

Digital Citizenship

*Exploring the Field
of Tech for Engagement*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Exploring the Field of Tech for Engagement	2
Introduction	5
The Role of Technology	7
The Role of Narratives and Gaming	10
Business Models	13
Measuring Success	16
Opening Up Government	19
Building the Field	22
What's Next?	24
Terms of Engagement	25
Summit Participants	29



Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/44623759>

Digital Citizenship

Exploring the Field of Tech for Engagement

Knight Foundation launched its Tech for Engagement Initiative two years ago because we believe technology has the power to transform our democracy.

In big and small ways, we see the potential for reinventing citizens' relationships with their neighbors, leaders and governments, as a way to build the informed and engaged communities where we all want to live.

Since then, Knight has invested \$10 million in two dozen projects, with some early successes. I think most readily of Community PlanIt, which helped the Boston Public Schools involve more people, more deeply in planning efforts.

Two years ago, the district's town hall meetings drew 100 people. Earlier this summer, some 500 people participated through Community PlanIt, navigating challenges and responding to questions like: "If you were a headmaster of a turnaround school, what would you change?" Their 5,000 comments helped inform the way school quality is measured.

These and other platforms offer a glimpse of what is coming. However, we are nowhere close to realizing the full potential of technology for engagement. Many projects have a limited impact and

uncertain duration. Others make government more efficient, yet not more effective at building community and drawing in residents as part of the solution.

In fact, we will only begin to realize technology's potential when we use this kind of engagement to not just fix potholes, as useful as that is, but to bring people together to tackle the major social problems and issues of our times.

So in June, Knight, the [MIT Media Lab](#) and the [Berkman Center for Internet and Society](#) convened 70 leading thinkers on technology and community life to draw a map of the field, build a network and seek a way to push the field forward. We stuck to an “unconference” format, where participants in small breakout sessions debated business models and metrics, the importance of hackathons and data sets, and much more.

In those and other conversations, we've determined where Knight's funding can have the most impact going forward:

- **Deepening Engagement:** Theorists often talk about moving people up the rungs of the engagement ladder. How do we move people from say, donating money to actually organizing the building of a playground? Or, from attending a zoning meeting to organizing with neighbors to advocate for a well-reasoned position? We're looking for ways technology can bring people together to make a difference in communities, through developing deeper neighbor-to-neighbor connections, fostering collective dialogue or making it easier for residents and leaders to co-create solutions. These shifts are fundamental to the more meaningful involvement that leads to consensus building and the types of solutions that can transform communities.

- **Opening up government:** [Tim O'Reilly](#) and Code for America founder [Jennifer Pahlka](#) say it best when they talk about [government as a platform](#) that uses the principles of the Web and technology to reframe the function of government, to make it less of a service provider and more of a “platform for citizens to help themselves and help others,” as Pahlka said. [Code for America](#) has made it part of its mission, and we are interested in other ideas to help make it happen.

- **Infrastructure for the field:** The field right now is creative and skilled but small. Many of the people we gathered in Boston knew of each other's work but had not met. What kind of gatherings, on or offline, could move the field forward? Knight will help in part by hosting another summit in 2013. At the heart of the problem is the fact that we need more technologists with a passion for civic life, and ways to bring them together with social change leaders so that people and communities are at the center of projects from the beginning. We're looking for more ways to do that.

The report that follows, written by author [Charles Tsai](#), is an exploration of these and other key topics that emerged at the [Technology for Engagement Summit](#). It is meant as a starting point for conversations that are taking place in the early days of an emerging field. Many of the answers rest



[Damian Thorman](#),
Director/National Program

with people like you, the creatives, scholars, community leaders and developers who believe technology can help reinvent citizenship. We look forward to working with you to unlock the creativity and passion of people to come together around the causes they care so much about.

Damian Thorman

Knight Foundation

Introduction



Photo: Lily Kesselman

To build a better South Bronx, Lily Kesselman turned to some chickens. And a site called [Change By Us](#), but we'll get to that in a moment.

Kesselman thought that building a community chicken coop would solve two problems in her neighborhood, considered among the poorest in the United States. It would give neighbors access to healthy food while educating kids about its origins.

So she posted her idea, literally typed it onto a faux Post-It note on Change by Us, a site launched by CEOS for Cities to help New Yorkers share ideas and put them into action. On the site, neighbors are supposed to recruit volunteers for their projects, and find some efforts to support themselves. The best ideas with community traction get minigrants from the city of New York, which Kesselman ultimately did.

Two volunteer days later, the coop was built and operating. Now 14 volunteers a week help tend to the birds, earning half of the eggs from their day of the shift, while kids visit on field trips and have planted seedlings to produce feed.

For Kesselman, Change by Us introduced her to other grassroots projects going on in her neighborhood and helped open up the city of New York, as an institution, to her.

Yet sites like Change by Us, the first in the emerging civic technology movement, raise larger questions for social innovators: How can we use technology to facilitate more social connections – not just for individuals but for groups and communities?

Can technology help us reveal the aspirations of thousands or even millions of people? Can it help them connect to like-minded folks, co-create solutions, and coordinate efforts to bring about the ideal outcome? What would these tools look like and how do we foster and sustain these innovations?

These are just some of the challenging questions posed at the 2012 Technology for Engagement Summit, convened by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, MIT Media Lab and the Berkman Center for Internet and Society. Close to 70 academics, funders and innovators took part in the 24-hour session to speak across sectors about successes and failures and how to advance the field.

Participants set the agenda themselves and organized discussions around topics that had the most resonance.

This report shares their key insights, recommendations and action steps addressing these important themes: the role of technology, design principles, business models, measurements of success, the role of government and how to build the field.

We hope you'll be able to draw inspiration for how you can contribute to the nascent field of Technology for Engagement.

“Your identity as a citizen should be reflected in your devices because your devices reflect your life and your priorities.”
– Jennifer Pahlka, *Code for America*



Video: <https://vimeo.com/43778961> by David Timko.

The Role of Technology

Technology has infiltrated every aspect of our lives, changing how we work, how we learn and how we shop. It's inevitable that our devices begin to reflect our civic aspirations – our desires to connect with others and to contribute to the world around us.

The Internet and related tools already play critical roles, in areas such as data mapping and visualizations, crowdsourcing and more. Here's how:

1) They lower transaction costs for group formation and action.

While we have always come together to engage in community change through “weak ties,” the potential of the Internet is that we will be able to do this much more effectively.

2) They shift time.

Group members don't have to be in the same room at the same time to “meet.” They can coordinate activities over days and months, and members can chime in at their convenience, whether it's 2 p.m. or 3 a.m.

3) They facilitate easy communication.

Spreading the word now only takes one click and maybe one tweet. That's all anyone needs to do these days to share something with a social network.

Given these benefits, what role should technology play in fostering engagement? How can technology help citizens become more involved with one another and more active in their communities?

Summit participants explored this very question in one of the first sessions.

Technology for Engagement, they concluded, should create and support opportunities and capacities for people to transact with others for the common good.

Engagement technology should:

- connect people
- build relationships
- increase participation in governance
- facilitate discovery
- reveal common needs and shared values
- enhance the ability to act

A clear example is Change by Us, which Kesselman used to build the [Brook Park Chicken Coop](#) in the South Bronx.

City governments are also turning to digital tools to improve planning and budgeting so that citizens have greater input. Summit participant [Jennifer Pahlka of Code for America](#) has matched programmers with eight city governments to help them create new tools. In New Orleans, for example, a [Blight Status page](#) helps users find information about properties that have been abandoned or are in decline.

But participants seem to agree that engagement tools should go beyond improving existing civic processes led by governments and nonprofits. Perhaps the real potential lies in how they might connect citizens to one another through new processes, how they might create new models that make the old ones obsolete.

This is the thinking behind [Favortree](#), an online platform that allows people to share resources and exchange services. You can borrow a power drill from a neighbor or mow their lawn. The website helps you unlock your neighborhood's varied assets that are so often hidden behind closed doors.

For founder [Micki Krimmel](#), the real purpose of Favortree goes beyond helping people save a few dollars. It's really about getting to know your neighbors and building "social capital," which, she believes, is the fuel that drives more involved and more sustained civic action. Interacting with your neighbor means stepping on the first rung on the ladder of engagement.

Where does the ladder lead? In the old paradigm, the top rungs belonged to citizens giving input to governments on how to deliver services. Today's paradigm asks, how is the fundamental relationship between government and citizen changing? Who is responsible for it?

How technology can help people get to those upper rungs where co-creation can happen is the ultimate challenge for this field.

But what do these tools look like? Clay Shirky notes in *Here Comes Everybody* that tools don't get interesting until they become technologically boring. The most powerful tools are the ones that are so pervasive that they are nearly invisible. That's when their true potential is revealed.

The lack of community engagement will not be solved by technology alone. But for social innovators, it's hard to imagine technology not playing some important role.



***Engagement Mechanics:** Games for Change Co-founder Benjamin Stokes shares insights on how game mechanics can be powerful tools for sustaining engagement.*

Play video: <https://vimeo.com/43778961> by David Timko.

