The Effectiveness of Children's Advocacy Websites

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study focuses on the effectiveness of using the Internet for child advocacy, with advocacy defined as attempts to mobilize public support regarding the welfare of children. Two of our main research questions are (1) How can advocates potentially use the Internet for informing current advocates, building advocacy communities, and recruiting new advocates? and (2) How can they most effectively do so?

From the literature addressing the effectiveness of online activities, we identify three online genres: distance/online education, e-commerce, and online political action, as well as associated subgenres. Each of these genres spans a continuum of action that runs from informing to engaging to motivating the user. By operationally defining effectiveness as accomplishing the purpose or rhetorical action that defines a genre—distance/online education is effective if the user learns, e-commerce is effective if the user buys, and online political action is effective if the user mobilizes—we are able to identify effectiveness frameworks for each genre and subgenre, which allows us to create an effectiveness framework for electronic advocacy.

After testing this framework on thirty-two child advocacy websites, we identified several *basic* features that advocates have not, but should, provide consistently: privacy and security, informative keywords, and search engines. With respect to our first research question, we highlight these specific recommendations based on our findings, noting that general recommendations are listed by the purpose of each genre in the final chapter:

- Advocacy websites are informing users successfully.

- Advocacy websites' community building efforts can be improved in the following ways: (1) Localism: offer community information and event calendars, as well as interactive maps or external links to local or regional websites; (2) Coalitions: provide features such as email or hypertext links, wider issue networks, and webrings to extend the reach of advocacy organizations; and (3) Emotional appeal: leverage the unique capabilities of the Internet through interactive games and quizzes, and downloadable postcards, screensavers, and e-cards.

- Advocacy websites can motivate users by engaging in the following activities: (1) Legislative advocacy: provide avenues where advocates can impact the formal political process; (2) Feedback: use guestbooks and online surveys to solicit detailed feedback; (3) Fundraising: offer affinity programs, online stores, and online auctions to increase fundraising efforts; and (4) Online activism: provide mechanisms such as electronic events and action alerts to enable mobilization.

As one of the first attempts to define, test, and measure effectiveness across three online genres, this research is necessarily exploratory. Based on our data, we cannot state categorically whether implementing the features identified will result in an effective website. However, as the features were drawn from studies assessing the effectiveness of online endeavors, our evaluation form has a firm foundation in research. In addition, our evaluation has identified how child advocates currently are using the Internet and, more importantly, areas in which they can improve.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the effectiveness of using the Internet for child advocacy using Schneider and Lester's definition of advocacy as "the exclusive and mutual representation of a client(s) or a cause in a forum, attempting to systematically influence decision making in an unjust or unresponsive system(s)" (2001, 65). Two of our main research questions are (1) How can advocates potentially use the Internet for informing current advocates, building advocacy communities, and recruiting new advocates? and (2) How can they most effectively do so?

In a recent project funded by Packard Foundation, Scott (2000) studied how nonprofits currently use online technologies by conducting interviews with twenty online activists and examining websites to report on best practices in online organizing. Our approach to the question of online advocacy comes from a different perspective, that of effectiveness. Researchers have noted that the distinction between how the Internet currently is being used and whether that use is effective is frequently blurred. To minimize our reliance on specific practice or normative prescriptions, we have limited our review to research addressing the effectiveness of online activities. In addition to the two online activities examined by Scott (2000)—e-commerce and online political action—we survey literature on distance/online education. These three types of activities provide insight into the effective use of the Internet for educating, selling to, and mobilizing users and contribute to our understanding of online advocacy.

Chapter one begins with a literature review of online genres. From this review, we identify three genres based on the actions of teaching, selling, and mobilizing that allow us to review distance/online education, e-commerce, and online political action for possible parallels to child e-advocacy. In this context, we discuss the continuum that runs from informing to engaging to motivating the user, or the movement from simply informing the user to influencing him or her to take action. Within this section, we discuss the importance of online community building, noting that this activity may be crucial for online activism. Using the top-level genres as analogies, we identify features that may serve not only to inform users, but also to persuade them to take social action in support of child advocacy (see Figure 1 for a complete hierarchy of our online genres).
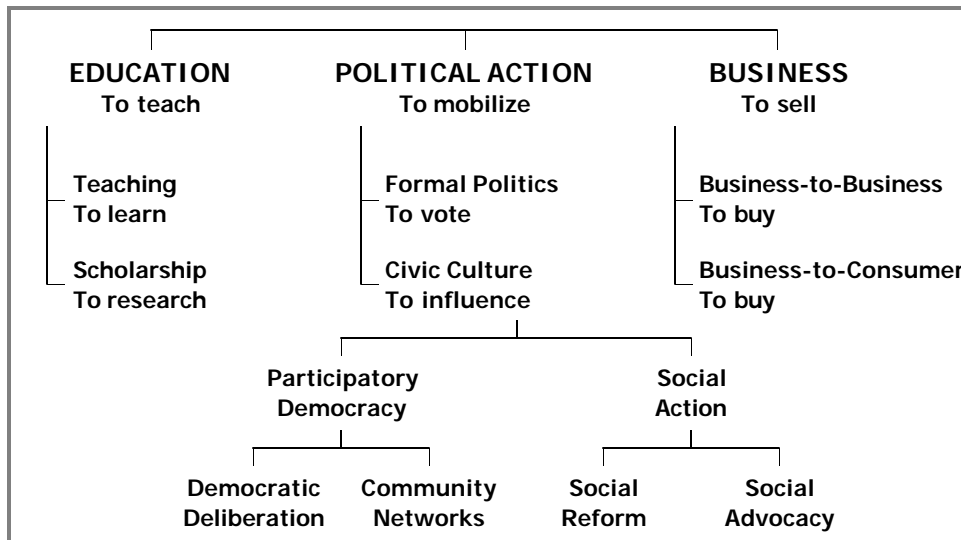
Figure 1. *Proposed Hierarchy of Online Genres*

Crucial to the goal of persuading others to take social action in support of child advocacy is a review of research that focuses on measuring the effectiveness of each online genre. We define effectiveness as accomplishing the purpose or rhetorical action that defines a genre. In other words, distance/online education is effective if the user learns; e-commerce is effective if the user buys; online political action is effective if the user mobilizes. We delve into research on the effectiveness of distance/online education, e-commerce, and online political action by emphasizing those studies that examine effects as well as intentions. This research allows us to identify specific frameworks of effectiveness for each genre and subgenre. We define these frameworks in chapters two through seven.

In chapter two, we summarize research on the effectiveness of distance/online education, which is valuable for its insight into online learning. Researchers have studied several aspects of online learning, including its effectiveness and problems inherent in the concept. Several educational theories have been used to gauge the qualities of effective traditional education, and researchers are increasingly using these same theories to determine the effectiveness of online education. These theories include the technology acceptance model, collaborative learning theory, activity theory, and constructivist theory.

As the literature review will reflect in chapter three, establishing criteria for effective e-commerce Web design has proven illusive. Although there are numerous prescription-based publications relating to effective e-commerce Web design, they are often drawn from specific projects and are not generalizable. For this reason, we purposely limit our focus to a small body of research that is now emerging, which includes a study by Turban & Gehrke (2000) that distinguishes between user and designer perspectives on effectiveness, as well as research on the theory of flow, customer satisfaction, and online consumer behavior.

The focus in chapter four is online formal politics, the first subgenre of online political action. Research in this area is valuable for its insight into user participation in the formal political process using the online medium. We examine studies on several aspects of online formal politics, including the use of the Internet to disseminate governmental information, to communicate with representatives, and to mount political campaigns.

In chapters five, six, and seven, we discuss the other subgenre of online political action: civic culture. Within this subgenre, we include those activities that relate to the use of the Internet to facilitate participatory democracy and to engage in social action. In chapter five, we focus on participatory democracy, discussing democratic deliberation and community networking. Democratic deliberation focuses on the national level, whereas community networking focuses on a circumscribed geographical area such as a neighborhood, city, county, or region.

The second subgenre of civic culture, social action, can be divided into those activities that relate to the use of the Internet to reform large-scale societal ills and to advocate for others. Correspondingly, we discuss social reform in chapter six and social advocacy in chapter seven. Online technologies are particularly beneficial for the types of groups typically undertaking social action. As a result, we discuss several online movements in chapter six including protests against corporations, environmental activism, insurgent and extremist activities, and international coalition building.

Our last category of political action is that which includes child advocacy, and which we have termed online social advocacy. The term "advocacy" has been used to refer to activities ranging from consumer education, to civil rights, to brokerage activities (Schneider & Lester, 2001). In chapter seven, we summarize research on electronic advocacy (e-advocacy), narrowing to a focus on electronic advocacy for children.

Using the effectiveness frameworks we constructed in chapters two through seven, we conducted two kinds of tests—website evaluations and an online questionnaire—to determine whether advocacy websites are implementing those features recommended in the research. Chapters eight and nine describe our evaluations and online questionnaire responses, respectively. Specifically, chapter eight describes the effectiveness framework we developed for e-advocacy. This framework serves as a tool to evaluate websites and includes four sections: Basic Features, Informational Features, Interest-Invoking Features, and Motivational Features. We evaluate the data from the evaluation of child advocacy sites in two ways: (1) we sort the websites based on the number of features they implement, with the website implementing the most features being ranked first; and (2) we calculate the percentage of sites that have implemented each feature.

In chapter nine, we discuss our online questionnaire, reporting on two general findings. First, the respondents assign multiple purposes to their sites, viewing them as more than tools for advertising their organizations or passively informing users. Second, the respondents implement several measures for assessing the effectiveness of their sites.

Our recommendations are provided in chapter ten, where we return to the main purposes for our three online genres—distance/online education, e-commerce, and online political action. Based on our research, we believe that all websites should attempt to establish a presence, to inform,

and to engage. In addition to these fundamental purposes, however, each online genre has a specific motivation: distance/online education sites to teach, e-commerce sites to sell, and online political action sites to mobilize. Furthermore, depending on the specific subgenre, online political action websites attempt to get users to donate, volunteer, vote, deliberate, or advocate. We therefore construct a basic hierarchy of purposes by which Web designers can assess the features needed. Finally, we propose a set of specific features for each purpose, suggest a means of measuring whether a website is succeeding in its purpose, and recommend exemplary websites that reflect the relevant features.

Attached to our report are four appendices. The first provides definitions for our evaluation form and blank copies of both the form and online questionnaire. Appendix B discusses the results from our evaluation of five political and five environmental websites. Appendix C includes our subjective descriptions of all of the websites evaluated—child advocacy, political, and environmental. And lastly, appendix D provides an extensive list of URLs pointing to useful tools and resources for nonprofits.

Chapter 1 : ONLINE GENRES

In this chapter we discuss our literature review of online genres with respect to the rhetorical elements of substance, form, and rhetorical action. Genre fuses semantic substance (content or information), form or format, and the actions invoked by the situation. We identify three main Internet genres based on the actions of teaching, selling, and mobilizing; these genres are distance/online education, e-commerce, and online political action. In addition, we discuss the continuum that runs from informing to engaging to motivating the user, or the movement from informing the user to influencing him or her to take action. Using these online genres, we construct a hierarchy based on the theory and research of ancient and contemporary rhetoricians. This hierarchy allows us to compare and contrast different genres and to draw parallels to child e-advocacy. Also in this chapter, we discuss the importance of online community building, and we note its significance to online activism.

Genre as Substance, Form, and Rhetorical Action

The concept of genre has proven useful for researchers attempting to classify Internet communication. There are a number of studies that have identified online genres based on technical aspects of the Internet such as domain names (Swenson, 2001), home pages (Dillon & Gushrowski, 2000), Web pages (Crowston & Williams, 2000; Haas & Grams, 2000), hypertext links (Haas & Grams, 1998), navigation (Dillon & Vaughan, 1997), and email (May, 1997). Shneiderman (1997) identifies four ways to define Web genres: (1) originator's identity, (2) number of Web pages or amount of information, (3) goals of the originators as interpreted by designers, and (4) measures of success. Two studies have drawn from Miller's seminal work on genre, applying it to understanding the ways in which communication and media interact in organizational communication (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992).

We also have followed Miller's lead, yet we have limited our focus to her discussion of social institutions as genres. Miller states that genre represents "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations," or standard responses to rhetorical situations perceived to be similar (1984, 159). According to Miller, genres can be defined by similarities in rhetorical substance (semantics), form (syntactics), or the rhetorical action the discourse performs (pragmatics). Substance "constitutes the aspects of common experience that are being symbolized," form is the way in which that substance is symbolized, and rhetorical action is the social action invoked by the situation (Miller, 1984, 159). More simply, substance refers to themes and topics, form to physical and linguistic features, and rhetorical action to the socially defined need to which the genre responds (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Miller concludes that genre fuses substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics, all of which must be present to constitute a genre.

To illustrate the three components of genre, Miller summarizes Aristotle's definitions of the three forums in ancient Greece: deliberative (legislature), forensic (law), and epideictic (celebration) (Miller, 1984, 152-53; Devitt, 1993, 574). Aristotle defined these forums along four dimensions: the audience, the communicative act, the time, and the end. According to Miller, it is the communicative acts and the ends of the forums that comprise the substance of each; similarly, the time, proofs, and style constitute the forms. The fusions of these substances and forms are grounded in the specific situations in ancient Greece, each defined by the audience and their role as either judges or spectators. Miller's treatment of Aristotle's forums as examples of genre establishes a precedent for treating contemporary social institutions similarly.

Niklas Luhmann's (1989) formulation of contemporary social institutions in terms of coding and programming resembles Aristotle's description of the forums, and thus can provide a basis upon which to define our notions of genre. In Luhmann's formulation, the code, or end, of an institution consists of a binary scheme that serves to differentiate it from other institutions and the program, or set of communicative acts, representative of that institution defines the criteria for suitable communication (1989, 40, 45). We have categorized our literature review based on three of the social institutions Luhmann describes—Education, Business, and Political Action—each of which defines a specific top-level genre in terms of substance, form, and situation.

Genre of Distance/Online Education—Learning Curricula

Our first main genre focuses on the educational institution, which is directed toward learning. According to Luhmann (1989), the end of the educational institution is pass or fail; its program is the corresponding curricula. For our purposes, we can define the substance of the educational genre as certain curricula or facts. The pragmatic aspect of the educational genre, or the action performed by educational discourse, is learning or knowing.

These two aspects of the educational genre, substance and action, have been described in more depth by Baumgartner and Payr (1998). They propose a heuristic model of learning that is comprised of three dimensions: learning/teaching, action, and social organization. The learning/teaching dimension defines subjects and learning goals; the action dimension defines the possible interactions between the learner and the world; and the social organization dimension describes the role of the teacher. Thus, the substance of the educational genre is to learn a specific subject; the action of the student is to know, do, or master; and the teacher's role is to transfer, tutor, or coach. Baumgartner and Payr (1998) subsequently distinguish types of Internet applications based on their learning model, and these distinctions may be viewed as descriptions of form. These applications include informational websites, online exercises and tests, tutorials, simulations, and software tools.

Other researchers have proposed similar categorizations. For example, in their discussion of a prototype digital library, Michael et al. (1998) have proposed categorizing information based on organization (a specific university, NASA, and so on), data genre (journal articles, technical reports, theses and dissertations, and so on), and subject category (aeronautics, space science, math). These three categories could be described as situation, form, and substance respectively. Aoki et al. (1998), who identify six specific types of distance education, have stated that various deployments of online components include course material presentation and distribution (substance and form) and interactive communication between instructor and students or between students themselves (action or situation).

A study by Liebscher et al. (1997), however, suggests that education as a genre is not as one-dimensional as implied above. In their examination of types of network use by science and engineering faculty, Liebscher et al. (1997) distinguished the uses of particular services by the following purposes: research, teaching, administration, social, or current awareness. Drawing from these proposed purposes, we have identified two subgenres for the educational genre: teaching and scholarship. The former focuses on the teaching or learning of facts or curricula, the latter on the publishing or citing of research. This subgenre of scholarship is studied by Cronin et al. (1998), who identify eleven categories of online scholarly invocation: abstract; article; conference proceedings; current awareness; external home page; listserv; personal/parent organization home page; resource guide; book review; syllabus; and table of contents. Although they focus on how scholars are invoked rather than on how scholars can persuade users to invoke them, their categories provide some guidance as to what forms may comprise online scholarship.

Genre of E-Commerce/Online Business—Buying Products and Services

Our second main genre focuses on the economic institution, most familiar to us as e-commerce, which is directed toward buying. According to Luhmann, the end of the economic institution is payment or nonpayment and its program is prices (1989, 52, 53). Thus, the substance of the economic genre is information concerning certain products or services and their prices, and the action it invokes is buying.

