple online publishing tools so he could hone his skills and, more importantly, gave him an opportunity to recover from a bad experience and feel better about himself. He now has two websites on the St. Chris community-learning server.

Also, we have many stories of people taking our two-day crash course in computer training just prior to going to a job interview. They want to learn spreadsheet programs, email, and how to visit the company's website that is hosting the interview. They finish off by tweaking their resume, printing it, and they're off. Half of the people who do this with us say they got the job.

- *Is the difference between the two approaches that the tutors at St. Chris are grounded primarily in community development? And that the private firms are only focused on tech skills?*

TERADA: I don't think it's that clear cut. Many of our volunteer tutors are techies with minimal past exposure to community development or even volunteering. However, I do think our environments are different. Ours is service-oriented, with the focus on what the participant wants to learn while the private sector firms are more skill-oriented. It's perhaps a subtle difference since many of our learners are very keen to get new skills. But I think we provide more individual and informal attention than a standardized "cookie cutter" curriculum.

- *How are you using technology in your community development work?*

TERADA: Well, we have self-publishing tools, which basically use a web content management system to make publishing accessible. This suite of tools enables users to be productive web users, which has resulted in a diverse expression of St. Chris and community content on the website. Since content is no longer the responsibility of a web designer, there is not one author making the website but many people contributing and posting their own web content. We do diversity well, but capturing this is hard, especially hard to put into words. Distributing the publishing across the whole organization and to some clients means that the website now captures this diversity.

I should also mention our Bang the Drum Network. One of the goals of this network is to encourage community members to leave their mark, to leave a trace of their presence, a footprint on the net that they'll be able to return to on subsequent occasions. We provide them with the self-publishing tools to make this possible. And it happens in a specific context that St. Chris provides which is a supportive environment for personal and collaborative work.

- *Who are these folks? What do they publish with the tools you give them?*

TERADA: Bang the Drum has drawn around itself a community of volunteers all variously skilled in things digital. So there is now a team of mobile volunteer technicians, teachers and web designers who circulate amongst our community access Internet sites. They troubleshoot, train and give workshops to community members. The loyal team of volunteers are only seeking credible 'Canadian experience' and a reference for their resume. This dynamic of immigrants providing valuable digital services in exchange for career support is the result of the Internet work that we do at St. Chris.

FAIR: Also, one long-term participant with significant learning disabilities and possibly psychiatric problems has developed a website about his personal interests and stories: he proudly shows this to his family, friends and other service-providers in his life. They can see his diverse interests, they can get to know him a bit better and he is very, very proud of his online identity.

- *When did St. Chris first start using the Internet as a part of its work? What did some of your earliest Internet experiments look like? How did they go?*

FAIR: Our first exposure to the Internet was in the mid-1990's with a city-wide partnership called Growing Up Healthy Downtown (GUHD). The eight organizations in the group linked over the Internet with a discussion board. Liz Rykert was the GUHD Coordinator for the partnership at the time. She did an amazing job in getting highly resistant staff in most of the agencies online. Our frontline staff was really worried about getting tied up on the computer instead of dealing with the community members. This early online network did help with administrative work, especially evaluations. However, there were widespread hardware, software and connectivity problems. Also, it was early days and we had to do a lot of work on 'netiquette'. We had to work hard to structure the discussions to mirror the same expectations we would have communicating face-to-face.

- *What did you learn from this early project? How did this influence the ways that you use the Internet now?*

FAIR: It takes a lot of time and patience to introduce new technology to frontline service-providers who do not see technology as a tool in human services work. I continue to marvel at how long it takes to get many people in our sector up to speed (and I'm not particularly quick myself).

We have learned to build-in consultation early on about new technology tools to try to create some buy-in and interest. We have also made sure not to push too hard with resistant people, so we've avoided major backlashes that we've heard about in other places. In fact, we've been very tolerant of a few individuals who really resist IT. The result is that they're starting to gradually be won over.

It's important to emphasize that we don't try to "sell" IT as a time-saver for staff. It's usually not. It increases the amount of info and communication they have to deal with. We do emphasize the helpfulness of having more access to info, and how this leads to more opportunities for our community members.

- *Do you think the Internet has changed St. Chris as an organization? How?*

FAIR: The Internet has changed St. Chris as an organization, especially email. We have a relatively large organization with almost 200 staff in six locations. So good consistent internal communication is essential to keeping staff well-informed and connected. We also believe that internal communication is essential for maintaining and building our strong organizational culture, which is fairly harmonious, open and transparent.

- *Would you say that St. Chris uses the Internet well to support strong organizational culture and internal communications? If so, what factors have made this possible? If not, what are you still struggling with here?*

FAIR: Internal communications are far better now than they were. We used to rely on an internal newsletter sent out every two weeks, and we sent huge amounts of information through inter-office mail. Not only do all staff have access to much more info for their

work and for their program participants, I believe that email has also flattened the hierarchy a bit more here -- staff at all levels share information they've found from their online newsletter subscriptions or networks.

The downside, and it is a real problem, is that most staff feel deluged with too much information. We've tried to create interest groups to minimize the "all staff" emails but many staff are conflicted and want to know what's going on while, at the same time, they complain about the number of emails. Some of us, and I am definitely one of the worst here, have never felt like we got appropriate training about how and where to store email and we have problems with some of us having huge in boxes which are hampering our servers. At the same time, we don't want to lose these emails and it seems counter-productive to make hard copies of them.