The Role of Narratives and Gaming

Summit participants took time to examine some of the recent successes in community engagement and what we can learn from them. Do they hint at design principles for the tools we develop for engagement?

Recent bright spots point to the increased use of narratives and gaming. This is no surprise. If engagement is about sustaining action and involvement beyond one-off events, then engagement will naturally take the form of stories or games. They provide meaningful structures for sustained actions.

They can motivate action better than facts and figures. Just witness the challenge of getting people to exercise, eat healthy and recycle. Consider that each American plays an average of 10,000 hours of games by the time he or she reaches age 21. Is there a way to use games to get them to be more healthy or engaged in their communities?

Narratives are cleverly used by several recent initiatives that succeeded in spreading quickly, person to person, including the [Harry Potter Alliance](#). The alliance relies on an unfolding narrative to hook people. You're not just told a good story, you're part of one. You don't just donate or sign petitions, you're writing the next or last chapter of a powerful story.

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on Knight Blog

The group asks fans who grew up with the books to imagine the young wizard in this world. What evil would he fight and how could you raise your own “Dumbledore’s Army” to help him? This simple reframing, a practice dubbed “cultural acupuncture,” helped mobilize hundreds of thousands of youths to action. Together, they’ve sent five cargo planes of aid to Haiti and donated more than 87,000 books around the world.

The alliance’s success gave founder Andrew Slack this epiphany: “Fantasy is not an escape from the soul of our world but an invitation to go deeper into it.” That idea has activated a noncivic network – the network of Harry Potter fans – and helped them become a civic network.

Inviting participants into powerful narratives – fictional and real alike – has long been a civic tactic. It’s also a core strategy for many of today’s best video games. Game designers help players embark on missions that feel epic (e.g., to save planet Earth), inviting them to share responsibility for the hero’s journey. In politics, so many people feel their vote hardly counts. Can new media bring a sense of agency to participants?

Narrative is just part of what makes games so engaging. While there is a good deal of controversy over their ability to have deep impact, games have the potential to expand across lines of gender, to increasingly reach older Americans, to involve physical activity and to reach mainstream audiences on phones. They have caught the attention of educators, entrepreneurs and social innovators looking for better ways to sustain engagement.

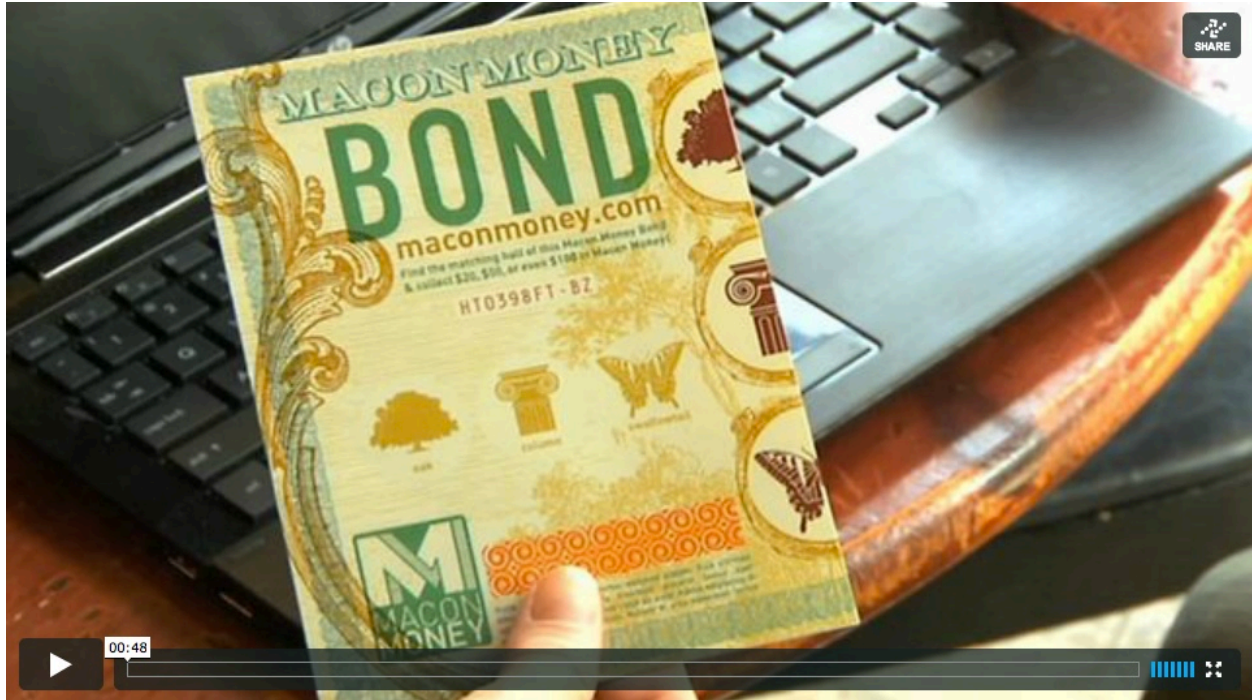
Summit participant Benjamin Stokes cofounded Games for Change in 2004 out of the belief that games can structure engagement and support social change. We already see that happening.

Participatory Chinatown uses a 3-D immersive video game to engage residents of Boston’s Chinatown neighborhood in the city’s master-planning process. Players complete missions – find a job, find a place to live, find a place to socialize – and then give input on how they would like their community to develop.

Games don’t always have to be played online. “Alternate reality games,” which are played in the physical world mixed with game quests, have become popular with social innovators who want to bring about engagement in the real world.

Examples include Re:Activism, a game that began in New York to re-enact labor history through street performance, giving a sense of place to modern social issues; and ParTour in Los Angeles, which invites residents on quests to map their city, finding hidden assets and advocating for neighborhood improvements.

Macon Money, another Knight-funded project, uses the “treasure hunt” mechanic to build community. It sends thousands of Macon, Ga., residents half of a currency bond. Their challenge is to find a matching half in their town so they can redeem the whole bond for currency that they can spend at local businesses.



Play video on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/49701099>

Macon Money

Macon Money is a social game that sends residents of Macon, Ga., on a fun treasure hunt to connect with each other and invest in the local economy.

Stokes predicts that the success of future engagement tools will depend on understanding and mastering social patterns and structures of human participation. He believes game thinking will inevitably play a bigger role. Effective games, though, aren't just appetizer add-ons, they are the main course.

“The more we want to engage citizens in real problems and complex issues, the more engagement mechanics will be crucial,” said Stokes. “Yet games in the real-world must be ethical, and reward the goals of participants – not just the designers.”

Business Models

It's one thing to design technology for usability. It's another to design for sustainability.

Often the two challenges don't overlap neatly, particularly when organizations are looking to derive revenue from sources other than users.

Both Facebook and Twitter are facing this very problem. They have enticed hundreds of millions of users to adopt their simple free tool to communicate and connect. They assume that most users are unwilling to pay for this service. So who, then, should foot the bill?

Advertisers are one answer, but not a complete or satisfactory one. Ads work only at large scale and are likely to turn off users if they overwhelm platforms.

If Facebook and Twitter struggle with this basic question, imagine the headache associated with building local engagement tools, which are often meant to be smaller and community focused.

Summit participants explored sustainability challenges in two sessions and identified key challenges in building viable business models.

1) Users are often different from payers.

The bulk of citizens are unlikely to pay for tools that allow them to report potholes, brainstorm solutions, talk to neighbors, attend a virtual town hall, etc. Revenue will have to come from alternate sources, which implies competing interests. Technology for Engagement products must balance the needs of payers and users. One offsetting principle that makes this easier is that these tools often lower transaction costs for payers.

2) Scaling is difficult, but technology is often only cost effective at scale.

Engagement tends to be place-based, but new technology investments often make sense only at a larger scale. Community Planit and Participatory Chinatown, referenced above, began as a series of face-to-face meetings with virtual reality simulations in one Boston neighborhood. It cost over \$100,000 and involved hundreds of people. It is difficult to justify this type of expense unless these platforms get to scale. Alternative notions of scale and lower prototyping costs are both needed.



3) Reliance on philanthropy.

The pool of money for engagement technology is small. Civic startups generally rely on philanthropic funding rather than venture capital. But the pressure for social entrepreneurs to adopt the nonprofit model may not be ideal, particularly since philanthropic capital to bring technologies to scale in the absence of revenue is scarce, unlike in the venture capital world where Instagram, Twitter, etc., could raise funding to scale without much revenue.

4) Government can be a tough customer.

Local governments have a vested interest in more engaged communities, particularly to the extent that engagement technologies can make government faster, better and cheaper. However, governments have little appetite for the risk of adopting new technologies.

How have innovators responded to these challenges?

Many organizations have adopted a business-to-business-to-consumer model whereby earned income is generated from selling enterprise access to a community of users of a particular platform rather than from the users themselves. While it can be more difficult to scale this model (since revenue is not always in line with growth) it does provide earned income early on and therefore mitigates the lack of philanthropic capital available. [Popvox](#), for example, is a nonpartisan platform that shares individuals' opinions on legislation with Congress and generates revenue by selling "pro" versions of its advocacy tools to grassroots organizations.