Esrock and Leichty (2000) have analyzed corporate Web pages specifically in terms of content (substance) and structure (form), claiming that both must be considered simultaneously, a claim echoing Miller's definition of genre. Although content or information may be provided by a website, they contend that its prominence is determined by structural considerations: "having content on a Web site is different from giving that material prominent access or display" (2000, 339). Esrock and Leichty's study (2000) also emphasizes the importance of audience with respect to genre. While the results of their content analysis demonstrated that the combination audience investor/customer/press/image is the most frequent combination of publics to which content is directed, the structural analysis illustrated that investors, prospective employees, and customers were the most important publics; media, dealers and retailers, and current employees were less important. Their study thus suggests that the genre of business also possesses subgenres distinguished by audience. Accordingly, we have identified two subgenres within this genre: business-to-business and business-to-consumer. Researchers including Angelides (1997) and Ng et al. (1998) have distinguished between these markets.

Many researchers have also categorized online businesses in terms of use. For example, Hoger et al. (1998) provide a typology of corporate uses of the Web for e-commerce, distinguishing five uses: (1) marketplace awareness/promotion; (2) customer support; (3) sales; (4) advertising; and (5) electronic information services. Cockburn and Wilson (1996) have identified five similar application areas for online business sites: (1) publicity, marketing, and advertising; (2) direct online selling; (3) research and development; (4) communication; and (5) collaboration. In their follow-up study, Ng et al. (1998) found that businesses were using the Web in the following ways: (1) product information; (2) price information; (3) online shopping; (4) email ordering; (5) registration of credit cards; (6) basic web presence; and (7) free products. Cockburn and Wilson emphasize the importance of attracting customers to a site, as well as encouraging them to return. They claim that the following features serve these purposes: visually attractive site, multimedia, regularly updated links, competitions, free products, searchable product databases, press releases, bulletin boards and chat rooms, and detailed information unrelated to the business (1996, 92-94). Ng et al. similarly identify the provision of electronic greeting cards, 'cyber comics,' and games (1998, 308).

In their empirically based classification of Internet retail stores, Spiller and Lohse (1998) isolate three dimensions along which store types differ: size, service, and interface quality. Their dimension of size includes features such as number of products; number of hierarchical levels; amount of company information; amount of information regarding ordering; existence of a search function; number of customer-care features (gift services, access to sales representatives, feedback mechanisms). Their service dimension includes features such as number of links to

related information; appetizers (magazines, lotteries); information content for individual products; and general product information and services. And lastly, their dimension of interface quality includes features such as consistent text or image menu bars; sophisticated use of images; availability of indices and browsing functions; and What's New or FAQs sections.

Angelides (1997) describes two main business uses of the Internet: financial transactions and marketing/advertising. As the former use remains problematic due to security concerns, businesses are focusing on the latter. Specifically, business uses the Internet as a promotional channel for advertising, a distribution channel for sales, and a communications channel for information. This latter differentiation bears a striking resemblance to Hoffman et al.'s (1995) earlier categorization of e-commerce sites based on functionality. Hoffman et al. (1995) claim that marketing communications perform three functions: to inform, to remind, and to persuade. Two main marketing challenges are to attract visitors to a site and to generate significant repeat visits. These two challenges drive their first-level categorization of websites into Web traffic control and the design of the commercial website respectively. These latter studies suggest that business uses of online technologies range from providing information to advertising to selling.

Genre of Online Political Action—Supporting Issues and Candidates

Our third main genre is the political institution, which is directed toward voting and includes social action relative to public policy. According to Luhmann, the end of the political institution is the holding or not holding of public office (1989, 86). Its program is the selection of the person who will govern and the programs that will be used (1989, 87). The substance of the political action genre is thus information concerning specific issues or candidates; its action is mobilizing popular support in the form of funding, volunteering, or voting.

Three forms of political activity on the Web have been identified by Resnick (1998): (1) politics within the Internet, involving the internal operation of the Net itself; (2) politics which impacts the Internet, involving governmental policies and regulations regarding the Net; and (3) political uses of the Internet, involving the use of the Net to influence off-line political life. It is the latter form with which we are concerned here. Resnick includes within this category "activities of ordinary citizens, political activists, organized interests, political parties and governments to achieve political goals" (1998, 55-56). These activities include providing information about candidates, policies, or interest groups and urging visitors to contact public officials, contribute funds, support candidates, vote, and so on. According to Resnick (1998), the Internet may facilitate the particular form of action favored by political activists: accessing up-to-date information on a great variety of topics to build policy positions and formulate political strategies. Furthermore, he quotes Schartz's claim that "what activists—in fact, most people—want from the Internet is email" (1998, 64), arguing that the Internet can be used to build discussion lists for formulating policies, raising money, and organizing political activity. Resnick's (1998) discussion suggests two possible subgenres for the political action genre; namely, these are formal politics and social action, which are subgenres for which Dahlgren (2000) provides additional support.

Dahlgren (2000) argues for the distinction between formal politics and civic culture. According to him, formal politics consist of the political system's institutional structures, laws, parties, and elections. In contrast, Dahlgren (2000) relates his concept of civic culture to everyday life. Equivalent to neither civil society, which refers to institutional structures and social processes, nor the public sphere, civic culture emphasizes collective meaning making. It does not assume a homogeneous citizenship, but rather a shared commitment to democracy. Boris and Mosher-Williams' (1998) definition of civil society, the "space of uncoerced human political association and also the set of relational networks—formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology—that fill this space," appears to refer to the same concept (489). Within civic culture, volunteer associations can positively impact a society. If conflicts of interest occur, they become political issues that are resolved democratically.

Based on Dahlgren's (2000) discussion, we have identified two subgenres within the online political action genre: online formal politics, the formal end of the political institution, and online civic culture, those attempts to influence public policy. We believe that the respective rhetorical actions of formal politics and civic culture are distinct: the ultimate goal of formal politics is to obtain a vote; the ultimate goal of civic culture is to motivate to act. Correspondingly, we locate both activist and advocacy efforts in the realm of civic culture. Child advocacy, in conjunction with protests such as those focusing on the environment or landmines, would therefore seem to be included within the subgenre of civic culture, as would other movements such as civil rights, women's rights, and the anti-GMO (genetically modified organism) movement.

These two subgenres are specifically referred to by Bauer and Scharl (2000) in their description of a new software tool for automatically classifying and evaluating websites. They illustrate their tool through an analysis of thirty environmental websites, characterizing these sites using six attributes: (1) strategy, (2) goal, (3) interactivity, (4) wealth of information, (5) appearance, and (6) organizational structure. The first attribute, strategy, refers to the organization's approach to changing the world, either aggressively (activist) or cooperatively (government). The second, goal, refers to the distinction between informative (government) and motivational (activist) sites, the latter of which are concerned with activating the reader. Bauer and Scharl (2000) claim that the third attribute, interactivity, is critical for motivational sites but do not expand on their claim. The next two attributes, wealth of information and appearance, also assist in classification, although it could be argued that these attributes apply to all websites. The last attribute, structure of organization, specifies whether the website is funded by a larger organization (government), by corporate sponsoring, or independently through direct membership (activist).

Hierarchy of Online Genres

Based on this review of literature, we have proposed a set of online genres, each comprised of two levels and summarized in Table 1-1. These genres meet Miller's requirements of substance, form, and rhetorical action. Furthermore, as Miller recommends, our set is not limited, but rather allows for the addition of other genres (1984, 155). Luhmann (1989) has discussed several other social institutions such as science and religion in addition to the three we have used, all of which may comprise online genres. For example, cybermedicine is burgeoning online, as are religious fundamentalist sites. Our set of subgenres also allows for additional genres, the best example being the possible existence of an educational subgenre addressing service.

Table 1-1. *Proposed Online Genres of Education, Business, and Political Action**

Genre	Distance/Online Education	E-Commerce	Political Action
Subgenres	Teaching Scholarship	Business-to-Business Business-to-Consumer	Formal Politics Political Democracy/Civic Culture
Substance	Specific curricula	Specific products/services	Specific issues or candidates
Action	Learning	Buying	Mobilizing
Form	Informational websites Exercises and tests Tutorials Simulations Software tools Abstract Article Conference proceedings Current awareness External home page Listserv Home page Resource guide Book review Syllabus Table of contents	Company information Product information Price details Press releases Visually attractive site Multimedia Updated lists of links Competitions Free products Bulletin boards Chat rooms Unrelated information Electronic greeting cards Cyber comics Games Email ordering Searchable database Online ordering Online payment Registration scheme	Media files Press releases Positions on issues Speeches Voting record Sound/video clips Candidate's personal history Pictorials Cyber-celebration Computer programs Trivia quiz Candidate postcards Screen savers Desktop images Candidate email Campaign staff email Listserv Message board Guestbook form Donations form Coalitions links Volunteers page

* These hierarchical categories are not fixed; rather they provide us with a tool for analysis and, as such, may overlap.

Table 1-1 also illustrates that a further differentiation may be made between the various uses of online technologies. As implicitly shown in the lists of features, as well as reflected explicitly in our discussions above, there is a continuum of action for each genre that ranges from simple

information provision to community building or interaction. In our next section, we will discuss this continuum of action and the associated concept of online community formation.

Continuum of Action—To Inform, To Engage, To Move

Although we have defined our three main genres and their corresponding subgenres, a further differentiation between the various uses of online technologies remains to be made. In each of the preceding discussions, there were references to continuums of use, ranging from simple information provision to tutorials (education), selling (business), or mobilizing (political action). If we consider these continuums from the perspective of George Campbell's types of discourse, we can reduce all three to one and define a basic continuum of action. Campbell argues that all discourse is directed toward one of four ends: to inform, to please, to move, and to influence (Golden & Corbett, 1990, 145). More specifically, a discourse can enlighten the understanding, please the imagination, move the passions, or influence the will. These types of discourse build upon one another; for example, a discourse that influences the will combines informing, pleasing, and moving. This distinction can also be found in more contemporary research.

One example of the distinction between informing and motivating can be found in Maier and Hovy's (1993) discussion of discourse structure. They propose a taxonomy of relations for natural language generators, selecting Halliday's three metafunctions of language—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—as top-level categories. In Maier and Hovy's taxonomy of relations, ideational relations express semantic interrelationships, interpersonal relations explicitly address interlocutors, and textual relations organize the text (1993, 76, 78). When studying how these types of relations occur textually, they find that texts written to *inform* the reader employ ideational relations. However texts written to persuade or *motivate* the reader employ all three relations—ideational, interpersonal, and textual (1993, 81). As Maier and Hovy conclude in their analysis of an advertisement, "after providing ideational knowledge, using ideational discourse structure relations, the advertisement employs interpersonal relations to influence the reader's attitudes and actions" (1993, 82). In other words, to inform the user, a designer relies on semantic meaning; however, to motivate the user, a designer must rely on semantic meaning *and* interpersonal interactions.

A similar distinction is drawn by Zhang and von Dran (2000) in their empirical study of design factors that affect user satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a website. As they state, the challenge for designers is to "help attract users to a Website, maintain their interest in the Website, and encourage them to return to the Website again" (2000, 1253). Drawing on hygiene-motivator theory, Zhang and von Dran (2000) propose that there are two types of factors that determine user satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a site: hygiene factors, which provide basic and essential functionality, and motivator factors, which increase users' satisfaction and motivate them to return to the site. They identify three hygiene and three motivator categories, each containing several features. The hygiene categories are technical aspects, navigation, and privacy and security, categories that can contribute to user dissatisfaction if absent. The technical aspects category includes features related to basic site functionality, such as load times, platform and browser support, and site availability. The navigation category includes features related to moving around the site, such as location indicators, navigation aids, and directions. The privacy

and security category includes features such as access mechanisms, authorized collection or use of user data, and data encryption. In general, hygiene categories include those online features that users take for granted; if they are absent, users become dissatisfied.

It is Zhang and von Dran's (2000) motivator categories, however, that appear to relate to the three actions of informing, pleasing, and moving. The motivator categories are enjoyment, cognitive outcome, and credibility. These categories emphasize users' interactions with a site rather than just the site itself. The enjoyment category includes features that make the site fun, such as humor and multimedia. The cognitive outcome category includes features related to learning from the site, such as the acquisition of new knowledge and/or skills. And lastly, the credibility category includes features related to the reputation or recognition of the site, such as the identification and reputation of the owner and external awards. These three categories, cognitive outcome, enjoyment, and credibility, are comparable to Campbell's ends of informing, pleasing, and moving, respectively. As Zhang and von Dran state, "these factors make users feel they are involved, either cognitively or emotionally, while interacting with the Web site" (2000, 1265).

Informational, Engaging, and Motivational Actions

Drawing from Campbell (1990), Maier and Hovy (1993), and Zhang and von Dran (2000), we propose that each genre is built upon a basic continuum of action depending on whether the designer's purpose is to inform, to please, or to move. We label these actions informational, engaging, and motivational, respectively. Informational sites are those that provide information pertaining to the content of the top-level genre. Engaging sites are those that attempt to engage users by providing features that appeal to their emotions. And lastly, motivational sites are those sites that allow for interaction between the user and the site authors concerning the purpose of the genre (that is, learning, buying, or mobilizing). Furthermore, we make the assumption that all three types of sites provide Zhang and von Dran's (2000) hygiene and motivator features.

There are several distinctions between our definitions of this continuum of action and the theories we have just outlined. First, although our informational, engaging, and motivational sites correspond to Campbell's (1990) ends of informing, pleasing, and moving, we do not include his end of influence as a separate action because we assume that all three types collectively contribute to influencing a user. Second, we use the term "engaging" rather than Campbell's term "pleasing" to emphasize that these sites may produce sympathy as well as pleasure, as is the case in some sites directed toward social action. Third, although Zhang and von Dran (2000) offer support for our distinction between informing, engaging, and moving, their identification of hygiene and motivator features is limited. Because they focus on general information-seeking tasks, none of their features address interaction between the user and the site authors or among a group of users as a community. In contrast, both our engaging and motivational actions include features that enable interaction, an inclusion derived from Maier and Hovy's (1993) study. Most importantly, this continuum allows us to explore our specific research question regarding the use of e-advocacy as an informational, community-building, and recruitment tool.

Interestingly, research on online community formation provides some support for this differentiation between informing, engaging, and moving. As we discuss in the next section, researchers have distinguished between information-seeking and community-focused views of online communities, arguing that the former is a very narrow view of the Internet's potential.

Online Communities—Information-Seeking vs. Community-Focused

The inventors and earliest users of the Internet noted that the technology would be conducive for community formation (Licklider et al., 1968). Subsequent scholars have argued that online communities offer participants much more than material goods or information, as suggested by the dominant commerce-driven or information-seeking views of the Internet (Sproull & Faraj, 1997; Werry, 1999). Rather, Internet users, particularly those who participate in electronic bulletin boards or Usenet newsgroups, seek support, affiliation, and community. Although Sproull and Faraj argue that an information-seeking view of the Internet predominates and influences policy decisions about the Internet, a community-focused view calls for very different policies that encourage communication, community and democracy, and self-governance (Sproull & Faraj, 1997; Valauskas, 1996).

A community-focused view of computer-mediated communication allows scholars to focus on the interactions that create communities, or on social networks, rather than on the geographical places where communities are formed (Jones, 1995; Sproull & Faraj, 1997). To better understand the kinds of computer-mediated interactions that take place in these communities, scholars such as Wellman (1997) suggest the use of social network analysis. Yet theorists have discovered problems in defining the community aspects of these social networks because, unlike traditional communities, social networks do not take up specific physical locations and they are strongly symbolic in that their participants infuse them with meaning (Fernback, 1999). According to Fernback (1999), these communities/social networks are like the physical communities of Toennie's *Gemeinschaft* in that they are nourished through language, ritual, cultivation of the groups' legacy, and a community-generated system of punishment.

Computer networks, according to scholars such as London (1997), can strengthen communities by fostering dialogue and deliberation and enhancing the bonds of trust, reciprocity, and connectedness that make up social capital. This strengthening is also noted by Glogoff (2001), who states that some community-based websites can bridge and bond community. He cites Putnam's claim that, when comparing face-to-face communication with computer-mediated communication, the richer the medium of communication, the more sociable, personal, trusting, and friendly the encounter. Vaughan and Schwartz (1999) confirm the intimacy of community-based websites, discussing their own experiences in creating such a site. Cisler (1995) provides several recommendations on how to keep such community networks running: ensure that community network membership is truly representative; be inclusive rather than exclusive in the information and services provided; make alliances and partnerships with governments, schools, nonprofits, and businesses; offer commercial services in order to sustain and subsidize the computer network; focus on content and services that can come from larger, commercial online services or regional network providers; and raise money from computer network members.