Also, we are starting to see major shifts as Internet use becomes more widespread for the community we serve. Here, we need to emphasize the importance of the community access sites that we operate for training people on computers and for providing ongoing access to the Internet. St. Chris has about 800 active volunteers a year and lately, about 40% of new volunteer candidates are approaching us via email and/or responding to our volunteer postings on websites.

- *What do you see as the cutting edge or next step for Internet use at St. Chris? What will this cutting edge enable you to do as an organization that you can't do now?*

FAIR: The next step for the Internet is St. Chris' new website which is an experiment in extending community services work online and making sure our community-building goal is met. Of course, we're still unsure about what will happen online in terms of community building. We are going to be doing a large-scale research project with University of Toronto about gentrification in our west end community and we expect that the info sharing and consultation opportunities will happen online. Some residents' associations in the area have their own websites now and we'll be linking up to them (if they let us!). And our new website will have forums for program participants who are locally-based. This is just another way, perhaps a more convenient way, for people in our community to communicate even within our geographic area.

TERADA: We also have some big picture, long-term ideas about the web and citizenship. The predominant framework used to define a contributing citizen in society is fraught. It assumes that a citizen is employed full-time, English-speaking college/university educated, heterosexual, able-bodied and has a family. As an organization, we need to alter and enlarge the frame that decides and defines who is a respectable citizen and who falls outside so that more people on the periphery or labeled as non-citizens can enter the greater political dialogue.

Some of participants from marginal populations are stuck. For various reasons, they have encountered a rut on social assistance and are forced into a repetitive routine that works. They continue to receive sustenance checks every month, but they're caught. You sense they want to break out, want to accomplish so much more. But the digital revolution,

computers and Internet still are such an amorphous concept to them, especially when their job counselors place it in the context of their personal narratives of 'getting off the dole'.

They come in and know they have to learn 'something', but they don't know what. We enable them to do some things with computers, email, the Internet. But they don't leave our program actively engaged, they leave with some knowledge. The huge majority are still far away from walking out with what we deem job/life/success skills.
A longer term project, if we had the funding, would be to actively engage these people who have been assigned a 'success' narrative from either a job counselor or have written one themselves, and then engage and place them in a digital womb of sorts. We would try to encapsulate them in a digital matrix that is a seamless integration of how they envision the skills they want to have in order to move on with their lives with the technological assistance to make this happen. For example, more than just teaching them computer skills, we would encourage them to discuss their plans and models for success online ... and also keep a journal (blog) with scanned or downloaded photos, have them make tutorials and a quiz for purposes of self-clarification and for the community. They could develop an online calendar of personal milestone events, or a newsletter.

Having this kind of control over their own narratives can help people envision their future success and how they want to change their lives. We could help them use technology as part of this 'visioning' process, but all along making sure the technology is there merely as a assistive guide rather than the main player in the show.

- *This is an inspiring vision! What would it take to make it happen?*

FAIR: I think it will take a new approach to service delivery, and it will take money. These two things are so inextricably bound together since most of our funders specify the service delivery model that they will fund. However, we're about to experiment with an Adult Learning Centre that will be learner-centered as Randall describes above with various training and supports brought to the individual instead of the individual having to seek out and link up with scattered, uncoordinated supports. Much of this training can be provided online now at the individual's own pace with our staff and volunteers providing the ongoing motivation and support to continue as well as ongoing problem-solving and advocacy.

A more minor point as well is that some folks who are anti-social, for a variety of reasons, use info technology tools to express their skills and interests that are otherwise lost due to their inability to work with others in person. Using technology has gradually opened them up to working with others such as tutors.

What we're trying to do is less pathologizing of individuals and more, true empowering of them. Some of this means going right back to some basic life skills like learning polite manners while at the same time acknowledging and polishing some highly-developed skills in the same individual. What this means for the "world" is that our society is including a lot more people's skills and energies.

- *What are the biggest challenges that you face as you move ahead with this work? Funding? Community building? Service delivery? What parts are going to be the hardest?*

FAIR: Sustaining the infrastructure is a key organizational challenge. Part of this is obviously about resources, but part of it is also addressing the planned obsolescence of most info technology. The non-profit sector and our community members cannot afford to keep buying new computers every three years and updating software and anti-virus protection. We're exploring open source technology for this reason, but the hardware problem remains. It's also frustrating for many IT professionals to work or volunteer in our settings when we use second-hand computers and spend so much time on repairs and maintenance.

A key community challenge is the uncertain funding of publicly accessible computers and Internet access. Industry Canada's Community Access Program continues to lurch unpredictably from funding decision to funding decision without a strong commitment to program funding for computers and Internet access for marginalized communities. The libraries are simply not a sufficient or appropriate alternative for many members of our community.

- *If the Internet completely disappeared tomorrow, what would St. Chris look like? What would happen?*

FAIR: If the Internet disappeared tomorrow, St. Chris would still be able to deliver our primary work, which is community work delivered face-to-face. However, our organization would structurally suffer as internal communications would be really disrupted. We would also lose opportunities such as social policy developments and new kinds of funding.