All of the most successful organizations continue to experiment with both products and revenue sources on the path to growth. A few have been able to generate revenue directly from users.

- [Change.org](#) offers free tools to start online petitions, which add to their massive database of users. They then charge nonprofits to run campaigns to generate new leads from their database.
- [Public Stuff](#) and [See Click Fix](#) offer residents of a community a simple and free way to report and track a complaint. But clients include governments that pay for proprietary software to manage all the service requests.
- [Front Porch Forum](#), a for-profit neighborhood information network in Vermont, generates advertising revenue from local businesses but also charges municipalities and interest groups for access to multiple neighborhoods within the platform.

Each of these products caters to multiple constituents and strives to solve the problems of both users and payers. While [Change.org](#) has developed tools that can scale easily, depending on whether an issue is local, national or global, PublicStuff chooses to serve individual communities but offers a product that can spread to many others.

Both [Change.org](#) and PublicStuff are companies that have managed to leverage venture capital.

Raising money from "the crowd," a funding approach popularized by Kickstarter, has proven successful for many creative projects. Its payout this year is expected to top \$150 million. However, whether technology for engagement is a good fit for crowd funding is still unclear.

What's clear is that the crowd is rising. So may a new funding landscape.

Recent passage of the JOBS Act may jumpstart investments, rather than merely attracting donations through crowd-funding portals. The Jumpstart Our Business Startups Act, introduced by House Republicans and signed into law by President Obama, allows startups to seek funding from small "unaccredited" investors. This could unleash not just more funding but a greater range of innovation aimed at the masses. Their values may be very different from that of traditional venture capitalists.

Recommendations:

- Diversify revenue sources.
- Solve the problems of both users and payers.
- If scale is unlikely, focus on spreadability.
- Help communities decide what kind of civic infrastructure (and technologies for engagement) they want.
- Explore crowd funding as an option.

Measuring Success

In business, there's one metric that trumps all: profit. That's not so for projects seeking a social impact. Different stakeholders value different outputs and outcomes. Measuring success becomes very subjective.

Furthermore, digital technology generates lots of data sets: clicks, views, shares, invites, impressions, tweets, downloads, fans, likes and users. Noise to some, signal to others – they are data nonetheless. What gets counted becomes what counts, encouraging “clicktivism” – easy actions that feel good but generate little impact.

Engagement, however, is about being “attached, committed, involved and productive,” according to summit participants. It requires multiple data sets measured from multiple vantage points over time. It also means paying attention to the offline world: How, for example, do we measure changes in real-world communities that come about because of participation online? One of the greatest challenges is to go beyond evaluating Web metrics to finding ways to measure behavioral changes on the ground. Many of these already exist in the social sciences – from measuring collective efficacy to social capital and neighborhood brand affiliation. Are they seeking to change public policy? Influence someone in a position of authority? Change cultural perceptions? Deliver services? Metrics must follow stated outcomes of programs.

There's no silver bullet to define success. A small group of summit participants proposed an initial model for metrics here:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Who participated? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of participants• Demographics/diversity• Prior level of engagement |
| 2) Who was affected? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants• Targeted beneficiaries• Other stakeholders |
| 3) Did we do what we said? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stated goals• Unintended consequences• Effectiveness |
| 4) What changed? Impact? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual vs. collective value• Short, medium, long-term• Trust and efficacy |

For each data set, it's also important to get input from three different perspectives – the individual participants, the group or network and outsiders. Lastly, the data can be quantitative or qualitative. Impact and engagement may be captured by numbers as well as stories.

Yet, challenges begin to arise the minute you apply this framework.

One participant in the metrics discussions was Micki Krimmel, whose platform [Favortree](#) allows neighbors to exchange goods and services. Her goal is to increase social capital in each community and foster more civic engagement. The biggest challenge for Krimmel is knowing how to measure “social capital” – a common good without common metrics. Do you measure the number of acquaintances or relationships, the number of interactions with neighbors, the number of groups joined, or how often they work together to achieve common goals?

Favortree has been tracking new relationships being formed through the platform, in addition to how many exchanges participants make and how much money they save. But do new relationships formed around transactions constitute social capital or is engagement about something more?

There’s increasing pressure from funders and investors for concrete measures of success. They need to see the return on their investment. So do the innovators who create and manage these tools.

“If we can’t measure our work,” says Krimmel, “we’re not sure we’re putting resources in the right direction.”

Where to put resources isn’t just a question for innovators and their funders. It’s a question for the field as a whole, which is why sharing data and what you measure should be encouraged, if not required by funders. Ideally, there can be a common platform where engagement practitioners can share data with other practitioners.

Two summit participants, have started platforms to document instances of political and civic engagement.

1) [Participedia](#) – [Archon Fung](#), professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, started this wiki to collect examples of democratic innovation and public engagement around the world. Hundreds of thousands of participatory processes occur each year. Participedia allows researchers and practitioners to compare them.

2) [Cairns](#) – [Beth Simone Noveck](#), professor at New York Law School, started this website to navigate the “landscape of collaboration” and learn from the results of organizing efforts, citizen engagement projects – any kind of collaboration or collective action.

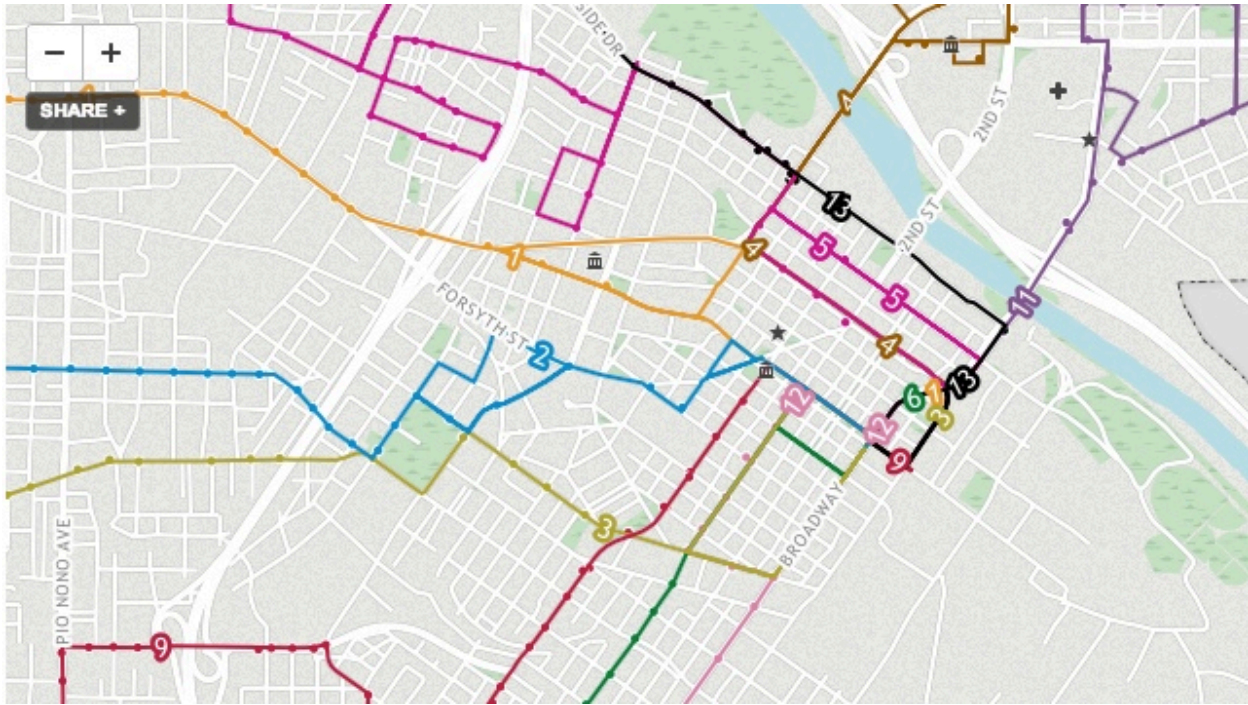
But the field is far from having a platform where common sets of data are identified and impartiality can be assured. Such a platform would need to provide the right incentives for participation and establish clear use cases for different audiences.

Recommendations:

- Standardize metrics for assessing the impact of technology for engagement projects, including measures of online engagement, offline engagement and social capital.

Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.
– William Bruce Cameron

- Create metrics specific to the programmatic outcomes sought.
- Adopt common survey tools and Web analytics to measure impact.
- Explore approaches for transcending website stats by measuring the impact new platforms have on offline behavior.
- Include qualitative data in the assessment to better understand the results.
- To be bottom up, empower communities to codesign and contribute to impact assessments.



Interactive: Code For America fellows working in Macon have mapped the city's transit with open source tools. Visit <http://codeforamerica.github.com/Transit-Map-in-TileMill/>.