Several scholars have considered community formation with respect to online activism. Klein (1999) discusses how citizen associations, moved online, allow for greater responsiveness and reach. He refers to the insights of Alexis de Tocqueville, who felt that citizen associations united citizens with similar agendas and interests for the common good. These groups, according to de Tocqueville, reinforce democracy by educating citizens and becoming political forces in their own right. Two modern-day examples of citizen associations in the form of online protests are the Lotus MarketPlace and Clipper Chip protests. Gurak (1997) has discussed how the speed, reach, and ethos of computer-mediated communication influenced business and government during these protests. Along the same lines, Bimber (1998) argues that the Internet contributes to accelerated pluralism, in which issue group formation and action are accelerated while traditional politics continue at the same rates of formation and action. Because of this acceleration, grassroots issue groups are able to rally more quickly and vigorously due to decreased transaction costs, allowing their citizen associations to develop more quickly but with less coordination. Yet Gurak (1997; 2001) has noted that while online communities may attract new participants, they also may be visited by like-minded individuals only. One challenge for child advocacy websites will be to reach out and attract new participants.

Online Communities—Chat Rooms, Newsgroups, Bulletin Boards

Chat rooms, newsgroups, and bulletin boards can foster the community building that may be crucial for online advocacy. The communication and identity formation that occurs in communities such as MUDs (Multi-User Domains), MOOs (Multiple-user domain Object Oriented), Usenet newsgroups, bulletin boards, and discussion groups has been studied extensively. Baym (1995) suggests that the distinct cultures that emerge through computer-mediated communication are grounded in communicative practice. Participants in this communication—particularly in Usenet groups—build community by using preexisting structures of computer-mediated communication and by interactively appropriating and exploiting the rules and resources that those communities provide. Reid's (1995) study of MUDs echoes Baym's (1995) findings that participants use computer-mediated communication in conventional and inventive ways to engage in virtual worlds and to define their places in them. McDonough (1999) concentrates on the performative identities that multi-user environment participants adopt in these environments. Participants' identities, according to McDonough (1999), are often constrained by the choices that developers make about what multi-user environments will be like, who will use them, and how they should be used.

Conflict in Usenet groups is examined by Kollock and Smith (1996). Examples of conflict include bandwidth abuse such as posting long messages, grandstanding, flaming, and posting messages that are off the discussion thread. The authors discuss some of the ways that participants attempt to resolve these conflicts—FAQs, kill files, moderated newsgroups—without having to rely on external authorities to moderate. McLaughlin et al. (1995) take an even closer look at standards of conduct on the Usenet, building a classification of reproachable conduct on the Usenet. Lastly, Zappen et al. (1997) discuss how MOOs can foster respect and understanding. They conclude that MOOs, because of their reach, have the potential to become rhetorical communities in cyberspace.

Types of Communities—Communities of Purpose & Communities of Affiliation

As the previous discussion shows, the capability of online technologies to provide information is only one aspect of community formation. More important, perhaps, is the potential of online technologies to support and enhance affiliation between community members and, in some cases, facilitate social action. Furthermore, these communities of affiliation may have different purposes. For example, in his discussion of customer relations, Angelides (1997, 414) has identified four types of online communities that companies should build:

1. Communities of transaction, which facilitate the buying and selling of products and services and deliver information related to those transactions;

2. Communities of interest, in which visitors can share ideas;

3. Communities of fantasy, in which visitors can create new environments, personalities, and stories; and

4. Communities of relationship, in which visitors can share personal experiences.

The first of these types of online communities is specific to e-commerce, but we can speculate that the community of transaction would parallel one of learning in the educational genre or one of activism in the political action genre, all of which would contribute to motivating the user with respect to the ends of each particular genre. Moreover, Angelides' (1997) community of transaction seems to include both the informational and motivational elements covered in the previous discussions of genre. So the community of learning or the community of activism would similarly provide both informational and motivational components.

The latter three types of communities seem to describe different forms of affiliation between users. These communities may contribute to pleasing or engaging users, preceding any motivational action taken by them. In other words, regardless of the relevance of interests, fantasies, or relationships to the end of a particular genre, these types of affiliations may be preconditions for action. Engaging users by providing mechanisms conducive to building communities of affiliation may invoke users to learn, buy, or mobilize. From this perspective, the informational and motivational actions rely on communities of purpose, learning, transaction, or activism. The engaging action relies on communities of affiliation based on interest, fantasy, or relationship. With these distinctions in mind, between informing, engaging, and motivating users; between information-seeking and community-focused views of the Internet; and between various forms of community building, we reexamine our three online genres.

Genres Along a Continuum of Action

The research summarized above supports our proposed differentiation; furthermore, the features can be categorized accordingly. For example, Baumgartner and Payr (1998) describe a continuum of learning/teaching goals—knowing, doing, mastering—and teacher roles—transferring, tutoring, coaching. Correspondingly, an online user may wish to access information, to explore knowledge, and to master specific tools. And a designer can seek to provide propositional information, to present engaging problems, and to devise educational mechanisms (see Figure 1-1). We did not categorize the features under scholarship, as Cronin et al. (1998) identified how scholars are cited online but not how they persuade others to cite them.
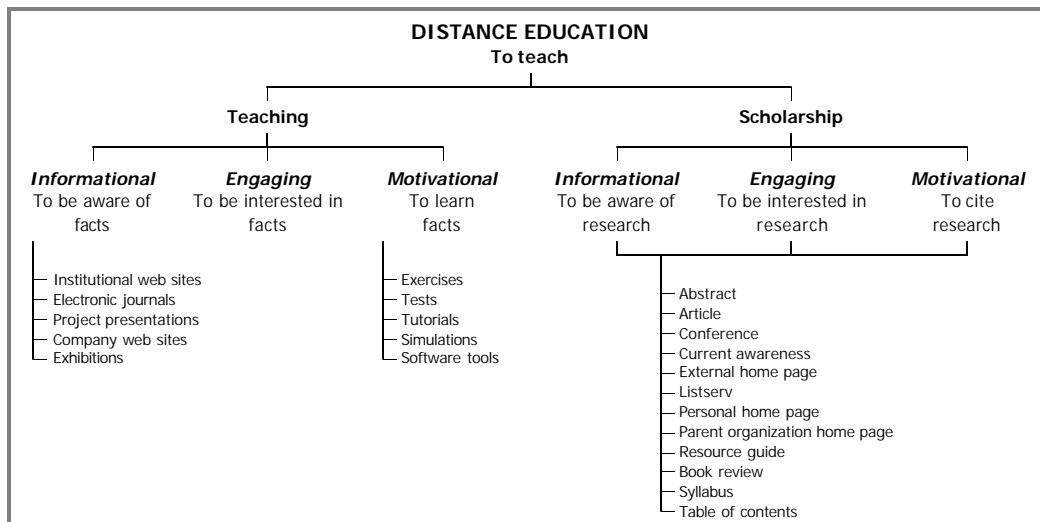
Figure 1-1. *Genre of Distance/Online Education*

Researchers who have examined e-commerce also have described a continuum of uses, which ranges from providing information to marketing to advertising to selling (Cockburn & Wilson, 1996; Ng et al., 1998; Hoger et al., 1998; Angelides, 1997; Hoffman et al., 1995; Spiller & Lohse, 1998). Therefore designers of e-commerce sites can seek to provide company and product information, to present marketing and advertising information, and to implement online sales mechanisms. Figure 1-2 on the next page summarizes our proposed online business genre.
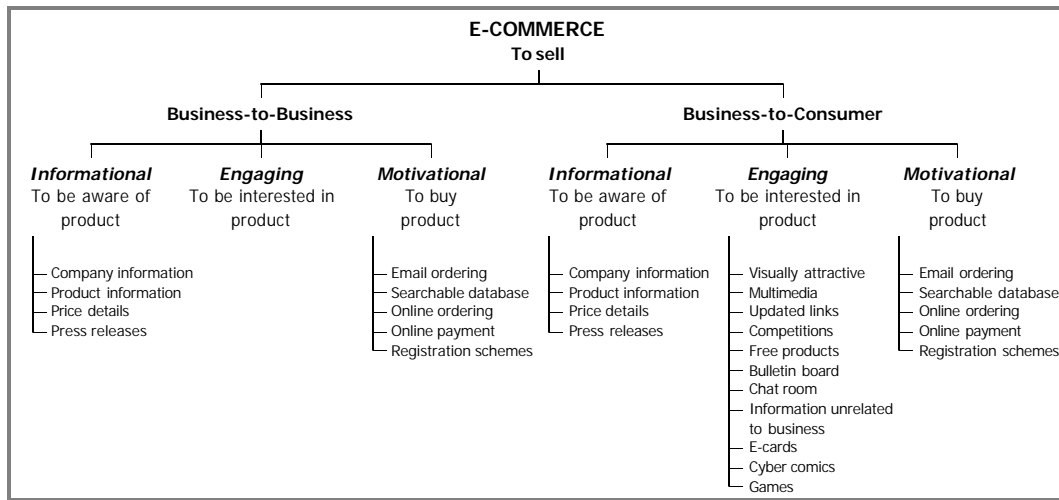
Figure 1-2. *Genre of E-Commerce*

With respect to the online political action genre, Klinenberg and Perrin (2000) describe two ends of a continuum of uses: information provision and community building. Thus the designer can seek to provide information about an issue or candidate, to support some form of community building, and to implement mechanisms for donating time or money. Figure 1-3 summarizes our proposed online political action genre.
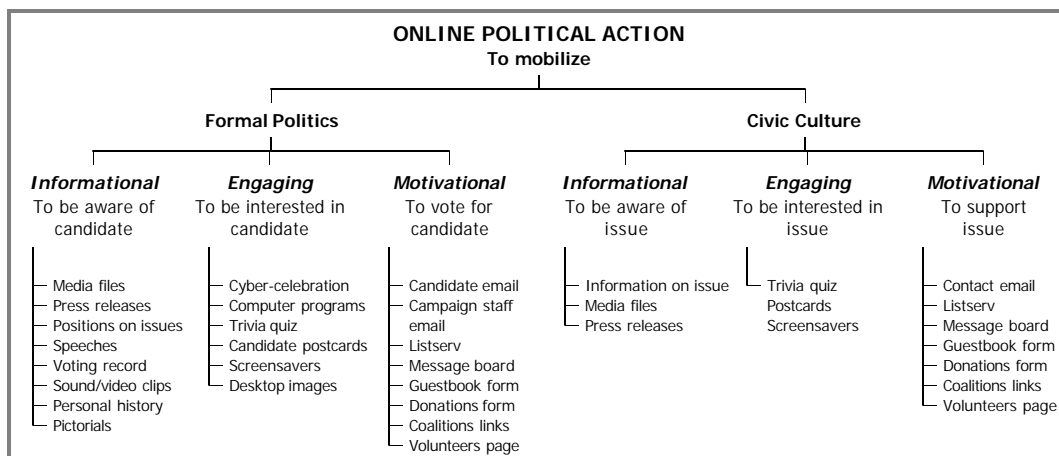
Figure 1-3. *Genre of Online Political Action*

Whether specific features contribute to one of the subgenres or another depends on the purpose of the site. For example, we have categorized bulletin boards as a feature for engaging the user in the e-commerce genre. However, in the online political action genre, we have categorized them as a feature for moving the user. This seeming inconsistency in our categorization is due to the different ends of e-commerce and online political action. In the e-commerce genre, the end is selling, and interaction among users is not a necessity. Conversely, in the online political action genre, the end is mobilization, which by definition entails interaction among users. The same argument applies to child advocacy websites; they may focus specifically on informing current advocates, but this approach does not deploy the unique capabilities of the Internet to their fullest potential. With the addition of interactive features, these same sites can be used for building a community of advocates and for recruiting new advocates.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we identified three top-level genres—distance/online education, e-commerce, online political action—each of which has subgenres. We also identified a continuum of action that focuses on the specific actions of informing, engaging, and moving the user, and the features that may contribute to each of these actions. Using the top-level genres as analogies, we will identify features that may serve not only to inform users, but also to persuade them to take action in support of child advocacy.

Crucial to this goal is a review of research that has focused on measuring the effectiveness of each genre. We operationally define effectiveness as accomplishing the purpose or rhetorical action that defines a genre. In other words, distance/online education is effective if the user learns, e-commerce is effective if the user buys, and online political action is effective if the user mobilizes. In the remaining chapters, we delve into empirical research on the effectiveness of distance/online education, e-commerce, and online political action, emphasizing those studies that examine effects as well as intentions. Drawing on all of these frameworks, we develop a framework of effectiveness for e-advocacy, which we use to evaluate child advocacy websites. These evaluations are presented and discussed in chapter eight.

Chapter 2 : THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DISTANCE/ONLINE EDUCATION

I n chapter one, we proposed the genre of distance/online education, the substance of which is certain curricula and the action of which is learning or knowing. In this chapter we summarize research on the effectiveness of this online genre, which is valuable for its insight into online learning. Researchers have studied several aspects of online learning, including its effectiveness and limitations. After reviewing their research, we define a framework of effectiveness for distance/online education.

Theories of Effective Distance/Online Education

Several educational theories have been used to gauge the qualities of effective traditional education, and researchers are increasingly using these same theories to determine the effectiveness of online education. We discuss several of these theories here: technology acceptance model, collaborative learning theory, activity theory, and constructivist theory.

Technology Acceptance Model

The technology acceptance model suggests that a computer system's perceived usefulness and ease of use will predict whether users will accept that system. Soon et al. (2001) conducted a series of case studies of online courses in which they sought to extend the model. According to them, to extend the model one must consider how enjoyable an online course is, not just how usable it is. Also, one must consider how the model applies specifically to higher learning. Lastly, one must consider the mindset of system users, as well as collaboration between these users.

Collaborative Learning Theory

Another theory used to gauge the effectiveness of online education is the collaborative learning theory, which suggests learning that is collaborative can enhance students' discussion and information sharing in the contexts of shared problem solving, and that this learning can lend to group identification, which reinforces learning by providing motivation and support to students. Scifres et al. (1997) used this theory to suggest how collaborative electronic groups formed by students in online courses can reap the same educational benefits as those students in more traditional, face-to-face collaborative groups. In their case study, they examined how electronic groups used computer-mediated communication. Specifically, they tested a number of popular hypotheses held about the quality of communication in these small communities of learners.

The role of community formation is studied by Hilton et al. (1999) in their case study of email-based communication between cross-national sets of students taking the same business course in Japan and the U.S. In their study, computer-mediated communication helped students transcend cultural stereotypes and taboos. Specifically, they found Japanese students using email to their advantage by "speaking up" online more than they acknowledge they would ever do in a traditional, face-to-face class.

Activity Theory

Activity theory is also used to gauge the effectiveness of online education. This theory situates behavior within social contexts. Specifically, the idea of shared purpose in education—which is considered critical to the success of collaborative work among students—is central to this theory. Tolmie et al. (2000) used the activity theory in their case study of two classes that used an electronic conferencing system to work on collaborative projects. Based on the case study, they suggested that these elements of activity theory must be met in order for shared purpose to develop in student groups:

1. The group and task characteristics should help computer-mediated communication participants establish some shared purpose to motivate their online interactions.

2. The type of computer-mediated communication used should correspond primarily to the requirements of this shared purpose.

3. The conferencing system's success should be a function of how much it helps shared purpose be achieved.

Constructivist Theory

Another theory of education—the constructivist theory—suggests that students actively construct an internal representation of knowledge by interacting with the material they must learn, usually within a collaborative setting. This theory is used by many researchers to gauge the effectiveness of online education. For example, Navarro and Shoemaker (1999) conducted a study of a graduate-level course split into traditional lecture and online sections. They found that students' performance across the two sections did not vary; in other words, online education was found to be just as effective as traditional education in terms of student learning. Interestingly, even though students in the two sections had the same levels of performance, students in the online section felt that they had learned just as much if not more than their peers had in the traditional lecture. This finding is backed up by Scifres et al. (1997), whose case study findings suggested that students in an electronic collaborative group felt that they had learned more from their group experience than peers in a traditional collaborative group. In contrast, Johnson et al.'s (1999) study of online and traditional lecture sections of a course suggested that students in the online section were less satisfied than their peers with the course format; however, students' ratings of both sections were positive overall.