Opening Up Government

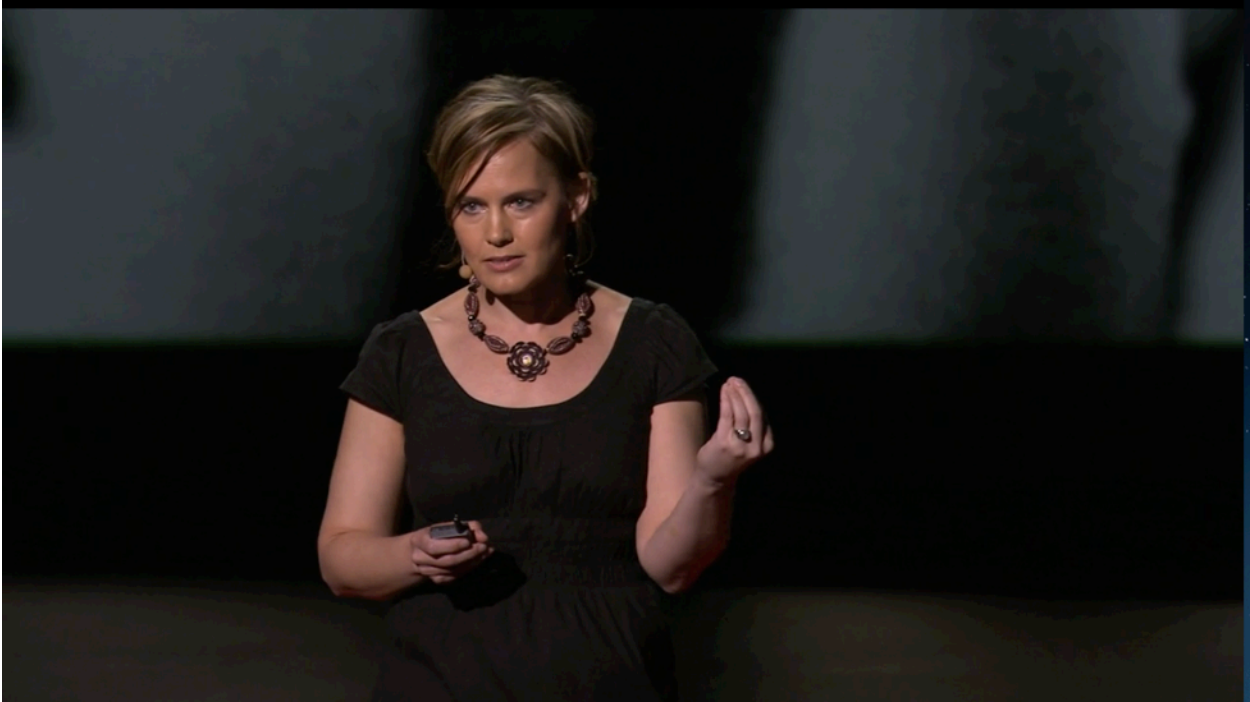
You don't have to be a geek to believe in the power of technology to transform governments, making them more transparent, more efficient and more inclusive of citizen input. The potential is there, but adoption of digital tools has been slow compared to many other sectors.

RELATED CONTENT

[*Four ideas for the future of hackathons on Knight Blog*](#)

One obvious culprit is culture. Governments tend to be risk averse; they face the constant threats of legal action, media scrutiny and public backlash. (Most of them are also in severe cost-cutting mode.) Innovators prefer to experiment, fail fast and iterate.

Code for America attempts to bridge these differences through its new fellowship program. Jennifer Pahlka started this "Peace Corps for Geeks" two years ago to embed programmers in city governments so they can work side by side with bureaucrats to develop new apps. In Boston, for example, Code for America fellows have created apps to help parents find the best schools for their children and track school buses online on snowy days. Another simple app encourages residents to help the city dig out fire hydrants buried in snow. It does so by letting them "adopt" the hydrants and name them.



Video: Jennifer Pahlka, March 2012 at TED: "Jennifer Pahlka quoted: "We're not going to fix government until we fix citizenship." Play it now at TED.com:

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/jennifer_pahlka_coding_a_better_government.html

Beyond launching new tools, their goal is to shift the mind-set at City Hall – to show governments what's possible. Projects that normally take two years can take two months and cost just a fraction. The pace of innovation can accelerate.

Summit participants devoted several sessions to discussing the role of government and the potential for public-private partnerships. Their common vision is to view government as platform, much like Apple's iOS or Google's Android.

Bureaucrats don't have to innovate and build all the apps. They simply have to create the opportunity for innovation to happen. In Pahlka's view, this means governments would function less like companies or nonprofits, and more like the Internet: permissionless, open and generative.

In particular, governments can open their records and release as much data as possible to the public. These may include crime statistics, restaurant inspections and business licenses. Governments can also collaborate and develop as well as adhere to common standards for collecting data so that the data can be mashed up, remixed and compared.

As participant Clay Johnson put it, "It's not the numbers that matter, but their differences."

Participants also saw government as a broker of relationships, joining different sectors that need to work together. In fact, the ability of government to help convene large, diverse numbers of people (in part by using tech for engagement tools) seemed a promising way to generate more innovative solutions to public problems – and more support for innovation generally.

If a new culture of innovation can take hold, what outcomes might we see?

The city of Boston has created the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics whose purpose is to partner with social innovators to pilot community-centered technologies and interventions. The office aggregates risk within city government to allow these experiments to advance. "When a project fails, we take the blame; when a project succeeds, the government office that partnered in the implementation takes the credit," according to Nigel Jacob, who co-chairs the office. By aggregating risk within a single office, and by building internal requirements for research and evaluation, governments are able to take more risks and to establish a context for learning from experimentation.

The low-hanging fruit for technologists interested in public engagement is to improve government services and processes. Perhaps new tools would allow citizens to give more input in budgeting and planning, report issues and track their progress online, and communicate more directly with their representatives. Some of these tools have already launched: TurboVote, seeking to make voting as easy as renting a Netflix DVD, PopVox, Public Stuff, See Click Fix, etc.

But there's potential as well in tools that allow citizens to connect to each other and help each other, bypassing government. These tools would not only leverage a community's assets and save taxpayer's money, they would build them as well, increasing the community's social capital.

New York City helped launch Change by Us to encourage citizen-led projects that would green the city. The platform has spread to Philadelphia and will launch in two other cities this year.

If such tools take hold, they can transform our very notion of government – from provider to enabler – and citizenship – from consumer to producer.

Recommendation:

Support models that mobilize diverse, critical masses of people. Create a marketplace for civic solutions:

- Where entrepreneurs address the most pressing challenges.
- Where capital flows to solutions that achieve double bottom line results.
- Where we are partnering on projects, not procuring products.
- Where we are creating a local context for learning from experimentation.

Building the Field



Photo: Tech for Engagement Summit at MIT, summer 2012. (From David Timko video)

Talking about Technology for Engagement as a field can be a challenge in itself. Academics, innovators and entrepreneurs are still defining the field and trying to decide whether they are all part of it. Are we trying to solve the same problems? Do we strive for the same results? Assuming we do, what's the best way to support one another and build the field?

Right now, there are many flowers blooming, but they do not tie together as part of a stable, thriving ecosystem. Too many innovations depend on unique personalities and relationships with funders and officials rather than on market forces and peer legitimacy.

There's no pipeline to educate and bring innovators into the field.

We don't speak the same language or tell the same stories.

There are no physical spaces where we can easily find each other.

The Technology for Engagement Summit was the first time many participants met and learned of each other's work.

Local infrastructure for engagement

A physical space that is **fun** and ...

- Empowers citizens to act.
- Allows innovation.
- Allows collaboration.
- Connects people to government.

Many participants agreed that exciting as it is to innovate great tools, the field needs to see the forest and think about changing systems as well as culture. They identified areas for intervention:

1) Tell stories

First, practitioners need to tell better stories and celebrate the work of civic innovators. Apps are important but only because of the people who create them and the people who use them. Their stories should be shared through popular channels, such as YouTube and blogs, not just in academic publications and industry reports.

2) Create opportunities

When people are inspired by the stories they hear, point them to opportunities where they can enter the field. Even better, create more fellowships for rock-star coders and designers to take a break from companies like Apple and Google so they can apply their talents in a different realm.

3) Support hybrids

We are not just activists, academics, techies, designers, entrepreneurs or bureaucrats. People are complex and welcome opportunities to wear different hats and express their different selves. The field should invite all types of talent to contribute.

4) Get physical

Practitioners need physical spaces to meet, build relationships and generate ideas. These don't have to be new spaces. Libraries can become the new hubs for engagement and innovation. They can house knowledge as well as the tools to address community needs. Librarians can curate information to help people solve problems and make their communities better.

5) Share data

The field needs more data to show how people engage and disengage and how people interact in communities. Do the different data sets correlate? Are neighbors who know each other by name more likely to form associations and take collective action? Do they engage around needs or other types of social glue? Wherever the data is gathered and shared, it should serve practitioners and academics.

For a field that specializes in building tools, perhaps these challenges present new opportunities to innovate. Could technology help the field overcome its current barriers to growth?

What's Next?

Emerging fields are by nature shaped by questions. What should people interested in Technology for Engagement put energy toward in the next few years?