In another example of the constructivist theory, Sorg and McElhinney (2000) maintain that learning requires student collaboration and interaction with peers and instructors in order for that learning to be meaningful. Their qualitative case study of an online course that used synchronous communication yielded these shared themes in student surveys:

- Sense of empowerment from the course derived from reflecting on postings and receiving feedback from peers

- Sense of belonging to a group whose diverse goals, roles, and resources contributed to the creation of new meanings and knowledge

- Frustration with the purely text-based environment of the course

- Disappointment with the moderation style used by the instructor during the online discussions, which often stifled discussion

Tobin (1998) conducted a qualitative study of students' perceptions of an online course, as well. His findings yielded three dimensions to successful online science education:

- Emancipatory activities—qualities of the course that contributed to the freeing effect that it had on learning

- Co-participatory activities—qualities of the course that pertained to the participation-enhancing effects that they had on learning

- Qualia—qualities of the course that pertained to the quality effects that students derived from learning

Within the three dimensions, Tobin found the specific qualities listed in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1. *Dimensions and Qualities of Successful Online Education*

Dimension	Quality
Emancipatory	Convenience
	Efficiency
	Autonomy
Co-participatory	Flexibility
	Reflection
	Quality
	Interaction
	Feedback
	Collaboration
Qualia	Enjoyment
	Confidence
	Accomplishments
	Success
	Frustration
	Tedium

Interaction and Distance Education

Researchers also have identified problems in online learning. There has been speculation that rather than facilitate learning due to its associative nature, the Web may actually inhibit learning. In addition, Web-based courses have been criticized for reducing teacher immediacy, where the latter term refers to those teaching behaviors that enhance closeness. However, other studies indicate that interaction may compensate for these limitations.

Cognitive Load

Eveland and Dunwoody (2000) use the think-aloud method to analyze the information processing of individuals when browsing a website. They speculate that because of its nonlinear nature, hypermedia may actually hinder rather than facilitate learning, as maintained by many hypermedia advocates. They focus on four categories of information processing: (1)

maintenance, (2) orientation, (3) elaboration, and (4) evaluation. The first category, maintenance, refers to the repetition of information in short-term memory and thus contributes little to learning. The second category, orientation, refers to navigational tasks and the management necessary for coordinating those tasks with information tasks; as such, it also contributes little to learning. The third category, elaboration, refers to the making of connections and associations between new and existing information or between two sources of information. Elaboration is thus integral to the learning process. The last category, evaluation, refers to the assessment of information, primarily consisting of affective judgments and contributing as well to learning.

Eveland and Dunwoody (2000) find that regardless of level of expertise or gender, 23% of the thoughts expressed by their participants were maintenance, 39% were of an orienting nature, 25% were elaborative, and 13% evaluative. They conclude that their participants spent much of their time orienting themselves to the content and structure of the websites, thereby providing support for the view that navigation of hypermedia may in fact hinder learning by imposing a large cognitive load and producing disorientation.

Eveland and Dunwoody (2001) also conduct a study in which they compare learning on the Web and learning from paper. They briefly review two theories of learning using hypermedia: user control and structural isomorphism. The first theory, user control, predicts that providing control of pace, order, and content of information to the user increases learning. Furthermore, control may range from complete control for the learner to complete control for the site and is determined by the design of the site. The second theory, structural isomorphism, holds that navigation through websites mimics the associative nature of human memory. Thus hypermedia can imitate human knowledge structures and facilitate learning for the user.

Using four test conditions—print, linear Web, nonlinear Web, and advisement Web—Eveland and Dunwoody (2001) study the interaction between medium and learning. They find limited support for their hypothesis that hypermedia reduces learning compared to print because of cognitive load and disorientation. Supplementary findings are that cognitive load inhibited learning, that Web experts learned more than novices regardless of the medium, and that learning motivations were negatively related to learning.

Active Learning and Interactivity

In their quantitative study of one conventional and two Web-based sections of a technical writing class, Mehlenbacher et al. (2000) find no significant difference in student performance between the two conditions; however, they do report on two interesting findings. First, female students performed better than male students in the Web-based sections, a finding that Mehlenbacher et al. (2000) explain in terms of the equalizing nature of the computer-mediated communication environment. Second, reflective, global learners performed better in the Web-based environment than active, sequential learners. Mehlenbacher et al. (2000) suggest that Web-based learning may not be effective for reflective learners, and may in fact hinder reflection and consideration.

According to Mehlenbacher et al. (2000), current best practices in both writing instruction and instructional computing share the assumption that active rather than passive learning is more effective and, furthermore, that interactivity is an essential part of active learning. However, they

summarize a study stating that multimedia features can distract learners and may benefit low aptitude learners more than high aptitude learners, and that interactivity influences users in different ways depending on motivational level, age, and testing methods. In a similar comparison of conventional and Web-based formats, Botsch and Botsch (2001) find that students with lower GPAs tended to perform the best in an online section of a course. These findings reflect "the paradox of the active user": a user who may be highly motivated and who accomplishes goals quickly, but whose skills are mediocre (Mehlenbacher et al., 2000, 178).

While Eveland and Dunwoody's (2000, 2001) studies provide some support for the negative impact of hypermedia on learning because of increased cognitive load, Mehlenbacher et al. (2000) suggest that the effectiveness of Web-based learning may differ by type of learner.

Instructional Immediacy

A second problem that has been discussed with respect to Web-based courses is the negative impact of the medium on teacher immediacy. According to LaRose and Whitten, Web-based courses restrict teacher immediacy, those "teaching behaviors that enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another" (2000, 321), and may therefore negatively impact both affective and cognitive learning. However, they propose that there are two other forms of immediacy—student and computer—that together with teacher immediacy may provide feelings of closeness in Web-based courses. Mehlenbacher et al. (2000) propose a similar categorization. Noting that the meaning of "interactivity" online has not been defined precisely, they propose four different types of interactivity: student-instructor, student-content, student-student, and student-environment.

The three forms of immediacy identified by LaRose and Whitten (2000) make up instructional immediacy. All of these forms provide opportunities for motivating learning, either through social incentives—expressions of approval of or social interest in the learner—or status incentives—recognition or enhancement of the learner's status. These immediacy features can be enactive, arising from the learner's direct experience, or observational, arising from the observation of other students as they interact. LaRose and Whitten (2000) advocate using the four types of immediacy behaviors—social approval, social interest, status recognition, status enhancement—and the three possible sources—teacher, student, computer—as a heuristic for designing websites. Sample features for each of these categories are shown in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2. *Sample Features of Immediacy by Source*

Immediacy	Instructor	Student	Computer
Social Approval	Instructor praises student	Student smiles	Roll call feature addresses learner by name
Social Interest	Instructor addresses students by name	Students identified by name in chat room	Lecture launches slides automatically
Status Recognition	Instructor uses personal examples	Student bios posted	Search engine provided
Status Enhancement	Instructor uses humor	Email addresses of other students posted	Password required

LaRose and Whitten's (2000) system suggests that other forms of interaction made possible by the online medium can compensate for limits on teacher immediacy. The effectiveness of interaction in distance education has been studied as well.

Effective Interaction

Flottemesch (2000) suggests that interaction is fundamental to the effectiveness of education. She cites studies claiming that interaction in distance education may lead to greater academic achievement (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Niebuhr & Niebuhr, 1999) and greater retention rates (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). In addition, students who learn interactively tend to retain information longer, to apply information in a better manner, and to continue the learning process (Weimer, 1993). Echoing LaRose and Whitten (2000) and Mehlenbacher et al. (2000), Flottemesch (2000) states that interaction is based on two-way communication that runs instructor to student, as well as student to student. She lists the following ways that instructors can increase interaction in distance courses:

- Instructors should have a presence on the site to stimulate conversation

- Instructors should use email and networks to serve the purpose of two-way communication

- Instructors can use study questions to focus discussions

- Instructors should study the demographics and characteristics of their students to build a better interactive atmosphere in courses

- Instructors should have students contact him or her early in the semester via email to get accustomed to the technology

- Instructors should arrange for evening and phone office hours

- Instructors should send letters of welcome to students

- Instructors should provide immediate feedback on inquiries and assignments

- Instructors should integrate a variety of delivery systems for feedback and interaction

- Instructors should have students introduce themselves to their classmates

Similarly, Volery (2001) studied the effectiveness of an online course based on three critical success factors pertaining to the technology, the instructor, and the students respectively. As shown, interactivity plays a role in the success of both the technology and the instructor:

- Technology: reliability, quality, and a medium richness that is interactive, engaging, and allows for both synchronous and asynchronous exchanges

- Instructor: good attitude toward technology, interactive teaching style, and mastery of the technology

- Students: previous knowledge of the technology, age, gender, program of study, and computer access at home

Interactive Testing

Interactivity has also been studied from the perspective of testing. Hester (1999) studied the effectiveness of offering a Web-based interactive sample test prior to an exam. He prepared two versions of the test. In the first version, upon selecting one of the four hyperlinked answers, the student was linked to a page containing all four answers and explaining why each answer was correct or incorrect. In the second version, if the student selected an incorrect answer, he or she was linked to a page explaining why the answer was incorrect and offering a link back to the question to try again. If the student selected the correct answer, he or she was linked to the next question. Hester (1999) finds that the students viewed the sample test as a valuable learning tool. However, there was an interaction between the version and gender: Males perceived the more interactive test as more valuable. Most importantly, Hester (1999) finds a significant difference in exam scores between those students who took the interactive sample test and those who did not.

Framework of Effectiveness for Distance/Online Education

To summarize, research has suggested that hypermedia may negatively impact learning by increasing cognitive load and disorientation. Research has also shown that the effectiveness of Web-based learning may depend on the type of user, but that an excessive use of hypermedia may actually distract users. And lastly, although teacher immediacy may be restricted online, student and computer immediacy may be alternative means of establishing immediacy in general. Some possible approaches may include chat rooms, email, bulletin boards, videos, and audio. We believe that immediacy may be established by deploying Mehlenbacher et al.'s (2000) four types of interaction: between the user and the site designers, between the user and the content, between the users themselves, and between the user and the online environment.

Based on the studies summarized above, we have constructed a framework of effectiveness for distance/online education (see Table 2-3 on the next page). For each criterion, we have counted each mention of a specific feature in our literature review. This approach allows us to attain a general sense of those features that appear to be most critical to effective distance/online education rather than to rank these features by relative importance.

Table 2-3. *Framework of Effectiveness for Distance/Online Education*

Criteria	Rank
Interactivity (for example, two-way communication with other students, video, audio, and quizzes) with feedback (grading, surveys, guest books, comments forms, and email responses)	10
Perceived information technology infrastructure (for example, user friendly) and technical support	9
Collaboration intrinsic in the course/group identification	8
Instructor's and student's technical competency/prior experience with CMC	8
High quality of content of lectures, CD-ROMs, and so on	6
Lends to convenience, efficiency, and autonomy	5
Mindsets instructors and students have about learning: the more constructivist, the better	4
Fun/enjoyment	3
Instructor's involvement and human-emotion skills	3
Supports both synchronous and asynchronous communication	3
Attractiveness of interface/graphic images	1
Clear need for computer-mediated communication that cannot be fulfilled easily by other means	1
Explicit and rigorous structuring of assignments	1
Participants know one another or have met	1
Participants understand and are permitted to negotiate the tasks of the course	1
Small group size of participants	1
Student access to computers/technology	1
Student shared purpose	1

Conclusion

Based on our framework for distance/online education, we surmise that interactivity in the form of communication, feedback, and collaboration is essential for online learning. We use these effectiveness criteria to evaluate the educational effectiveness of child advocacy websites, as summarized in chapter eight. In the next chapter, however, we turn to a discussion of the effectiveness of e-commerce.

Chapter 3 : THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-COMMERCE

In chapter one, we proposed a genre of e-commerce, the substance of which is information on products and/or services and the action of which is buying. In this chapter, we review research on the effectiveness of e-commerce. As the literature review will reflect, establishing criteria for effective e-commerce Web design has proven illusive. Although there are numerous prescriptive publications relating to effective e-commerce Web design, they are often drawn from specific projects and lack generalizability. For this reason, we purposely limited our focus to a small body of research that is now emerging. Specifically, we focus on a study that distinguishes between user and designer perspectives on effectiveness, which interestingly have been found to differ. This difference underscores the importance of testing the effectiveness of website features from a user's perspective. We also discuss the theory of flow as well as research on customer satisfaction and consumer behavior online. Using the criteria suggested by this research, we define a framework of effectiveness for e-commerce.

User vs. Designer Perspectives

Turban and Gehrke's (2000) study provides strong evidence that online user perceptions often differ from those of Web designers. While the authors suggest this research is exploratory, they aim to identify the most important issues in e-commerce Web design as perceived by different groups: experts in e-commerce and consumers (experienced and novice). A major limitation with the study however, which the authors acknowledge, is a lack of academic literature on effectiveness features. This limitation forced Turban and Gehrke to look at trade journals written by experts in order to develop their determinants. A survey methodology was used to gather data from the two groups. The major findings indicate that experts and consumers differ significantly in what they consider to be the most important factors (see Table 3-1).

Table 3-1. *Expert and Consumer Rankings of Important Factors*

Rank	Experts	Rank	Consumers
1	Use clear, concise text*	1	Security*
2	Promote your site	2	Compatible with browsers
3-4	Keep graphics, tables simple*	3	Clear terms of purchase
	Limit the use of animation/multimedia	4	Easy ordering procedures
5-7	Provide contact information on each page	5	Well-labeled lines*
	Use simple background colors texture	6	Confirm orders
	Security*	7	Updated sites
8-10	Free services/information	8	Clear concise text*
	Use well labeled, accurate links	9	Use English on site
	Find out what customers want	10	Keep graphics, tables simple*

* Items on both lists

Turban and Gehrke conclude, "It is clear that there is a need for a total customer orientation in Web design…users no longer want glitter—they want content and service, and they want it fast. This demand will continue to drive Website design toward speed, navigation, efficiency, simplicity, and elegance with an emphasis on customer focus and security" (2000, 117).

Theory of Flow

Because there are few established criteria for judging the success, effectiveness, or impact of commercial sites and little common ground for comparative purposes, according to Nel et al. (1999), marketers and designers tend to judge the success of Web efforts on a subjective and changing basis. As a result, their study investigates the following issues:

1. How can we measure a successful interaction with a website?

2. What classification can we use to group websites?

3. What insights would the previous two issues provide for the design of an effective website?

A means of evaluation is derived from Csikzentmihalyi's (1975) theory of flow, which characterizes the interaction between humans and computer-mediated technologies. The theory of flow suggests that involvement in a playful, exploratory experience is self-motivating because it is pleasurable and encourages repetition. The intention of this research then is to use the flow construct to evaluate websites, to determine whether there is a correlation between flow characteristics (control, attention focus, curiosity, and intrinsic interest) and the type of site. The results suggest a significant correlation exists between a stated intention to return to websites and a high flow rating, which leads the authors to make the following recommendations:

1. The temptation to be everything to everyone must be vigorously guarded against

2. The ability of tighter customization—a characteristic of the Web—must be utilized to the fullest

3. Audience focus should be on quality not quantity

4. To retain interest in a site, it must be designed to enhance the flow of a specifically identified customer or group

5. The interactivity of the medium provides immense opportunity for relationship building with the audience: spoiling this opportunity with ill-considered website design would negate the considerable benefits to be gained by repeat visits of the target market

By contrasting different tasks in e-commerce, Helander and Khalid (2000) review the interface design of webpages using a systems model to illustrate the information flow between three subsystems: store environment, customer, and Web technology. Since a customer makes several decisions—to enter the store, to navigate, to purchase, to pay, and to keep the merchandise—this artificial environment must be designed so that it can support customer decision-making. To retain customers it must be pleasing and fun, and create a task with natural flow. Customers have different needs, competencies, and motivations that affect decision-making. These differing needs suggest the importance of customizing the design of the e-store environment. Helander and Khalid (2000) present several theories on e-commerce research in addition to the theory of flow: cost of search, theory of seductive interface design, theory of economic trade-off, and theory of internet addition.

The authors found that the following factors drive repeat visits:

1. High-quality content
2. Ease of use
3. Quick download
4. Frequent updates
5. Coupons and incentives
6. Favorite brands
7. Cutting-edge technology
8. Games
9. Purchasing capability
10. Customizable content
11. Chat and BBS
12. Other

As both of these studies suggest, the importance of a pleasing/fun user experience supports our argument that user engagement is an important characteristic for websites, whatever their genre.