RELATED CONTENT

[Tech for Engagement Manifesto on Knight Blog](#)

A summit breakout session tackled the question, synthesizing the values heard over the 24 hours and creating a [Technology for Engagement Manifesto](#).

At Knight, we've drawn from that document, and with an eye on the initiative's focus areas, have zeroed in on some of the important questions from our perspective:

- **Amplifying impact:** As the manifesto states, "our problem isn't just about access, there's a larger gap in skillful practice that we need to close." How do we ensure that the technology is available and that people across ages and incomes have the skills to use it, so that the benefits are reaped by all members of our communities? A key question from Knight's perspective: Once they do become involved, how do we move them up the proverbial engagement ladder? How do we deepen community relationships and effectively share insights?
- **Opening up government:** How do we ensure that new tools emerge with the community at the core – with their input first on identifying the need, to design and ultimately use? Opening up data is another important facet, as the manifesto says, we need to increase our understanding, accessibility and standardization of it.
- **Measuring impact:** Should we apply the same measures of success to both online and offline engagements? How do we measure change in physical and virtual communities that was spurred by online engagement?

Developing talent and building the network: Certainly gatherings like hackathons create connections and infuse a community with energy, but how do we translate that into building a larger field? And what kind of talent pool do we need to deliver on the promise for technology for engagement? How do we help develop it?

We hope you will explore these questions by contributing your own solutions that not only advance the field of technology for engagement, but show the world its true potential.

Terms of Engagement



Photo: The Knight-Mozilla hackathon at MIT in June 2012

Every field of practice develops its own language to talk about key concepts and ongoing concerns. Buzz words are often introduced or borrowed from related fields. What terms are commonly used when discussing technology for engagement? These are what we heard at the summit.

App Contests

A common way to spark innovation and quickly generate new software tools. Governments have organized and funded many of these code-a-thons to leverage its data for better ends, but few if any of the winning apps ever last beyond a few months. A better catalyst is needed, and three attendees offered their views on how they can be improved.

Business Models

Often, tools for civic engagement have no clear model for sustainability. The people they engage are generally not people who can or will pay for their use. Because users are not payers, innovators are forever wrestling with the question, “Who pays?”

Clicktivism

A dismissive way to describe the use of social media and other Internet tools to advance social causes. The problem isn't with the tools but the tendency to use Web analytics (i.e., page views, clicks, tweets) as measures of engagement, reducing activism to meaningless acts that lead to no impact.

Cocreation

For many, this is deep engagement in its truest sense – citizens working together to create solutions or new possibilities for themselves. It involves people asking and then answering the question, “What can we create together?” Digital tools have demonstrated success in crowd-sourcing ideas. Can they also help the crowd turn those ideas into action?

Common Good

There seems to be consensus that engagement goes beyond acting only in one's self-interest. Being engaged also means acting in the interests of others, perhaps with others, to achieve what might be called the “common good.” Those who think the term sounds too academic or wonkish prefer to speak of “common goals.” Others fear the term doesn't help people transcend tribal tendencies. They prefer to engage citizens in thinking about and striving for the “greater good.”

Data Shame

The idea that governments or organizations don't want to open up their data because someone will find out how bad it really is.

Field Building

Beyond creating individual tools for civic engagement, practitioners are equally concerned with how to create the right ecosystem for innovations to appear on a regular basis, the way engineers and scientists enter and ultimately advance their fields. Building the field requires not just resources and infrastructure but investing in human capital – helping people get inspired, educated and plugged in to the right opportunities.

Government as Platform

Engagement presumes active citizens and governments that welcome active citizenship. Such governments don't just set the rules and provide needed services. They connect the people that can help each other. They create the space needed for creativity to be unleashed. At least, that's the ideal innovators are working to realize.

Ladder of Engagement

It's generally accepted that engagement can take many forms. A ladder is often used as a metaphor to rank activities by level of difficulty. Meeting your neighbors might be the first rung. Doing favors for them might be the next. High up on the ladder might be a social entrepreneur who is

solving a challenge in an innovative way. Community engagement is mostly about getting people on the ladder and helping people move up.

Mechanics

Engagement tools and activities are designed and follow design principles, stated or not. These features, sometimes called mechanics, go a long way in determining how positive (or engaging) the user experience is. Innovators have learned that engagement depends on these mechanics, not just the urgency or relevance of a cause.

Metrics

Funders like to say, “What gets measured gets managed.” But how do you measure deep engagement? How do you assess how committed and involved someone is in their community? Metrics were challenging even before digital tools came along. Now devices allow us to track our every waking moment. Do they help or do they confuse our attempts to measure successful engagement?

Narrative

Stories don’t just help us communicate. They help us structure our own lives and make sense of our actions. Seen in this light, engagement is about people acting out stories about who they are and what they want to become. Narratives, more than issues, invite engagement.

Open Data

The push to make data, especially government data, freely available. Technologists can then build tools to make them useful and beneficial to citizens. Advocates for open data would also like to see government data follow common standards so that cities can be easily compared.

Potholes

A low-hanging fruit for engagement tools. Many apps now exist to allow citizens to report potholes to their city governments. This represents an easy win. Technologists bring up potholes to illustrate a type of challenge that has been conquered. What’s the next frontier for digital tools?

Social Capital

The idea that human networks have value. The more people interact, the stronger their bonds, the more resilient and powerful their community will be. Some argue that civic engagement is first and foremost about building social capital, both bonding (within groups) and bridging (between groups). No surprise then that social capital figures prominently in discussions about metrics.

Scalability

Digital tools tend to be costly to build. They often can’t be justified unless they can reach millions of users. But engagement tends to be place based and community oriented. The two tendencies – to

go wide and to go deep – often conflict. The question isn't simply “How do you scale?” but “Why do you want to scale?”

Spreadability

Solutions don't have to grow in order to spread. Sometimes it's faster to spread an idea and let it manifest independently. This is how clothing, tires, toilets and TEDx events have become ubiquitous. Instead of asking if your idea can grow, it might be better to ask if it can spread.

Time

Engagement requires time, a resource few people seem to have in abundance these days. A common challenge for innovators is figuring out how time can be saved or shifted so that “busy people” can be engaged as well.

What sucks?

A good question to spark innovation in any field. A focus on real pain points is likely to produce tools that people must have.

Summit Participants

Terry Amsler

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Amsler is the program director of the Institute for Local Government's Public Engagement program, which promotes and supports effective and inclusive public engagement in California's cities and counties and helps local officials involve the public in decision making. The Institute is the nonprofit research and education affiliate of the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities.

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Anderson is the innovations analyst for the City of Colorado Springs. He performs financial analyses and develops programs to create a more effective, efficient and responsive city government. He also administers a Recovery Act energy-efficiency grant that partially funds his city department, and actively uses social media to engage citizens on issues regarding sustainability and innovation.

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Barge is the director for philanthropic services of The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County. He leads efforts with major donors and directs the foundation's Early Childhood Initiative, which seeks to close the area's achievement gap between kids from low-income families and their peers. He joined the foundation in 2008 after a 10-year career in newspapers, including with the Rocky Mountain News and the Boulder Daily Camera.

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Bernholz is a visiting scholar at Stanford University and the award winning blogger behind philanthropy2173.com. Bernholz is the author of numerous articles and books including the *Blueprint Series: Annual Industry Forecasts on Philanthropy and Social Investing*, *Disrupting Philanthropy*, and *Creating Philanthropic Capital Markets: The Deliberate Evolution*. In 2011 she sold Blueprint Research & Design, a philanthropy advising firm she had started in 1997. She earned a B.A. from Yale and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Stanford.

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Burris is the director of policy and special initiatives for [Living Cities](http://LivingCities.org), a philanthropic collaborative of 22 of the world's largest foundations and financial institutions working to improve the lives of low-income people and the cities where they live. Prior to joining Living Cities in 2010, he worked for 10 years on the staff of the Budget Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, the final six years as deputy staff director. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California at Berkeley, and an B.A. in politics from Princeton University.

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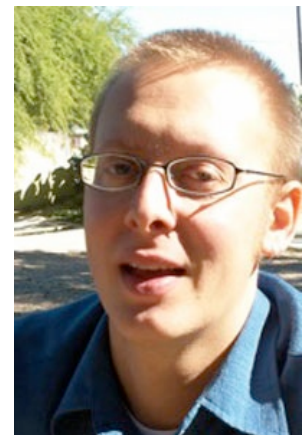
Sasha Costanza-Chock

Assistant Professor of Civic Media

Costanza-Chock is a scholar and media maker who works in the interrelated areas of social movements and information and communication technologies; participatory technology design and community based participatory research; and the transnational movement for media justice and communication rights, including *comunicación popular*.

Dr. Costanza-Chock holds a Ph.D. from the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University of Southern California, where he was a postdoctoral research associate; he is also a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. While living in Los Angeles, he worked on a variety of civic media projects with community-based organizations, including the award-winning VozMob.net platform.

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Visiting Stanton Professor of the First Amendment, Harvard Kennedy School; Visiting Professor, Harvard Law School

Crawford is the Visiting Stanton Professor of the First Amendment at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, a visiting professor at Harvard Law School and a columnist for Bloomberg View and Wired. She served as special assistant to the president for science, technology and innovation policy during 2009 and co-led the Federal Communications Commission's transition team between the Bush and Obama administrations. She is a member of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Advisory Council on Technology and Innovation.

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Director, Investments at Omidyar Network

Donohue leads the U.S. portfolio of Omidyar Network's Government Transparency Initiative, working to encourage accountability, effectiveness and participation in government by increasing people's access to credible information via technology. Her portfolio includes Code for America, Global Integrity, POGO, SeeClickFix and Sunlight Foundation. Donohue previously worked at Hewlett-Packard, Boston Consulting Group and JPMorgan. She earned an M.B.A. with distinction from Harvard Business School, an M.A. in art history from the University of California, Berkeley and a B.A. from Yale University.

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General Manager, WDET, Detroit

Ellcessor is the general manager for WDET, Detroit's public radio station. He has spent the last 25 years developing new, diverse audiences for noncommercial media and nonprofit arts organizations. At WDET, he built the first working prototype of a model for mainstream, major market, multiethnic public service media. Previous stints have included serving as the founding manager of Radio Milwaukee, a hyperlocal media and community-engagement hybrid designed to attract a younger, diverse audience to public-service media and as a senior content director at WNYC, New York Public Radio.

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Paula Ellis

V.P./Strategic Initiatives, Knight Foundation

Ellis is Knight Foundation's vice president for strategic initiatives. As a member of the executive committee, Ellis oversees national programs and new initiatives. She is also responsible for developing and gauging the impact of the foundation's overall strategy. Previously, Ellis was vice president for operations at Knight Ridder, where she oversaw 15 newspapers and was a member of the management committee. Throughout her career as a news, corporate and civic leader, she developed deep experience in national and community issues.

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Lee Fisher

Current place of work and position: CEOs for Cities – President and CEO

Fisher is president and CEO of [CEOs for Cities](http://ceosforcities.org). Previously, he served as Ohio lieutenant governor, attorney general, state senator, state representative and president and CEO of the Center for Families and Children. In his role as lieutenant governor, Fisher also served as director of the Ohio Department of Economic Development and chair of the Ohio Third Frontier Commission. While Fisher led Ohio's economic development efforts, Site Selection magazine awarded its top national economic development award, the Governor's Cup, to Ohio three consecutive times.

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Seth Flaxman

Flaxman is the cofounder and executive director of [TurboVote](http://TurboVote.org) and was recently named a Draper Richards Kaplan Entrepreneur and one of Forbes magazine's "30 Under 30." Before TurboVote, he worked at the Council on Foreign Relations, Institute for International Education and the Berkman Center; he earned a master's degree in public policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a B.A. in economics at Columbia University, where he was an activist and student body president.

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Janis Foster

Foster is executive director of [Grassroots Grantmakers](#), an adjunct faculty member of the Asset Based Development Institute and is certified as a coach from the Hudson Institute of Santa Barbara. She has served as a trainer for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute and as a consultant to dozens of funders and change-oriented nonprofit organizations. Foster came to Grassroots Grantmakers with experience as a neighborhood leader, a director of a neighborhood technical assistance center, a community foundation executive and a consultant to funders and community building organizations.



Jeff Friedman

Office of Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Manager of Civic Innovation & Participation

Friedman is the manager of civic innovation and participation in the office of [Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter](#). He has led initiatives to make city government (and urban governance generally) more open, participatory, transparent and innovative. Previously, Friedman was the chief of staff to the chief technology officer, and deputy director of performance management/project manager for the implementation of Philly311.

Friedman earned his undergraduate and law degrees from Temple University.



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Archon Fung

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Fung is the Ford Foundation professor of democracy and citizenship at [Harvard's Kennedy School of Government](#). His research examines the impacts of civic participation, public deliberation and transparency upon governance. His books include *Full Disclosure: The Perils and Promise of Transparency* (with Mary Graham and David Weil) and *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*. His current projects examine democratic reform initiatives in regulation, public accountability, urban planning and public services. He has written five books and over 50 journal articles.



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Gasser is the executive director of the [Berkman Center for Internet and Society](#) at Harvard University. He teaches at Harvard Law, the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) and Fudan University (China). He is a visiting professor at KEIO University (Japan), has written *Born Digital* and *Interop: The Promise and Perils of Highly Interconnected Systems* (both with John Palfrey) and published many journal articles.

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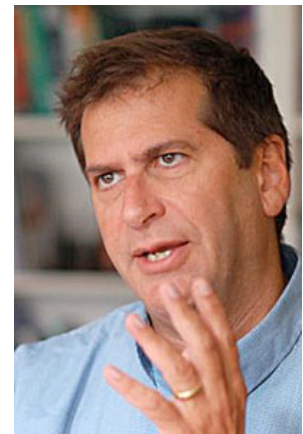


Chris Gates

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Gates is executive director of [PACE](#) -Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement. PACE is an affinity group of the Council on Foundations and serves as a learning collaborative for funders doing work in civic engagement, service and democratic practice. He previously served for 11 years as president of the National Civic League. Gates is an elected fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and has a master's degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where he studied the interaction of the public, private and nonprofit sectors.

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Geller is CTO and president of [Points of Light Digital](#), where he employs technology to help inspire, equip and mobilize people to help solve some of the world's greatest challenges. Geller is a social and technology entrepreneur with over 25 years' experience. He cofounded TechBridge, a nonprofit technology services social venture in its 13th year of operation. He has also been CEO of four technology companies focusing on enterprise software, mobile music app development and more.



Eric Gordon

Director of Engagement Game Lab, Emerson College

Gordon is the director of the Engagement Game Lab at Emerson College, where he studies location-based media, civic engagement and serious games. He is the designer of several “engagement games,” including Participatory Chinatown (2010) and Community PlanIt (2011-12). He is also the author of *Net Locality: Why Location Matters in a Networked World* (with Adriana de Souza e Silva, 2011) and *The Urban Spectator: American Concept Cities From Kodak to Google* (2010). He is currently working on a book about games and civic engagement.

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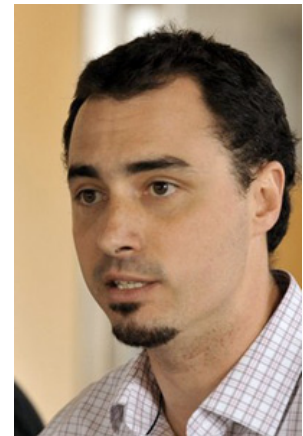


Nick Grossman

Visiting Scholar, MIT Media Lab, Center for Civic Media

Grossman, a visiting scholar at the MIT Media Lab, is a technologist and entrepreneur focused on the intersection of the Web and urban, social and civic systems. In 2010, he cofounded Civic Commons, an initiative that helps governments adopt open-technology strategies. Previously, Grossman was director of Civic Works at OpenPlans, building open tools for engagement in civic issues. He is an adviser to Code for America and a graduate of Stanford University.

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Gurstein is the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Community Informatics and foundation chair of the Community Informatics Research Network. Gurstein has consulted with a number of governments, companies and foundations. He is a member of the High Level Panel of Advisors of the (UN) Global Alliance for ICT for Development. His most recent book is *What is Community Informatics (and Why Does it Matter)?*

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Harkness is assistant to the city manager of the City of San José. For 20 years, Harkness' professional work has been driven by the proposition that people should be involved in the decisions that affect their lives. This mission has led him to try milling corn in the mountains of North Carolina, advising tomato farmers on the edge of the Sahara, training Peace Corps volunteers in Morocco and leading the innovative Strong Neighborhoods Initiative in San Jose. In the process, he has facilitated countless public meetings and listened to the perspective and concerns of hundreds of community leaders.

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Headd, a writer and speaker on communication technologies and open government, is director of government relations at Code for America. A civic hacking veteran, he has worked as both a technologist and a government official. He holds a master's degree in public administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, and is a former adjunct instructor at the University of Delaware where he taught a course in electronic government.

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Heath is president of The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County. The foundation has distributed nearly \$50 million dollars to non-profits in 21 years. Heath was Boulder County Commissioner for eight years, a candidate for the U.S. Senate, a fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, a member of the White House Office of National Service, She served on the Colorado Rockies stadium board and was a local government consultant in Central and Eastern Europe.

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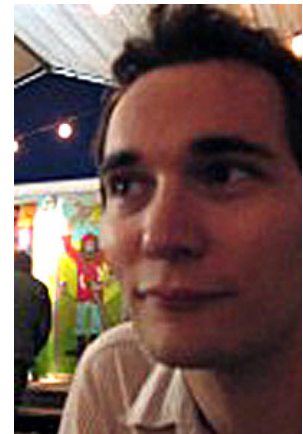


Frank Hebbert

Director of Civic Works, OpenPlans

Hebbert is director of civic works at OpenPlans, where he explores how technology, planning, citizens and government come together. He thinks we can make better places and beat climate change with the winning combo of planning, technology and public participation. Hebbert has a master's degree in city planning from MIT. He blogs intermittently on open-source planning, tweets slightly more and is one half of the team Holobiont (half architect, half urban planner). He co-organizes Planning Corps, a network of volunteer planners providing assistance to nonprofits.