Customer Satisfaction

Based on her book, *Customer-Effective Web Sites* (2000), Dalgleish describes what customer-effective e-services are, provides a checklist of top customer demands that a website must meet, and suggests that "theming" is an excellent tool for designing websites for customer-effective e-service. The author promotes the creation of "themes" around what customers want and need to do. A scenario or short story can then be created against each theme. Themes and scenarios become the basis for discussions about what e-services should be offered, why and how; what a website needs to do and how it fundamentally needs to be designed; and which business processes must be improved and created from scratch. A customer-effective design process considers the relationships between customer themes and finds a way to use the overall design—information architecture, content, functionality—to tie it all together. *Customer-Effective Web Sites* provides a checklist of some of the top customer demands a website must meet:

1. Make the purpose of content, functionality, and design clear
2. Give clear results of interactions
3. Offer information to build upon existing knowledge
4. Make it easy to compare products within and across sites
5. Do not prompt actions at inappropriate points
6. Let customers go straight to important parts of a website

7. Do not offer personalized content until you know enough about the customer for it to be relevant and useful

8. Provide a centralized, consistent, and helpful navigation system

Six popular e-commerce sites (Alaskaair.com, Amazon.com, CDNow.com, E-Loan.com, Gifts.com, Kbkids.com) were analyzed by five usability experts as reported by Bacheldor (2000). The panel of experts included V. Flanders, author of *Web Sites That Suck*; J. Frankle, director of retail research at Gomez Advisors; T. Harshbarger, a consultant at Lante; J. Nielsen, author of several books including *Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity*; and P. Sonderegger, an analyst for Forrester Research. Simplicity is the single most important criteria for effective Web design, and the first step to building a simple yet effective e-commerce site is navigation. The experts also provide a list of top ten design tips:

1. Keep graphics and other bandwidth-intensive design elements to a minimum

2. Put the search function in an easy-to-find spot

3. Keep content current, but make available an archive of previously published content

4. Do not use frames, which can be difficult to navigate and take too long to download

5. Minimize the need to scroll, especially on navigation pages

6. Structure content into hierarchies, but do not make things too complex

7. Make sure your company's name and logo are clearly visible on each webpage

8. Key functions such as shopping carts and help buttons should be easy to find

9. Avoid pop-ups that open new browser windows

10. Links to pages not yet seen should be blue; links to pages already viewed should be red or purple

Consumer Behavior

Based on an empirical analysis of consumer behavior in an online shopping environment, Koivumaki (2001) focuses on the relationship between the shopping experience (the level of customer satisfaction) and the outcome of the shopping process (the amount of purchases made). The study surveyed two user groups who shopped at the same website (an e-grocer), but with two different interfaces: one interface was designed as a conventional e-shop where items were presented in a list-type format in different item groups (based on the grouping by the wholesaler); the other interface presented the items using conceptual maps (based on same-item grouping).

The results of the study show that the interface design did not have any direct effect on the purchases made; however, there seems to be a significant *indirect* effect. The results of their study suggest that (a) in a Web-based grocery shop, a conceptual map type interface leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction than a traditional list type interface; (b) there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the level of customer satisfaction and the

likelihood of a repeat purchase; and (c) the interface-related variables that have a positive effect on customer satisfaction include:

1. Clarity of the interface

2. Usefulness of the Web shop

3. Interactivity

4. Ease of navigation

5. Product presentation

6. Ease of use

According to Limayem et al., "if cybermarketers know how consumers make [purchasing] decisions, they can adjust their marketing strategies to fit this new way of selling in order to convert their potential customers to real ones and retain them" (2000, 421). This research then has two primary objectives: (1) to use current behavior theories in the elaboration of a model that can identify key factors influencing purchasing on the Web; and (2) to conduct a longitudinal study to empirically test the validity of the proposed model. Data was collected from seven hundred and five consumers via two surveys spaced three months apart. Using the theory of planned behavior, the authors investigated the factors affecting online shopping intentions and behavior. Attitudes and intentions to shop online were found to significantly affect these perceived consequences:

1. Cheaper prices (offer discounts, coupons, and other incentives)

2. Risk of security breach (offer security/privacy reassurances)

3. Comparative shopping (facilitate comparison shopping)

4. Convenient shopping

5. Risk of privacy violation

6. Improved customer service (offer guarantees, warranties, and FAQs section)

7. Saving time (design for ease of use)

The link between behavior control and online shopping behavior was significant. Important factors facilitating online shopping include:

1. Site accessibility

2. Website loading speed

3. Good product description

4. Transaction efficiency/prompt delivery

5. Navigation efficiency

Lynch et al. (2001) investigate characteristics that are critical to whether a customer shops and revisits an e-commerce website. As they state, "even if companies can compete on price, selection, and delivery, differences may remain in consumer beliefs, preferences, and attitudes— important building blocks that drive purchasing behavior" (Lynch et al., 2001, 15). Actual shopping tasks by two-hundred and ninety-nine respondents from twelve countries indicate that site quality, trust, and positive affect toward it are critical in explaining both the purchase intentions and loyalty of visitors to the site. This research also suggests that the impact of these factors varies across different regions of the world and different product categories. As a result, websites should be tailored according to each region and product being offered for sale. Since bargain prices and unlimited selection are a given, the authors believe these additional features may offer vendors a competitive advantage:

1. Trustworthiness: add features such as customer-service guarantees, third party certifications of a site's credibility, former customer testimonials

2. Loyalty: usability factors

3. Affect: add features that enhance users' positive affect, like personalization and pleasing graphics

Since the computer interface is often the only contact the customer has with an online company, good Web design is undoubtedly key to a company's success. Yet, what do we know about the persuasive "triggers" in Web design that influence shoppers? In this context, Winn and Beck (2002) examine how design elements on an e-commerce website carry out the rhetorical function of persuasion. This exploratory research adopted a user-centered methodology to evaluate comments and click choices as subjects shopped on a pre-selected website. Salient factors were identified from a study by Jarvenpaa and Todd (1997) and were grouped using the classical theoretical framework of Aristotle's three means of persuasion: *ethos* (appeal to credibility), *logos* (appeal to logic), and *pathos* (appeal to the emotions). The salient factors were ranked two ways: by means of persuasion and by salient factor. Results showed that the most important means of persuasion was logical appeal, then credibility, and finally emotional appeal. The salient factors were ranked by individual score, which provided the following results:

1. Price

2. Recognizability (brand/name recognition)

3. Variety

4. Effort

5. Tangibility

6. Product information

7. Compatibility (sense of community)

8. Reliability (customer service)

9. Playfulness

10. Assurance (privacy and security)

11. Empathy (personalization)

As this study suggests, persuasion appears to be a good indicator of effectiveness.

Framework of Effectiveness for E-Commerce

Based on the studies summarized above, we have constructed a framework of effectiveness for e-commerce (see Table 3-2). For each criterion, we have counted each mention of a specific feature in our literature review. This approach allows us to attain a general sense of those features that appear to be most critical to effective e-commerce rather than an accurate rank of relative importance.

Table 3-2. *Framework of Effectiveness for E-Commerce*

Criteria	Rank
Ease of use: avoid pop-ups that open new browser windows; links to pages not yet seen should be blue; links to pages already viewed should be red or purple; put the search function in an easy-to-find spot; minimize need to scroll; structure content into hierarchies; don't use frames; compatibility with browsers; easy navigation; quick download	21
Clear, concise text; well-labeled lines; use English on site/clarity of the interface; keep graphics and tables simple, pleasing; make purpose (of content, functionality, design) clear; update site frequently	12
Price; make it easy to compare prices; easy ordering procedures; clear terms of purchase; price incentives (coupons, discounts, and so on)	8
Customization/personalization (enhance flow of specifically identified customer of group)	6
Good product presentation, description, variety; quality not quantity	6
Customer service (offer guarantees, warranties, FAQs section; transaction efficiency, prompt delivery; confirm orders)	5
Interactivity/Community (relationship building)	5
Security (offer security/privacy reassurances; third party certifications of site's credibility)	4
Recognizability (familiar brands/ company logo)	3
Playfulness (games)	2
Do not try to be everything to everybody	1
Testimonials from former customers	1
Tangibility	1

Conclusion

Based on this framework, we surmise that the most important aspect of e-commerce websites is a clear and easy-to-use interface. However, customization and good product presentation also appear to influence effectiveness. We use these effectiveness criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of child advocacy websites in fundraising, as summarized in chapter eight. In the next chapter, however, we turn to a discussion of the effectiveness of online political action.

Chapter 4 : THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE FORMAL POLITICS

I n chapter one, we proposed the genre of online political action, the substance of which is information on issues and/or candidates and the action of which is mobilization. Within that genre we further proposed two subgenres: online formal politics, which refers to the formal political process, and civic culture, which refers to attempts to influence that process. In this chapter, we define a framework of effectiveness for the first subgenre, online formal politics.

Online Formal Politics

Research in online formal politics is valuable for its insight into participation in the formal political process using the online medium. Researchers have studied several aspects of online formal politics, including the use of the Internet to disseminate governmental information, to communicate with representatives, and to mount political campaigns. Figure 4-1 shows our expanded subgenre of online formal politics.

ONLINE POLITICAL ACTION
To mobilize

Formal Politics
To vote

Governmental Information

Representative Communication

Political Campaigns

Civic Culture
To influence

Participatory Democracy
To deliberate

Democratic Deliberation

Community Networks

Social Action
To advocate

Social Reform

Corporate Apologia

Environmental Activism

Insurgency and Extremism

Campaign to ban Landmines

Social Advocacy

Child Advocacy

Figure 4-1. *Subgenre of Online Formal Politics Within Framework*

Governmental Information

Researchers have studied how the Internet is used to disseminate governmental information at several levels of government. Below, we discuss research that has examined how the Internet has been used to disseminate information by the federal government, Congress, and the state of California.

Federal Websites

Few guidelines or criteria exist for the assessment of federal websites. As Wyman et al. (1997) state, those criteria that do exist are either based on anecdotal information or are geared toward

commercial websites. Correspondingly, Wyman et al. (1997) propose several analytical tools for federal website administrators to use in evaluating the effectiveness of federal websites. To develop their analytical tools, Wyman et al. (1997) combine six qualitative and quantitative collection techniques addressing the following sets of criteria:

1. System-based—website mapping, Web server log file analysis
2. User-based—situated proxy and focus group assessments
3. Designer-based—technical and policy assessments
4. Developer-based—case study

Errors in the construction or maintenance of websites can be identified using mapping and log file techniques; heavily trafficked or problematic areas can be identified using log file analysis. The situated proxies technique relies on subjective assessments of a website, focusing on ease of use, or presentation and navigation, and content, or quality and usefulness. The technical and policy techniques provide objective assessments based on technical aspects and conformance to federal policies concerning websites. Lastly, the case study technique focuses on one specific site. Wyman et al. (1997) conclude that the designer-based techniques and technical and policy assessments are somewhat problematic and require additional study. However, their techniques do provide a starting point for analyzing the effectiveness of informational sites in general.

Congressional Websites

In a study of congressional websites, Carter (1999) reports on the results of a study in which OMB Watch reviewed the websites of fifty House members and twenty Senators. The review of websites focused on three issues:

1. Timeliness—how consistently the sites were maintained
2. Quality of information—how often members used sites to publicize policy positions
3. Ease of contact—how accessible the sites were for constituent interaction

Carter (1999) reports that although almost all congressional members have websites, these sites vary greatly in terms of both quality and accessibility of information.

Based on a survey of congressional offices and a content analysis of official congressional websites, Owen et al. (1999) examine how Congress uses the Internet to disseminate information to their constituents about themselves and their representative role. According to Owen et al. (1999), in 1996 House and Senate sites offered legislative information (text of bills, resolutions, amendments, current floor proceedings), links to the sites of individual members (photos, biographies, links to committees, contact information), and access to committee actions. Specifically, Owen et al. (1999) identified five congressional uses of the Internet:

1. Advertise selves and congressional activities
2. Provide contact information (email link, regular mail addresses, phone numbers)

3. Publicize constituencies (links to local or state government sites back home, tourism sites)

4. Provide constituents services (general constituent service information, tourism information, internships)

5. Link to information sources (other government sites, the Library of Congress database, party organizations, interest groups, the media)

According to Owen et al. (1999), this plethora of information is mainly beneficial to lobbying groups, political activists, and interest groups. Furthermore, they note that most congressional members are less effective in using their sites to take stands or claim credit than to advertise. According to them, most sites do not discuss legislation or even substantive issues in general; rather, websites have become an institutional tool like a press release.

Municipal Websites

The use of the Web for disseminating municipal information also has been studied. Weare et al. (1999) conduct an empirical study of the diffusion of municipal Web pages in California. They base their study on two theories: the political economy of public goods and the diffusion of technological innovation. The public goods perspective predicts that Web pages will be created either by private entrepreneurs who expect revenue from advertising or by public entities responding to public demand. The diffusion of technology perspective predicts that three factors will affect the adoption of a new technology: the characteristics of the technology, the characteristics of the individual or organization that decides to adopt, and the social system in which adoption occurs. Weare et al. (1999) find that 41.8% of the municipal websites in their sample were developed by public-private partnerships. Furthermore, the most important determinant of adoption is city population. Communities that adopt municipal Web pages tend to be wealthier and more educated than non-adopting communities; they also tend to have higher levels of voter registration. However, some of Weare et al.'s (1999) findings are somewhat unexpected. For example, an increased number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are negatively correlated with adoption. And neither political ideology nor previous experience with interactive communication technologies relate strongly to adoption. Weare et al. (1999) conclude that the best approach to policy for speeding diffusion may be a regional coordination strategy.

Representative Communication

In addition to the dissemination of information, researchers have studied how the Internet is used to communicate with representative bodies. Below, we discuss research that has examined how the Internet has been used to communicate with Congress and with parliamentary bodies.

Congress

Scholars also have studied how Congress uses the Internet to facilitate interaction between congressional members and the public, identifying several problems with that interaction (Owen et al., 1999; Carter, 1999; Clift, 2000). First, the volume of emails congressional members receive constitutes one problem; members lack the staff to answer hundreds of emails (Owen et al., 1999; Carter, 1999; Clift, 2000). Second, many emails come from non-constituents and members do not want to have to answer large volumes of email, especially mass mailings and spamming, from people outside their districts (Owen et al., 1999; Carter, 1999). Carter (1999) notes that there are significant implications for nonprofit organizations. Notably, he states that the value of services that allow users to send email to members of Congress for whom they are not constituents is questionable. Furthermore, he states that the use of filters by congressional offices, or the move toward making email addresses private, raises concerns about access.

A third problem concerns the immediacy of email. Although constituents expect an immediate response, staff typically replies to email using postal mail (Owen et al., 1999; Carter, 1999; Clift, 2000). Fourth, the ease of sending email leads many members of Congress to view them less seriously than letters (Owen et al., 2999). In addition to the review of congressional websites summarized above, OMB Watch also distributed a survey on constituent email to all congressional offices, only thirty-seven of which responded (Carter, 1999). Carter (1999) reports that while faxes and email from constituents are important to congressional members when considering policy positions, more personal forms of communication such as letters, personal visits, or telephone calls play a larger role. Significantly, form letters sent via email have the lowest importance.

Parliament

Löfgren et al.'s (1999) discussion of the Danish parliamentary website focuses on using the Web to facilitate democratic participation. According to Löfgren et al., a website may contribute to democracy in four ways:

1. Access and participation
2. Adaptation to the political system
3. Development of democratic identities and political capabilities
4. Development of public debates

Although the Danish parliamentary site had several democratic objectives, such as making parliamentary documents available to citizens, the industrial sector, and the press and, to a lesser degree, integrating citizens and organized interests into the parliamentary process, the first objective predominated. Löfgren et al. (1999) describe the conference set up by the Danish

parliament in February 1999, in which the parliament invited the population to offer their opinions on the constitution online. Although at the time of this article (July 1999) there were over six-hundred posts on twenty different topics, Löfgren et al. (1999) note some discouraging trends. Participation of politicians had been limited, the debate antagonistic, politically alienated issues predominated, and the level of interactivity was low. In other words, although citizens were posting they were not getting responses from either politicians or other citizens. Löfgren et al. (1999) conclude that the new website is more of a new service for professional users then a spur to more representative and participatory democracy. We discuss participatory democracy/civic culture in more detail in the next chapter.

Political Campaigning

Online political campaigning has been studied extensively since 1996. Studies have focused on the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections as well as on the 1998 Senate and House campaigns. We discuss research on each of these elections below.