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Heffan is general counsel of TopCoder, where he has worked since 2001. Heffan brings to TopCoder over 10 years of experience in working with technology companies on their legal matters, particularly in the areas of intellectual property and community-based models.



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Hoene is the director of the Center for Research and Innovation at the National League of Cities. He oversees the center's efforts to identify, research and share innovative local practices and trends on subjects including public finance, economic development, housing, sustainability, infrastructure and governance. He is coauthor of the center's annual reports on City Fiscal Conditions and City Economic Conditions, tracking the fiscal and economic health of the municipal sector.



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Jacob cofounded the [Office of New Urban Mechanics](#), a civic innovation incubator within Boston's City Hall. Jacob also serves as Mayor Thomas Menino's adviser on emerging technologies. In these roles, he works to develop new models of civic innovation. Before joining the city of Boston, Jacob worked for and launched a series of technology start-ups. He is also a fellow at the [Center for the Advancement of Public Action](#) at Bennington College.

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Clay Johnson

Johnson is the CEO of [Localize.io](#). He is best known as the cofounder of [Blue State Digital](#), the firm that built and managed Barack Obama's online campaign for the presidency in 2008. After leaving Blue State, Johnson was the director of Sunlight Labs at the [Sunlight Foundation](#), where he built an army of 2,000 developers and designers to build open-source tools to give people greater access to government data. He was named the Google/O'Reilly Open Source Organizer of the year in 2009, was one of Federal Computing Week's Fed 100 in 2010 and won the Campaign-Tech Innovator award in 2011.

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Keenan is a lifelong Detroit, engaged citizen, and the director of Publius.org, a non-partisan organization founded in 1996 to promote civic participation and voter education. He holds a degree in philosophy from the University of Michigan and is network engineer by training. He was the Senior Computer Systems Specialist for the University of Michigan Department of Human Genetics at the dawn of bioinformatics and the completion of the mapping of the human genome.



Judith Kleinberg

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Kleinberg is San Jose/Silicon Valley program director for Knight Foundation. An attorney and former Palo Alto mayor, Kleinberg has led both a tech start-up and award-winning nonprofits.



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Kolko is a professor of human-centered design and engineering at the University of Washington and cofounder of shiftLabs, an engineering and manufacturing start-up designing low cost health technologies. Her current project is the university's Design for Digital Inclusion Lab, which works on technology development for “the other 5 billion,” and the Hackademia, inspired by six plus years in hacker culture, which brings the habits of mind of hackers/makers into the university. Shift Labs combines technology design, hacker engineering and a desire to change the world.



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Micki Krimmel

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Krimmel, founder of NeighborGoods.net, has been building online communities for a decade. In addition to working for multiple start-ups, she created [Participant Media](http://ParticipantMedia.com)'s first online community and led the social media efforts for Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, one of the highest grossing documentaries of all time.

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Lange, assistant professor of critical studies at [California College of the Arts](http://CaliforniaCollegeoftheArts.edu), is an anthropologist studying technical identities, YouTube and reticulated models of civic engagement. She coauthored the book, *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media*. The book analyzed findings from the Digital Youth and Informal Learning study, which was sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation. She is currently writing a book tentatively entitled, *Kids on YouTube: Technical Identities and Digital Literacies*.

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JD Lasica

Founder & Chief Strategist, Socialbrite.org

Lasica is a strategist and social media consultant considered one of the world's leading experts in social media. He is founder of two consultancies, [Socialbrite](http://Socialbrite.org) for nonprofits and Socialmedia.biz for businesses. Lasica was cofounder of Ourmedia.org, the first free video hosting and sharing site, and has been named one of Silicon Valley's top 40 influencers, one of the top 100 influencers in social media and one of CNET's Top 100 Media Bloggers.

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Latorre is vice president of Digital Placemaking, a program for bottom-up, human-centered media he started at [Project for Public Spaces](#), a non-profit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people build stronger communities. Latorre has rich online experience from years with leading firms such as CKS Group, Razorfish, Funny Garbage, McCann-Erikson, Scholastic and others. In recent years his focus has shifted toward using effective design methods and today's powerful social technology tools for the civic realm in the movements around open commons, open government and open urban planning.

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Co-director, Allied Media Projects

Lee is a co-director of [Allied Media Projects](#) in Detroit, where she cultivates media strategies for a more just and creative world. She believes community media production is a process of speaking and listening that allows us to investigate the problems that shape our realities, imagine other realities and then organize our communities to make them real.

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Matt Leighninger

Executive Director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium

Leighninger is the executive director of the [Deliberative Democracy Consortium](#), an alliance of the major organizations and leading scholars working in the field of democracy and citizenship. Leighninger has worked with public engagement efforts in over 100 communities in 40 states. His first book, *The Next Form of Democracy*, traces the recent shifts in the relationship between citizens and government, and examines how these trends are reshaping our democracy.

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Director, CIRCLE

Levine is director of CIRCLE, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, and research director of Tufts University's Jonathan Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. He is the author of the forthcoming book *We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Philosophy and Practice of Civic Renewal* and six other books.

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Oakland CDC

Liu is a community development innovation practitioner partnering with communities to build healthy, vibrant and just neighborhoods. He is the principal of Creative Ecology, a hybrid project and consulting practice that utilizes people-centered art and design strategies for community development, planning, placemaking, and engagement. He is also a co-founder of the award-winning National Bitter Melon Council, and has served as the executive director of the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation in Oakland, CA and the Asian Community Development Corporation in Boston, Mass. He serves on the boards of The Center for Neighborhood Technology, The Interaction Institute for Social Change, and The New England Foundation for the Arts. He is a Barr Foundation Senior Fellow.

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CEO and Founder, PublicStuff

Lily Liu is the CEO and Founder of the leading national innovative CRM software system, PublicStuff. She has been working around public policy issues at the local and national level for over 10 years and has a deep understanding of government needs and abilities. Her professional experience includes working with Mayor Bloomberg's Special Projects and Analytics Unit in the Department of Education, a \$20 billion organization. Prior to that, she worked in the City of Long Beach, CA and the Transportation Security Administration in Washington, D.C.

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Nancy Lublin

CEO and Chief Old Person, DoSomething.org

Nancy must have done something great in a past life to warrant the blessings of this one.

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Maclay is the managing director of the [Berkman Center for Internet and Society](#) at Harvard University, where he works in diverse capacities with its faculty, staff, fellows and extended community to realize its ambitious goals. His broad aim is to effectively and appropriately integrate information and communication technologies with social and economic development, focusing on the changes Internet technologies foster in society, policy and institutions.

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Derek Neighbors

Gangplank, Co-Founder

Neighbors is a serial entrepreneur who helps people bring ideas to reality. Neighbors cofounded [Gangplank](#), a collaborative workspace in Phoenix in 2008, to help encourage local creatives to explore innovative ideas and create what they are passionate about. He is a partner at [Integrum Technologies](#), a consulting services firm that helps companies build high performing teams to compete in the new economy.

 [@dneighbors](https://twitter.com/dneighbors)

Rick Nixon

Program Manager, eGovernment and Technology Initiatives for the City of Portland

Nixon serves as program manager of eGovernment and technology initiatives for the [City of Portland](#), Ore. Nixon is responsible for supplying process and technology to the city's open data, open standards and open software solutions. After having launched the nation's first multi-jurisdictional open data offering, [CivicApps.org](#), Nixon continues this work with [PDXCitySync.org](#), a new open platform for government, residents and businesses to collaborate in sharing important information and services.



 [@CivicApps](#)

 [@PDXCitySync](#)

Beth Simone Noveck

New York Law School, Professor

Noveck is a professor of law at New York Law School. Formerly the head of the White House Open Government Initiative, she is the author of *Wiki Government: How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger and Citizens More Powerful*.

 [@bethnoveck](#)

Max Novendstern

CEO / Co-Founder, CommonPlace

Novendstern is CEO at CommonPlace, a tech and organizing start-up that's building social networks for neighborhoods across the country. Before that, Novendstern was an undergrad at Harvard, where he was the editor-in-chief of the Harvard Political Review and a student of American intellectual history. Prior to Harvard, he organized an artisans' cooperative in the highlands of Peru and traversed trails throughout the mountains of New York.

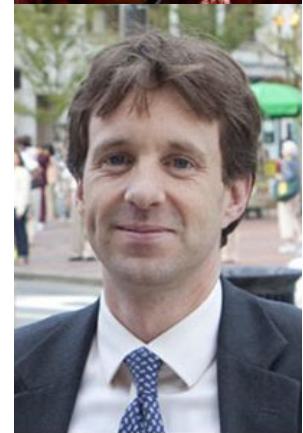
 [@mnovendstern](#)

Chris Osgood

Co-Chair, Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, Boston

Osgood co-founded and co-chairs the Boston Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, bringing to the office over 10 years of experience in city government. During that time, Osgood has focused on designing operations and policies that help cities engage and respond to constituents. Before joining the city of Boston, Osgood earned his MBA from Harvard and served for five years in the New York City Parks and Recreation Department.