1996 Elections

Two studies examined the 1996 presidential campaign as conducted in cyberspace. In their study of the 1996 presidential campaign, Margolis et al. (1997) approached the contact people of the major and minor parties. None of the contacts thought that their websites had a significant electoral effect. They viewed websites, newsgroups, and mailing lists as an excellent means of communicating with, mobilizing, and channeling their supporters, but not as a means of recruiting additional supporters or raising campaign funds. Margolis et al. (1997) compared the websites of major and minor parties and candidates, concluding that politics on the Web is increasingly mirroring real-world politics, dominated by the two major parties and the superior funding those parties can deploy. Although minor parties were the first to take advantage of the Internet, they have neither the time nor the money needed to maintain attractive, interactive websites. Margolis et al. (1997) state that minor parties failed to update pages quickly, implemented unremarkable graphics and interactive features, and rarely had links to party branches below the national level. Major parties, however, provided dynamic graphics, sound and music, graffiti walls, questionnaires, quizzes, and even conferences. The same imbalance was evident with respect to candidates' pages. Major party candidates surpassed minor candidates in terms of visual appeal, interactive multimedia, and links to party organizations, informational sources, and interest groups. Margolis et al. (1997) note the use of the following features on the Clinton/Gore and Dole/Kemp pages: information on accomplishments and families, fact sheets, press releases; emails; virtual libraries containing speeches, photos; videos; links to party sites, partisan, nonpartisan information services; guestbooks; volunteer forms; interactive map indicating supporters by state; trivia games, screen savers, desktop images; and "cyber-celebration" (that is, discussion of candidates' espousal of Internet technologies). Neither site, however, referred to overtly ideological issues.

Klinenberg and Perrin (2000) studied the websites of the major Republican candidates for the 1996 presidency: Bob Dole, Pat Buchanan, Steve Forbes, Lamar Alexander, and Phil Gramm. They outline six major political uses of the Web:

1. Organization, networking, and fundraising—distributing campaign literature, organizing volunteers, and raising funds

2. Political education and substance—disseminating information about the issues, candidates' positions on those issues, and personal information

3. Community building—providing space for supporters to develop online communities

4. Cyber-celebration—discussing candidates' commitment to and sophistication with technology

5. Links to other sites—connecting visitors to related political sites

6. Interactivity—allowing visitors to provide information to the campaigns and to receive meaningful responses

The latter two uses, linking and interactivity, comprise the uses that specifically deploy the unique capabilities of the Web. Interestingly, these were also the uses for which Klinenberg and Perrin (2000) found the least evidence. According to them, Bob Dole's and Pat Buchanan's sites illustrated two ends of the use spectrum: information provision and community building. While Buchanan, in particular, provided a message board for his site visitors, messages posted to the board were first vetted and excerpted by the webmaster. Klinenberg and Perrin (2000) contend that rather than substantive feedback, Buchanan's site offered a feigned or controlled populism. Interactivity, which they identify as being the most revolutionary aspect of the Internet for politics, is not, they state, straightforward. Interactive activities can range from simple computer programs to real, complex, unregulated discussions with other constituents and campaign officials.

1998 Elections

The continuum of interactivity described by Klinenberg and Perrin (2000), stretching from computer programs to discussion, has been defined further by Stromer-Galley (2000). In her study of the 1996 presidential and 1998 gubernatorial campaigns, she suggests that "most political candidates are inclined toward a façade of interaction facilitated through response-feedback mechanisms built into the technology" (2000, 112). Locating the problem in the way candidates have implemented interaction on their websites, she distinguishes between two forms of interaction: computer-mediated human interaction and media interaction. Both forms are characterized by feedback; however, they differ in whom or what is causing the feedback. Stromer-Galley defines computer-mediated human interaction as "prolonged interaction between two or more people through the channel of a computer network" (2000, 117).

In contrast, media interaction refers to the interactive capabilities of the technology itself, or the interaction between the user and the medium—navigating hyperlinks, filling out surveys, downloading information, and so on. Based on her analysis of the candidate websites, she concludes that candidates exploited the media but not the human interactive capabilities of the Internet. Stromer-Galley (2000) notes in particular the creative implementation of media interactivity on Dole's website, which offered users the option of responding to policy priority at

the end of Dole's position statements. An interview with Dole's webmaster revealed that although the campaign tracked these responses, they did not factor them into Dole's policies.

In their study of the U.S. Senate and House candidates' websites in the 1998 election, Dulio et al. (1999) find little difference in Internet campaigning between the winners and losers, although they claim that the sites did affect activities such as fundraising, management, and internal communication. With respect to fundraising over the Internet, Dulio et al. (1999) identify four ways in which campaigns solicited contributions online:

1. Inviting the donor to send a contribution by mail

2. Inviting the donor to download and complete a form, to be mailed along with a check

3. Inviting a donor to pledge to contribute

4. Inviting the donor to contribute online

While a few campaigns borrowed best practices from the commercial sector—for example, the use of secure software designed for e-commerce—Dulio et al. (1999) note that these campaigns rarely customized the software for political purposes. With respect to recruiting additional support over the Internet, Dulio et al. (1999) estimate that Senators' sites had received from two-thousand to three-thousand hits, whereas Representatives' sites have received substantially fewer. In an interview, they found that one candidate's site had only been accessed twenty-six times. The reason for this, however, is suggested by Dulio et al.'s (1999) own difficulty in accessing candidates' websites. Neither of the national parties was particularly useful in accessing candidates' sites; in fact, groups not officially affiliated with the parties provided the most links. Furthermore, Dulio et al. (1999) found that many of the sites were not found in the top fifty results of a search. These difficulties probably prevented interested citizens from accessing the sites as well.

2000 Elections

The 2000 presidential primary has been studied by Hansen and Benoit (2001), who analyze the discourse of the presidential primary candidates across four different media: TV spots, radio spots, debates, and websites. Using a public opinion poll to identify the top eight issues, they perform a computer content analysis of hundreds of texts to determine the extent to which candidates adapted their messages to the public agenda. In addition, they analyze the correspondence between the forms of media and the eight issues. They find that debates and TV spots are more successful at adapting to the public agenda than are radio spots or websites. Hansen and Benoit (2001) attribute this result to the cost of TV and radio spots and the time limit of debates, which require that candidates be selective and gear their message toward the public-at-large. Websites, in contrast, present a virtually unlimited forum in which the candidates can express their views on all the issues. Hansen and Benoit (2001) state that Internet sites are different from other forums in that they do not have to be heterogeneous. Users select which links to click based on their own interests; each voter reads a candidate's site differently.

Framework of Effectiveness for Online Formal Politics

Research of Internet use by both federal and local governments has found that few guidelines exist for assessing governmental websites and, furthermore, that these websites tend to take the form of online press releases rather than deliberative forums. This latter finding is supported by research on the use of the Internet to communicate with representative bodies, which has identified problems with email communication in terms of volume, spamming, immediacy, and level of importance. In addition, all three of the last national elections have been studied, and none have offered evidence that an online presence had an impact on the electoral outcome.

Based on the studies summarized above, we have constructed a framework of effectiveness for online formal politics (see Table 4-1 on the next page). Each effectiveness criterion represents a mention of that specific feature in our literature review. This approach allows us to attain a general sense of those features that appear to be most critical to effective online formal politics rather than an accurate rank of relative importance. Most of these studies merely reported on features that have been implemented rather than tested whether the features were effective; thus this framework should be used as a guideline rather than as a prescription.

Table 4-1. *Framework of Effectiveness for Online Formal Politics*

Criteria	Rank
Email; Discussion lists—Candidates; Potential supporters; Public officials (national, state, local); Specific representatives; Working committees; Webmaster; No form letters or mass mailings	6
Access—Concerns about disenfranchisement; Public facilities/terminals	3
Information—Committee information; Contact information; General educational information; Historical material; Issue information; Legislative information; Parliamentary information; Representative/Candidate information; Services information; Voting information	3
Links—Committee sites; Decision-makers; Government sites (national, state, local); Interest groups; Media and news sites; Political party sites (national, state, local); Representatives' or public officials' sites; Wider issue networks; Worldwide parliamentary sites	3
Mobilization—Contribution forms; Electronic lobby registration forms; Guest books; Volunteer forms	3
Multimedia—Audio; Interactive graphics; Photos; Videos; Virtual tours; Webcasting	3
Solicitation of citizen feedback—Conduct referenda; Feedback from focus groups; Post opinions on ballot measures; Submit feedback to working committee; Submit issues for debate and vote	3
Bulletin boards; Message boards	2
Chat rooms—Issue-based forums	2
Entertainment—Desktop images; Email postcards; Screensavers; Trivia games; Wallpaper	2
Feedback to citizen communications—Interactive communication between citizens and representatives/public officials	2
Services—Constituent services (general information, tourism information, internships, order forms for publication, job opportunities)	1

Conclusion

Based on our framework, we surmise that email communication and universal access to Internet facilities are critical issues for online formal politics. We use these effectiveness criteria to evaluate the political effectiveness of child advocacy websites, as discussed in chapter eight.

Importantly, our review of the literature on the effectiveness of online formal politics suggests that online activity appears to have had little or no impact on real-world electoral outcomes. While Margolis et al. (1997) conclude that political sites will fail to democratize or radically change the American political process, other researchers retain a more hopeful view of the future of online politics. Whillock concludes that for the Internet to be successfully deployed in politics, one of the challenges that must be met is that citizens "must learn how to talk to one another" (1997, 1221). Similarly, Dulio et al. (1999) argue that the Internet may add a new constituency—the "virtual political community." And while she found that candidates did not take full advantage of the interactive potential of the Internet, particularly with respect to human interaction, Stromer-Galley (2000) remains optimistic that the Internet can facilitate open public debate. Thus these same studies are also, to a certain extent, encouraging, in that they attribute the failure of online attempts to engage the citizenry to failures of *implementation*, thus holding out promise that the Internet is capable of supporting deliberation. Therefore, we turn next to a discussion of civic culture and, more specifically, participatory democracy in chapter five.

Chapter 5 : THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

I n chapter one, we proposed the genre of online political action, the substance of which is information on issues and/or candidates and the action of which is mobilization. Within that genre we further proposed two subgenres: online formal politics, which refers to the formal political process, and civic culture, which refers to attempts to influence that process. In the last chapter, we discussed the first of these subgenres, online formal politics. In this chapter, we begin our discussion of the second subgenre, civic culture, within which we include those activities that relate to the use of the Internet to facilitate participatory democracy and to engage in social action. Focusing on the former, we define a framework of effectiveness for participatory democracy.

Online Participatory Democracy

Civic culture is defined as the attempt to influence the formal political process. Dahlgren (2000) identifies four dimensions of civic culture: (1) relevant knowledge and competencies; (2) loyalty to democratic values and procedures; (3) practices, routines, and traditions; and (4) identities as citizens. The first dimension, relevant knowledge, means that citizens have access to reliable reports, analyses, discussions, and debates about current affairs. This information is accessible linguistically, culturally, technically, and economically. The second dimension, loyalty, means that citizens share a commitment to democratic values, however defined, and democratic procedures, such as resolving conflicts through compromise. The third dimension entails that democracy be grounded in concrete, routine practices (for example, hold elections, hold meetings, manage discussions, argue, and so on) at the individual, group, and collective levels. The last dimension, identity, defines citizenship as a mode of social agency based on identity.

Within the subgenre of civic culture, we include those activities that relate to the use of the Internet to facilitate participatory democracy and to engage in social action. Figure 5-1 shows our expanded subgenre of civic culture. In this chapter, we focus on studies of online participatory democracy.
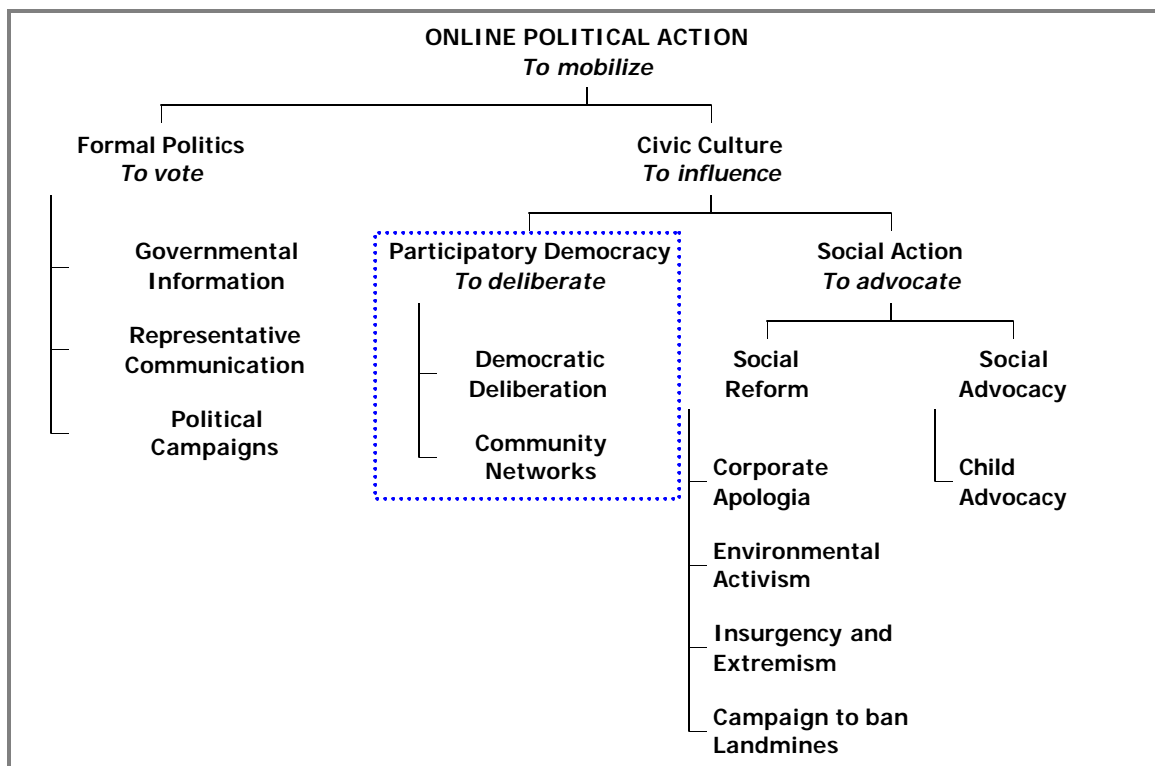
Figure 5-1. *Subgenre of Online Participatory Democracy Within Framework*

According to Stromer-Galley (2000), electronic media can contribute to either massification and alienation or communality and participation, depending on its implementation. Traditional mass media such as television, radio, and newspapers, which are one-way, top-down communication technologies, contribute to the former; however, the Internet has the potential to facilitate the latter. The Internet may do so by increasing vertical communication between people and politicians, by increasing horizontal communication among people, or by disseminating local political information through a civic network. In the following sections, we discuss democratic deliberation and community networking. Democratic deliberation focuses on the national level, whereas community networking focuses on a circumscribed geographical area such as a neighborhood, city, county, or region (London, 1997; Virnoche, 1998; Tonn et al., 2001). After reviewing this research, we define a framework of effectiveness for online participatory democracy.

Theories of Democratic Deliberation

Many studies identify the characteristics necessary for democratic deliberation with respect to different forms of democracy. In general, there are three types of democracy: (1) representative, (2) pluralist, and (3) direct (Taylor & Burt, 1999; Cook & Armstrong, 1999; Chadwick & May, 2001). In the first form, representative, parliament is the core of the system and the formation of political channels between parliaments and external actors is critical. In the second form, pluralist, interest groups mediate between citizens and government; parliament either may be enriched by the discourse of interest groups, engaged in dialectic with them, or irrelevant to their activities. In the third form, direct, the citizen has a direct relationship with parliament and the government; in other words, neither parliament nor interest groups serve as intermediaries between citizens and government.

Cook and Armstrong (1999) have further subdivided pluralism into three forms: (1) classic pluralism, which they equate with representative democracy; (2) elite pluralism, in which the lower classes are unqualified to participate; and (3) critical pluralism, in which those with capital are favored (3). They speculate that the new technologies will facilitate the latter form, critical pluralism; however, Bimber (1998b) comes to a different conclusion. Critiquing the two most prevalent theories regarding the impact of the Internet on American society—the pluralist and the communitarian—he proposes a theory of accelerated pluralism, which posits that the Internet will transform interest-based politics to issue-based politics. According to Bimber (1998b), the pluralist or plebiscitary theory (referred to as direct democracy by Taylor & Burt, Cook & Armstrong, and Chadwick & May), which holds that the Internet will enhance vertical communication between government and citizens, assumes that increasing the capacity of citizens to communicate directly with the government will increase their engagement and thus their influence. But, he argues, there is no clear link between increases in information and increases in popular political action. The communitarian theory holds that the Internet will enhance horizontal communication between citizens and thus enhance community. But according to Bimber (1998b), building community differs from increasing the amount of social talk. The Internet will not fundamentally change the classic pluralism underpinning of American politics; rather, the obstacles confronting grassroots mobilization will be lowered and the flow of

politics will accelerate. This impact has been discussed from several perspectives, including democratic innovation, democratic interaction, and political mobilization.