 [@newurbanmechs](#)



Jerry Paffendorf

Co-Founder & Executive Creative Director, LOVELAND Technologies

Paffendorf lives and works in Detroit, where he pours his love into LOVELAND Technologies' efforts to put cities online in new ways that combine interactive maps, crowdsourcing and crowdfunding (makeloveland.com). Since 2009, LOVELAND, which Paffendorf cofounded, has released a series of independent and partner projects with the connected goals of making Detroit more inviting, understandable, investable, user-friendly and creative. He writes sometimes at greatamericanpixel.tumblr.com.

 [@wello](https://twitter.com/wello)



Jennifer Pahlka

Founder & Executive Director at Code for America

Pahlka is the founder and executive director of Code for America, which works with talented Web professionals and cities around the country to promote public service and reboot government. Previously, she ran the Web 2.0 Summit and Gov 2.0 Summit events for TechWeb, in conjunction with O'Reilly Media. Pahlka's early career was spent in the non-profit sector. She lives in Oakland, Calif. with her daughter and eight chickens. Jennifer's early career was spent in the non-profit sector.

 [@pahlkadot](https://twitter.com/pahlkadot)



Joseph Porcelli

Director of Engagement Services for GovDelivery, Inc. and GovLoop.com; Founder and Chief Executive Neighbor of NeighborsForNeighbors.org

Porcelli, director of engagement services for GovDelivery.com and GovLoop.com, believes we are happiest when we are connected and in service to each other. To increase happiness, Porcelli creates, learns and evangelizes online and offline experiences that overcome the barriers of fear, time, place and bureaucracy. His career highlights include serving as the first community engagement strategist for the U.S Department of Homeland Security, leading online operations and partnerships for the ServiceNation legislation campaign, founding NeighborsForNeighbors.org, developing new online and offline organizing models for the Boston Police Department and wearing a nametag every day in 2007.

 [@JosephPorcelli](https://twitter.com/JosephPorcelli)



Bahia Ramos Synnott

Director/Community Foundation, Knight Foundation

Ramos Synnott is director of community foundations for Knight Foundation, where she directs donor-advised grants to community foundations around the country. Previously, Ramos Synnott lived for two years in London, where she consulted with Man Group, the world's largest publicly traded hedge fund, in the corporate responsibility department.

 [@bahiaramos](https://twitter.com/bahiaramos)

Jason Rzepka

Vice President of Public Affairs at MTV Networks

 [@jasonrzepka](https://twitter.com/jasonrzepka)

Max Schorr

Co-Founder and Chief Community Officer, GOOD

Schorr is co-founder and chief community officer of GOOD, a collaboration of people and organizations pushing our world forward. Recognized as a Next Generation Leader by the American Cancer Society, a member of the Japan Society's Innovators Network and a First Mover Fellow at the Aspen Institute, Schorr has appeared on CNN, MSNBC and NPR and has spoken on social innovation at The Commonwealth Club, Social Media Week and PSFK.

 [@maxschorr](https://twitter.com/maxschorr)

Trabian Shorters

Shorters is vice president of communities for Knight Foundation, leading the foundation's work in 26 communities across the United States. Shorters has a long history of creating and running different types of networks for social innovation.

 [@TSatKF](https://twitter.com/TSatKF)



Michael Smith

SVP Social Innovation, The Case Foundation

Smith leads the Case Foundation's Social Innovation team, which oversees social investments, programs and partnerships. He works with senior leadership to set the programmatic direction of the foundation and manages an investment portfolio designed to spark civic participation and promote innovation in the social sector. He holds a bachelor's degree in communications from Marymount University, is a frequent contributor to industry publications and gatherings and serves on the boards of Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE), Idealist.org and Public Allies.

 [@msmithDC](#)



Shannon Spanhake

Deputy Innovation Officer, City and County of San Francisco

Shannon Spanhake is building an OpenGov program for the City and County of San Francisco, which is focused on innovation to enable job creation, citizen engagement, and urban revitalization. Prior to this role, Spanhake worked at a startup founded with her patent-pending technology, which she developed while holding a dual-appointment as a post doctoral candidate at CallT2 and a senior researcher at the Centre for Development Finance.

 [@ShannonSpanhake](#)



Benjamin Stokes

USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. R&D/PhD Student.

Stokes investigates real-world games and participatory mapping as a Ph.D. student at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. He is a cofounder of Games for Change, the nonprofit behind the movement to use games for social impact. Previously, Stokes was a program officer in MacArthur Foundation's portfolio on Digital Media and Learning. Stokes has also led design teams at MercyCorps/NetAid, and ProQuest/Bigchalk.

 [@bgstokes](#)



Madeleine Taylor

Network Impact Inc., Partner

Taylor is cofounder and principal of [Arbor Consulting Partners](#) and a lead partner of [Network Impact](#), which provides social-change agents with strategies, tools, research and consulting expertise to design, use and evaluate networks for increased impact. She is the author with Peter Plastrik of *Net Gains: A Handbook for Network Builders Seeking Social Change* and *An Emerging Framework for Assessing Nonprofit Networks*.

 [@networkimpact](#)



Damian Thorman

National Program Director, Knight Foundation

Thorman joined Knight Foundation in 2007 as director of its National Program, which supports innovative ideas and leadership with the potential to drive transformative change nationally and in Knight's resident communities. He helps develop new grant opportunities at a national level that target systemic change within the framework of informed and engaged communities.

 [@dthorman](#)



Charles Tsai

Consultant to Knight Foundation

Tsai is a journalist, writer, speaker and consultant for social entrepreneurs. A former reporter and producer for CNN, Tsai ventured into the social sector to help youth design and implement their own solutions for global change. He has educated and mentored hundreds of young changemakers through [Ashoka](#), the world's largest network of social entrepreneurs. In 2009, he helped Ashoka launch its first global campaigns to support youth-led social ventures around the world. Tsai writes about social innovation at [SocialCreatives.org](#) and Huffington Post and is the author of *Endeavor: The Rise of Social Creatives*.

 [@Charlestsai8](#)



Conor White-Sullivan

Director, Huffpost Labs, Huffington Post Media Group

White-Sullivan is the director of HuffPostLabs, a product group within Huffington Post dedicated to building tools that advance journalism and democracy in the 21st century. Previously, he was the founder and CEO of Localocracy, an online town common, which was sold to AOL in September 2011. He has been named a champion of change by the Obama administration and placed on the Forbes 30 under 30 list for Media in 2011.

 [@CONAW](https://twitter.com/CONAW)

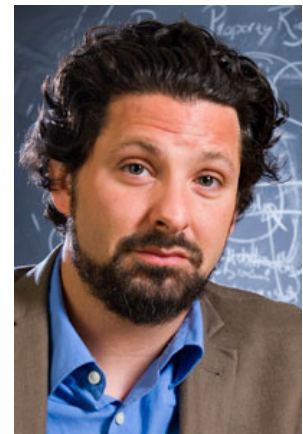


Todd Wolfson

Assistant Professor of Journalism and Media Studies, Rutgers University; co-founder and member of executive committee, Media Mobilizing Project

Wolfson is an assistant professor of journalism and media studies at Rutgers University. An anthropologist by training, Wolfson has conducted research with support of the Social Science Research Council and the National Telecommunications and Information Association. He is finishing a manuscript focused on the intersection of new media and social movements. Wolfson is also a co-founder of Media Mobilizing Project, which uses media to build the power of poor and working-class communities.

 [@twolfson](https://twitter.com/twolfson)

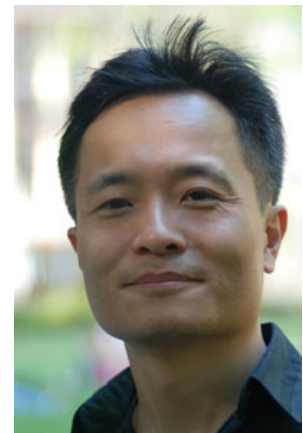


Youngjin Yoo

Professor of MIS and Strategy, Fox School of Business; Director, Center for Design+Innovation; PI, Urban Apps & Maps Studio, Temple University

Yoo is professor of management information systems and strategy at Temple University's Fox School of Business. Yoo also directs the school's Design + Innovation lab and leads the Urban Apps and Maps studio, which uses social networks and mapping software to improve the community.

 [@youngjinyoo](https://twitter.com/youngjinyoo)



Ethan Zuckerman

Director, Center for Civic Media, MIT

Zuckerman is director of the Center for Civic Media at MIT, and a principal research scientist at MIT's Media Lab. With Rebecca MacKinnon, he co-founded international blogging community Global Voices. Global Voices showcases news and opinions from citizen media in over 150 nations and 30 languages. His research focuses on issues of internet freedom, civic media in the developing world, and cosmopolitanism in the digital age. He blogs at ethanzuckerman.com/blog and lives in the Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts.



 [@ethanz](https://twitter.com/ethanz)