Categories of Democratic Innovation

Taylor and Burt (1999) examined thirty national parliamentary and governmental websites from the perspectives of website content and design and the three types of democracy. They analyzed the websites using five categories of democratic innovation: (1) information and educational support for citizens, (2) democratic service activities by parliaments, (3) parliamentary innovations supporting active citizenship, (4) sensitivity to accessibility problems, and (5) miscellaneous innovations (1999, 504-05). Within each category, features indicating support of the characteristics of the types of democracy were noted, particularly those that allowed for interaction. Taylor and Burt (1999) found that the provision of basic information on parliament is ubiquitous and that the provision of services supporting democracy was least developed. They conclude, "the 'parliamentary paradigm' that holds back from encouraging strong and active citizenship is more in evidence than a more holistic view of democracy that seeks to support and listen to a powerful citizen voice" (1999, 516). In other words, from an international perspective, they found that the representative rather than the direct form of democracy is more common.

Models of Democratic Interaction

A different approach to electronic democracy considers democracy in terms of the relationship between type of interaction and technological form (Chadwick & May, 2001). For example, data management technologies such as mainframes and databases have been linked with managerial democracy; mass-participation technologies such as opinion polling and interactive cable TV have been linked with populism; and interactive technologies such as conference calls have been linked with pluralism (Chadwick & May, 2001, 11). Based on these linkages, Chadwick and May (2001) have identified three models of democratic interaction: managerial, consultative, and participatory.

The first two models stress vertical communication between the government and the citizenry based on a view of information as a passive resource. The managerial model of interaction is a "push" model of information dissemination: "the state will place information in accessible forums and the onus is on the user to access it" (Chadwick & May, 2001, 13). The consultative model is a "pull" model of information gathering, in that the ICT (information communication technology) facilitates the communication of information from citizens to government. In contrast to the previous models, the participatory model predicates a multi-dimensional interactivity. According to Chadwick and May, the participatory model of democracy recognizes that "knowledge is discursive, contingent and changeable—that it emerges through interaction" (2001, 15). In this model, Usenet, bulletin boards, chat rooms, file sharing, and peer-to-peer networking are deliberative mechanisms.

Chadwick and May (2001) analyzed a cross-continent dataset containing information on how governments in North America and Western Europe have been using the Internet to implement e-government. Focusing on the ways in which these sites have facilitated interaction and democratic deliberation, they extracted data measuring interactive and deliberative potential, or

"the extent to which citizens can interact with the agency through its electronic face, the extent to which the agency presents itself as part of a wider issue network, and the extent to which the potential for democratic deliberation by citizens is provided by the website" (2001, 5). Based on their analysis, Chadwick and May (2001) found that the U.S., Britain, and the EU are predominantly following a managerial model of democracy rather than a consultative or participatory one. Like Stromer-Galley (2000), they speculate that national governments are reluctant to take advantage of the interactive capabilities of the Internet. They conclude that existing policy must be reconfigured to enable the implementation of the Internet to follow the consultative and participatory models of interaction.

Effects on Political Mobilization

Bimber also examines the Internet in terms of interaction; however, he distinguishes between information gathering and political participation, as well as between information and knowledge. According to Bimber (1998a), although the Internet may be a powerful new tool for distributing political information, browsing and other information-based uses of the Internet do not comprise political participation as it is traditionally understood. Political participation is, however, connected to mobilization, online attempts at which can be investigated to assess the impact of the Internet on politics. In a series of studies, Bimber examined online mobilization efforts, defining mobilization as "the process by which citizens are stimulated to participate in political actions such as voting or contacting elected officials" (Bimber, 1998a, 391).

Based on an online survey, Bimber (1998a) investigated the extent to which various types of political organizations used the Internet for mobilization in the 1996 elections. The survey asked respondents about contact by type of political organization (candidate campaigns, national political organizations, unions, professional associations, community organizations, religious organizations, employers, "other"), type of contact made (phone, mail, in person, email), and requests for online political action (donate online, contact officials online, contact others by email). Bimber (1998a) found that national political organizations were more active than other types of organizations in leveraging the Internet's capabilities. However, nontraditional organizations took comparatively greater advantage of email to reach citizens not contacted by traditional means, indicating that the Internet may be effective in lowering financial and institutional barriers. Bimber (1999) also has examined whether the medium of communication affects the likelihood of citizens contacting government, comparing traditional methods (phone and mail) with email. He concludes that the Internet can influence whether a citizen actively contacts government officials, stating, "lowered costs of communication should induce people with a lowered stake in politics to make the calculation that action is worthwhile" (1999, 425).

Bimber (2001) has examined the relationship between information and citizen engagement as well. The most common conception of this relationship is instrumental, positing that the lower the cost and the higher the accessibility of information, the higher the engagement, as summarized above. To examine the relationship between media use and information, Bimber (2001) used data from the National Election Surveys (NES) in 1996, modeling variables that predict citizen's use of TV, newspapers, and the Internet as sources of information about the campaigns. Including only those respondents with Internet access, he found that political interest

is less strongly associated with obtaining campaign information on the Internet than using the other sources. To assess the relationship between Internet access and participation, Bimber (2001) drew on 1998 NES survey data, using respondents both with and without Internet access. He operationalized political participation using voting and whether the respondent: (1) attempted to persuade others; (2) displayed a button, sign, or sticker; (3) attended meetings, rallies, speeches; (4) worked for a candidate; (5) gave money to a candidate; (6) gave money to a party; or (7) gave money to another political group. He found that Internet access did not predict voting or other forms of political participation. To assess the relationship between obtaining information online and participation, Bimber (2001) again drew on the 1998 NES survey, but included only those respondents having Internet access. He found that obtaining information online did not impact voting; however, it did predict one other form of participation—donating money.

Bimber (2001) concludes that his results do not support theories relying on the instrumental-quantitative conception of information. However, the Internet does more than provide information. According to Bimber (2001), it also "changes the structure of information, the speed with which it flows, the number and heterogeneity of elite sources, and control over agenda and frames" (64). Future research should thus examine cognitive phenomena with respect to forming political knowledge, including attention, salience, affect, and schema.

Problems with Electronic Democracy

Noveck (2000) has stated that despite the expectation that electronic communication will strengthen political culture, there is "no noticeable improvement of the democratic quality of political institutions" (18). And in an empirical study comparing the impact of traditional and Web-based forms of communication on political efficacy, knowledge, and participation, Scheufele and Nisbet (2001) found that the Internet has a limited role in promoting democratic citizenship; specifically, newspaper hard news remains crucial for disseminating political information and is the best predictor of political participation (see also Bimber, 2001). The failure of electronic democracy to meet expectations has been attributed to problems concerning access, security, information, and community.

First, there is the potential for disenfranchisement resulting from problems of access (Cook & Armstrong, 1999; Noveck, 2000; Stromer-Galley, 2000; Clift, 2000; Coleman, 1999; Wittig & Schmitz, 1996). As Cook and Armstrong (1999) state, even though the desktop will become an interactive portal to democracy, it will be expensive and may result in the disenfranchisement of those unable to afford the tools (Cook & Armstrong, 1999). What are needed are mechanisms for ensuring that online spaces are easily and freely accessible (Noveck, 2000).

Second, although technology may enhance government and politics, issues of reliability and security online still have not been resolved (Cook & Armstrong, 1999; Noveck, 2000). As Noveck (2000) has argued, technologies such as encryption, encoding, and scrambling software are needed to combat the tension online between privacy and anonymity on the one hand and monitoring and surveillance on the other.

Third, there are issues concerning the management of information and the distinction between information and knowledge. For example, despite the fact that users will have access to vast

amounts of information about officials, candidates, issues, and government resources, the pace of innovation makes the use of that information difficult to manage fairly (Cook & Armstrong, 1999). Also, rather than a surplus of information, it is distilled and contextualized knowledge that is critical for an informed democrat (Noveck, 2000; Bimber, 2001). As a solution, Noveck (2000) recommends the provision of online spaces in which information and conversation are linked so that users can segue between data and arguments.

The fourth problem concerns online community. Cook and Armstrong (1999) have argued that although citizens will be able to explore public policy issues in depth and from their local perspective, online technologies cannot replace the sense of community resulting from the neighborhood assembly. Noveck (2000) concedes that the virtual community can deliver companionship, conversation, and community dialogue, but states that "the superficial quality of conversation on the net makes lasting and politically relevant community thus far impossible" (32). She suggests that establishing rules of discourse may facilitate deliberation, an approach that has been used successfully by Minnesota E-Democracy (Clift, 2000).

Many scholars have concluded that it is not the technology itself that precludes the emergence of electronic democracy; rather democracy must be programmed into public cyberfora (Stromer-Galley, 2000; Noveck, 2000; Clift, 2000; Wittig & Schmitz, 1996). And the panacea for these problems may be localism. According to Noveck, what the Internet promises is a reinvigoration of localism based on reasoned political discourse (2000, 21). Chadwick and May (2001) echo this conclusion, speculating that participatory models of interaction may be more possible at the local level. They state, "Certainly, where virtual communities have been established on the basis of co-location the participatory model can begin to emerge" (26). Clift (2000) envisions an online public commons, beginning with general multi-issue forums based on geography. Finally, as Bimber has summarized, theories on citizen contact with government find a correlation between likelihood of contact and institutional proximity. In other words, citizens are more likely to contact state officials than congressional members, and more likely to contact the latter than the White House (1999). In the next section, we discuss community networks, which by definition exhibit localism.

Theories of Community Networking

Community networks (also called civic networks, Free-Nets, community computing centers, and public access networks) have been variously described as "computer-based communication [used] to create new forms of citizens-based, geographically delimited community information systems" (London, 1997); "a computer-based system or set of systems designed to meet the social and economic needs of a spatially defined community of individuals" (Tonn et al., 2001, 201); or "electronic communications [used] to connect people who live in the same area, city, or neighborhood" (Virnoche, 1998, 199). These definitions stress the two main characteristics of a community network: electronic linkage and geographical proximity, or localism. Discussions of community networks have focused on two issues: the decline of community in the U.S. and the disparity in online access.

Strengthening Community

It has been speculated that virtual communities have the potential to reverse the decline in community evident in the U.S. for the past several decades. This trend has been attributed to many factors, including a decline in social capital, work schedules, lifestyle, the demise of the "great good place" (bars, cafes, and general stores), psychological anxieties, and lack of education and capacity for citizenship (London, 1997; Tonn et al., 2001). However, electronic networks may have the potential to reverse the decline by strengthening communal bonds. For example, they allow for asynchronous communication, can help people build their capacities to enact citizenship, and can link to pertinent educational resources (Tonn et al., 2001). But most importantly, they can foster community-based dialogue and deliberation, facilitate collaboration among community members, and enhance the bonds of trust, reciprocity, and connectedness that make up social capital (Tonn et al., 2001; London, 1997).

To foster deliberation and enhance social capital, it has been argued that electronic networks must be linked to the physical (London, 1997; Tonn et al., 2001; Chapman & Rhodes, 1997). Virtual communities formed around interests, education, beliefs, or skills but lacking physical links encourage a sense of belonging without any sense of obligation, thus serving mainly as systems of information exchange rather than public dialogue and deliberation (London, 1997). However, when used to supplement physical communities, virtual communities can strengthen existent social networks. This idea forms the core of civic networking, which brings together local institutions such as schools and universities, government agencies, libraries, and nonprofit organizations into a single resource for community members. Community members can then use that resource to communicate with each other via email, to participate in local decision making, and to develop economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities.

London (1997) suggests that the effectiveness of community networks can be assessed based on the extent to which they support and enhance the three qualities vital for healthy communities: public space, deliberation, and social capital. Based on Habermas' definition of public space as "a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed," London (1997) argues that community networks can serve as public spaces. Electronic technologies such as chat rooms, mailing lists, and newsgroups can disseminate information and ideas, identify and frame collective issues, and promote broad-based discussion. The effectiveness of online deliberation is less clear-cut. Deliberation differs from conversation in that the latter is sociable and unreflective in nature, while the former consists of deep reflection. Electronic environments are not conducive to deliberation, as the speed of online communication facilitates instantaneous responses. But when existent groups are networked, public deliberation may be facilitated by the asynchronicity of the medium, which allows time for reflection (London, 1997).

With respect to social capital, London (1997) cites several studies showing that electronic networks, particularly if grafted onto existing social networks, can enhance social capital. However, a more recent study concludes otherwise. Tonn et al. (2001) evaluated forty community networks based on type of information and contribution to the neighborhood's social capital. They found that community networks have not realized their potential for increasing social capital—there is little evidence of dialogue, promotion of communities' internal

economies, communal identification, or opportunities for situated action (Tonn et al., 2001). Tonn et al. (2001) suggest that hybrid organizations are needed between private, nonprofit, and governmental sectors and that community networks must be linked with face-to-face meetings and new physical places that foster dialogue.

Equity of Access and Communications

Disparities in access to the Internet exist due to both socioeconomic and educational factors, resulting in a digital divide (Virnoche, 1998; Chapman & Rhodes, 1997; Scott, 2000). This disparity is particularly important with respect to community networking, the target population of which is frequently the disadvantaged. Furthermore, one of the basic tenets of community networking is democracy, a critical component of which is equity of access and communications allowing for direct, active involvement of citizens in town meetings and agenda setting (Virnoche, 1998; Chapman & Rhodes, 1997). One way to combat this disparity in access is by providing Internet connectivity using public terminals. For example, Austin Free-Net has installed and maintains public access computers in places where individuals from low-income communities tend to congregate informally, such as recreation centers, public housing projects, job training centers, and church facilities (Chapman & Rhodes, 1997).

Virnoche (1998) has focused on the social factors that produce variations in the development of community networks and the implications of those variations for equity and democracy. Crucial to her argument is a distinction between civic and consumer practices. The civic model, reflected by a technointellectual liberal computer culture, views the Internet as a public space supporting equity of access and civil liberties. In contrast, the consumer model, reflected by a fast-moving capitalistic computer industry, views the Internet as a marketplace and wishes to establish private property and generate profits. Those organizing community networks find themselves torn between the two social currents, or between the idealism of community networking and the structural demands imposed by a competitive Internet industry. These tensions surface at four key decision points: (1) interface choice, (2) content profitability, (3) interaction tools, and (4) outreach (Virnoche, 1998). Civic models require text-only interfaces, nonprofit content, full electronic interaction capabilities, and deep outreach. In contrast, consumer models require graphical interfaces, profit-making content, limited interaction options, and shallow outreach.

Virnoche (1998) suggests that one unintended consequence of broad access is that it may actually do a disservice to the disenfranchised. Community networking is based on the assumption that infusing peripheral populations with Internet technologies is inherently positive. But as information technology probably will impact various social strata differently, members of the lower strata may not have equal opportunity to opt out of Internet use. Virnoche states, "streamlined information coupled with governmental downsizing may limit access to services for some people (1998, 217). In other words, individuals with greater social or economic resources will be more likely to have access to mechanisms to get around the system and initiate human interaction, but those with lesser resources will be told to access information online.

The articles discussed above provide insight into online participatory democracy with respect to distinct levels of engagement—democratic deliberation occurring at the national level and

community networking occurring within constrained geographical locations. In the next section, we discuss three electronic networks that have been judged to be highly effective in achieving their political goals. These three examples are cited frequently as examples of successful online implementations of democratic participation. Furthermore, they illustrate online democracy currently taking place at the national (DNet), state (Minnesota E-Democracy), and municipal (the Santa Monica PEN) levels.

The Effectiveness of Online Participatory Democracy

Several studies have examined the implementation of electronic networks, judging their success based on achievement of political goals and identifying the features facilitating that success. Taylor and Burt (1999) describe specific sites that provide ideas for enhancing citizen participation in the democratic process, organized by type of democracy. For example, features supporting the first form of democracy, representative, are found on the Project Vote Smart site. This site allows citizens to identify their representatives by zip code and then view issue positions, campaign funding, and voting records. Sites supporting the pluralist form of democracy include Amsterdam's Digital City and the Santa Monica PEN. Relevant features of Digital City include theme-based town squares, each serving as a virtual meeting place on particular issues and containing eight buildings that can be rented by information providers. The Santa Monica PEN is accessible from both home computers and public terminals and emphasizes interactive communication among citizens and between citizens and public officials. Features supporting direct democracy are found in Network Pericles, which is accessible from public facilities and which allows citizens to submit issues for debate and vote; enables the conduct of referenda; and allows citizens to amend or annul previous decisions. All of these sites exhibit localism—Project Vote Smart enables the identification of local representatives; Digital City's town squares are organized by local issues; PEN supports discussion groups on local topics; and Network Pericles allows the submission of citizen-defined issues.

Several successful attempts at implementing electronic networks have been examined in depth, including Democracy Network (DNet), Minnesota E-Democracy, and the Santa Monica PEN. DNet, created by the Center for Governmental Studies in Los Angeles and online since 1996, has been called "one of the most innovative electronic voter guides on the Internet" (Docter et al., 1999, 535; Westen, 1998). It targets both the national and the local level—nationally it provides information on the presidential race and locally it provides election information for all 50 states. Minnesota E-Democracy, an online interactive public sphere in operation since 1994, supports a discussion list; four community issues forums specific to Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, and Winona; and electronic-oriented special events such as news, voter information, media coverage and comments, and E-Debates (Dahlberg, 2001; Clift, 2000). The Santa Monica PEN, established in 1989, has been described as "the first free (to users), government-sponsored, interactive communication system of its kind in the United States" (Wittig & Schmitz, 2996, 54). These networks have been successful in that they have achieved their political goals: DNet has secured both citizen and candidate participation; Minnesota E-Democracy has fostered online deliberation between citizens and those in power; the Santa Monica PEN has successfully

established a homeless center. These electronic networks' implementations of public deliberation have been examined and, like the networks discussed previously, all exhibit localism.

Democracy Network (DNet)

Drawing from interviews with the developers of DNet, Docter et al. (1999) examined how existing law and policy impact the design of online democracy, focusing on the specific features of DNet. DNet includes both a broadcasting component providing one-to-many communication and an interactive component providing many-to-many communication. The site is comprised of several sections; the first three employ broadcasting, the latter four are more interactive:

1. On the Issues—citizens identify issues of interest and compare candidates' relevant positions

2. Candidate Info—biographical, contact, and endorser information on candidates

3. Media—media stories on the election

4. Ballot Measures—official information on ballot measures; arguments for and against; users can also post opinions about the measures

5. Your Views—users can post comments and read those of other users; functions like a bulletin board

6. Match Poll—chat rooms in which users can compare their opinions and positions with those of the candidates; capacity for live interviews with candidates or experts

7. Take Action—allows users to send email directly to candidates; form for contributing to or volunteering for a campaign; information on polling places, voter registration, and absentee ballots

DNet also contains a Remote Updating System (RUS), which allows candidates to update their information as well as add issues to an election issue grid (Docter et al., 1999; Westen, 1998). The issue grid displays relevant election issues horizontally and candidates vertically under those issues, with red check marks indicating whether they have stated their positions. Candidates either can articulate their views on an issue already on the grid or add a new issue and those who have most recently updated the grid are bumped to the top of the list. Furthermore, old issue statements are archived so that users can examine position changes over time. Users can click on a check mark to view the candidate's full statement, on the issue for a chronological comparison, and on the candidate's name for biographical and endorser information. The issue grid thus holds candidates accountable for their positions as well as for failing to address certain issues.

Westen (1998), a founder of DNet, claims that this approach to debate has several advantages over TV. First, it facilitates discussion and debate on a broader range of issues, as well as motivates candidates to respond rather than have a "No Comment" in the grid. Second, it facilitates more substantive discussions because, in contrast to TV, the user rather than the candidate controls what messages are seen. Candidates who have not provided direct, detailed comments are likely to irritate users. Third, it facilitates positive rather than negative statements, again due to the fact that users are actively seeking out information and therefore are likely to

become impatient with evasions or attacks rather than substantive positions. Fourth, it allows candidates to enter statements in multiple languages. Fifth, it includes third-party candidates who are able to raise issues for debate the other candidates would perhaps not address. Sixth, it does not charge candidates to post their views and thus mitigates against disparities in fundraising.

Westen (1998) states that in the 1996 presidential election in Santa Monica, 86% of candidates participated; in the 1997 Los Angeles municipal elections, 86% of all candidates participated in the primary election, 91% in the general election. With respect to voters, in the 1996 presidential elections in Santa Monica (population 100,000), the site received over 116,000 hits and users visited on average twelve pages per visit. In the 1997 municipal election in Seattle, the site received over four-thousand visits. However, Docter et al. (1999) state that an examination of the ways in which DNet was used in the 1998 California gubernatorial election reveals that voter apathy and disinterest still limits the impact of the Internet on politics. They state, "designers of electronic democracy systems may have difficulty overcoming the larger problem of general voter apathy, disinterest in politics, and the fact that most users of the Internet are not avid information-seekers" (1999, 550).

Minnesota E-Democracy

Minnesota E-Democracy differs from DNet in that it does not focus on national issues, but limits its content to those issues important in the state itself. Dahlberg (2001) has investigated Minnesota E-Democracy, and in particular its discussion list MPD, as an example of a successful attempt to facilitate online deliberation. Dahlberg (2001) contends that Minnesota E-Democracy shapes its online discourse through its choice of technology, management system, and rules of discourse, and by focusing on geographically-specific issues. First, Minnesota E-Democracy relies on email lists. Email lists are a push technology and thus require little effort on the part of users, are popular and easy to use, and are more conducive to the enforcement of rules than, for example, the Usenet. Second, the list is managed rather than moderated; in other words, the list manager steers rather than edits the deliberative exchange. This steering involves helping members enforce the list's rules, providing support, and encouraging self-management to foster a sense of participant ownership. Third, management tools include list rules and guidelines that are imposed in order to ensure democratic exchange, the violation of which can lead to suspension from the forum, but the enforcement of which is primarily undertaken by members. Lastly, rather than build on fragmented groups bound only by shared interest, Minnesota E-Democracy attempts to build a public space based on shared geography and localized politics.

More specifically, Dahlberg analyzes whether MPD meets Habermas' conditions of the public sphere: (1) autonomy from state and economic power, (2) exchange and critique of criticizable moral-practical validity claims, (3) reflexivity, (4) ideal role taking, (5) sincerity, and (6) discursive inclusion and equality. First, Minnesota E-Democracy maximizes its independence from state and economic interests in several ways: it is volunteer-based; non-profit; independent from any political party, interest group, or private concern; and does not accept commercial advertising or promotion. According to Dahlberg, the nature of its discourse is therefore public. Second, the discourse in MPD is well-substantiated and reciprocal, as well as more developed in comparison with other online spaces such as Usenet or chat groups. Third, the discussions in

MPD foster reflexivity in terms of informing in greater depth and influencing opinions and voting. Fourth, MPD promotes ideal role taking and mutual respect by demanding a respect for difference, a demand supported by list management and forum rules and guidelines. Fifth, MPD attempts to ensure sincerity by requiring that all posts be signed with the author's full name, email address, and city. MPD also attempts to ensure the accuracy, or sincerity, of information by enforcing a guideline on the accuracy of postings. Lastly, MPD encourages equal participation by imposing a limit of two posts a day. Dahlberg (2001) states,

> [Minnesota E-Democracy] has maximized its autonomy from state and corporate interests, stimulated reflexivity, fostered respectful listening and participant commitment to the ongoing dialogue, achieved open and honest exchange, and provided equal opportunity for all voices to be heard. This has all been accomplished by the use of a structured email list, the formalization of rules and guidelines, the careful management of the forum, the development of self-ownership and self-moderation, and the focus on issues shared by those living within a particular geographically bounded political jurisdiction.

He claims that the most important area for improvement is to facilitate participation more representative of the public. This need can be met by further developing respectful and sincere deliberations; employing user-friendly, accessible technology; and linking online deliberations to offline political problems and networks of informal public debate. Again, the importance of localism is stressed, as well as the importance of linking online and offline activities.

According to Clift (2000), one of the founders of Minnesota E-Democracy, future developments may include statewide online public issue forums based on cultural, ethnic, and language groups and "virtual corner coffee shops" that complement in-person meetings. At the state level, he envisions the Minnesota Capitol Forum, thirty to forty ongoing topical spaces for public policy development focusing on specific legislative issues. Finally, Clift (2000) argues that these state and local online forums should be complemented by a Minnesota Commons, a set of "public practice" spaces for trading problem solving ideas and experiences among those who do public and volunteer work, and a Minnesota Open Forum, a self-governing free space without the discourse rules used, for example, in MPD. Clift (2000) argues that there must be many levels of civic forums with varying degrees of openness and decorum to accommodate all of those interested in civic interaction.

The Santa Monica Public Electronic Network (PEN)

According to Wittig and Schmitz (1996), the Santa Monica PEN was established to encourage communication among and participation by the citizens of Santa Monica. PEN had six goals: (1) provide access to public information, (2) aid in delivering city services, (3) enhance communication among citizens, (4) provide electronic conferences and enhance community, (5) diffuse new communication technology knowledge and access to citizens, and (6) distribute communication resources equitably to the disadvantaged (59). To meet its objectives, PEN provided the following features: a bulletin board with read-only information about government and social services posted by officials; facilities for sending email to other users and city officials; and electronic conferences enabling users to interact.

The PEN Action Group, one of the grassroots efforts on PEN, was formed with the aim of identifying local issues and developing civic projects. The PEN Action Group was active until 1994, at which time it achieved its goal of establishing a center for the homeless. Wittig and Schmitz (1996) note that the action group was unusual in that it spanned social class, income, education, race, neighborhood, and political party boundaries (54). They argue that this boundary spanning is critical to grassroots change: although individuals are bound into groups based on similarities, social systems depend on ties that link individuals across differences. For social change to occur, dissimilar groups must work together across difference. Wittig and Schmitz (1996) also argue that negative stereotypes are reduced when groups cooperate to achieve a mutually desired goal (57). Based on survey data, interviews, and participant-observation, they found that PEN surmounted socioeconomic and power barriers, altered users' perceptions of the homeless, and mobilized individuals who had not previously engaged in civic life.

Framework of Effectiveness for Online Participatory Democracy

Researchers of the Internet's influence on deliberation have concluded that its influence has been minimal. Rather, the success of online deliberation will depend to a great extent on its implementation, a decision that unfortunately resides with those in power. Furthermore, several problems remain to be addressed, such as universal access, online reliability and security, links between information and knowledge, and online community. However, our review has shown that several attempts at online democracy have been successful, including DNet, Minnesota E-Democracy, and the Santa Monica PEN. The factors that contribute to their success appear to be localism or some connection to the real world such as a focus on local elections, legislation, or issues.

Based on the studies summarized above, we have constructed a framework of effectiveness for online participatory democracy (see Table 5-1). For each criterion, we have provided three different ranks: RPD, EPD, and the final rank. The numbers in the RPD column count those features that were mentioned in our theoretical discussions of democracy and community networking. These features have not been tested, as most of those articles either propose features based on theory or report on those that have been implemented. The numbers in the EPD column rely on data from the studies on D-Net, Minnesota E-Democracy, and the Santa Monica PEN. All of these have been shown to be effective in accomplishing their political goals and are frequently cited as examples of successful online participatory democracy. The last column, Rank, provides a total count as a sum of the RPD and EPD columns. This framework provides only a general sense of those features that appear to be most critical to effective online participatory democracy; therefore, it should be used as a guideline rather than as a prescription.

With respect to this framework, we must note that the term "chat room" is used inconsistently in the literature. Although a chat room by definition is conversation that occurs in real time (or synchronously), many studies use the term interchangeably with "discussion list" or "bulletin board." However, both of the latter forms of communication are asynchronous.

Table 5-1. *Framework of Effectiveness for Online Participatory Democracy*

Criteria	RPD*	EPD*	Rank*
Access—Concerns about disenfranchisement (disabled, socioeconomically disadvantaged, senior citizens); Public facilities/terminals	9	4	13
Chat rooms—Issue-based forums	9	4	13
Information—Citizenry information; Committee information; Community information; Contact information; Crime statistics; Economy; Environmental conditions; General educational information; Governmental information; Historical material; Issue information; Legislative information; Parliamentary information; Representative/Candidate information; Services information; Traffic; Voting information; Weather	10	3	13
Email; Discussion lists—Candidates; Community; Potential supporters; Public officials (national, state, local); Specific representatives; Working committees; Webmaster; No form letters or mass mailings	9	3	12
Solicitation of citizen feedback—Conduct referenda; Debate and deliberate; Feedback from focus groups; Post opinions on development and redevelopment efforts; Post opinions on ballot measures; Report problems; Set agenda; Submit feedback to working committee; Submit issues for debate and vote	10	2	12
Localism—Links between online and offline activities; Local issues	8	3	11
Links—Committee sites; Decision-makers; Educational resources; Government sites (national, state, local); Interest groups; Media and news sites; Political party sites (national, state, local); Representatives' or public officials' sites; Wider issue networks; Worldwide parliamentary sites	6	2	8
Mobilization—Contribution forms; Electronic lobby registration forms; Guest books; Volunteer forms	6	1	7
Multimedia—Audio; Geographic information systems (GIS); Interactive graphics; Maps; Photos; Videos; Virtual tours; Webcasting	6	0	6
Electronic events—E-Debates between candidates; Live chats with officials; Live interviews; News, media coverage and comments	3	2	5
Media interactivity—Community map; Representatives by zip code; Search engines; Site maps	4	1	5
Bulletin boards; Message boards	2	2	4
Rules and guidelines—Accurate postings; Length limitations; Minimum level of participation among limited number of participants; Participant rating of postings; Posts signed (name, email, city); Silencing those who stray off topic; Topic exploration; Two posts/day; Violators suspended	3	1	4
Services—Constituent services (general information, tourism information, internships, order forms for publication, job opportunities)	4	0	4
Feedback to citizen communications—Interactive communication between citizens and representatives/public officials	2	1	3
Security and privacy—Encoding; Encrypting; Scrambling	3	0	3
Database—People; Programs; Calendars; Events	1	0	1
Electronic events—Live news casts	1	0	1

* RPD—Features recommended or used for online participatory democracy; EPD—Features shown to be effective for online participatory democracy; Rank = UPD + EPD

Conclusion

Based on this framework, we surmise that universal access and some form of many-to-many communication—listserv, bulletin board, and chat room—are prerequisites for successful online participatory democracy. We use these effectiveness criteria to evaluate the deliberative effectiveness of child advocacy websites, as summarized in chapter eight. However, in addition to deliberation, individuals can also engage in social action online, which is the topic of chapters six and seven.

Chapter 6 : THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE SOCIAL REFORM

In chapter one, we proposed a genre of online political action for which we distinguished two subgenres: formal politics, which refers to the formal political process, and civic culture, which refers to attempts to influence that process. In the last chapter we discussed the effectiveness of civic culture with respect to online participatory democracy. In this chapter we discuss civic culture with respect to online social action, within which we include those activities that relate to the use of the Internet to reform large-scale societal ills and to advocate for another. Focusing on the former, we define a framework of effectiveness for online social reform.

Online Social Reform

For the purposes of this study, we define "social action" very broadly as encompassing individual or group attempts to enact social change. Online technologies are particularly beneficial for the types of groups typically undertaking social action. Bonchek (1995) has identified seven different types of groups that online technologies support: ethnic, community, issue-based, governmental, international, extremist, and information infrastructure, four of which we address in this chapter (issue-based, ethnic, extremist, and international; we discussed community with respect to participatory democracy). These groups all share the following characteristics: (1) broad geographic distribution, (2) large volume of intra-organizational communication, (3) high value placed on information, and (4) poor access to traditional media (Bonchek, 1995, 15). Correspondingly, reductions in costs related to communication, coordination, and information benefit these types of groups more than others (Bonchek, 1995; Myers, 1994).

Myers (1994) has discussed how specialized networks such as Peacenet, Econet, Internet, and Usenet are being used by activists to communicate about social movement activities and agendas. According to him, activists use computers to communicate in three ways: (1) personal use of email, (2) clearinghouse for information related to a particular movement, and (3) computer forums, either local bulletin-board systems or computer conferences. In particular, computer conferencing performs several roles with respect to social activism: it generates sympathy among bystanders, it maintains efficacy by tracking and reporting the results of activities, and it recruits directly through calls to action and solicitation of funds (Myers, 1994).

Mass media, the technology on which activists typically depend, differs from communication technology in several ways. First, activists often have to engage in radical behavior to get media exposure, but that exposure represents a loss of control over their message. Second, mass media is one-way communication and cannot be leveraged to coordinate action. In contrast, communication technologies are two-way, thus enabling clarification, agreement to, and coordination of action. And lastly, coalitions formed online are more stable because they are formed around communication and are less likely to fold after the issue is addressed, unlike more traditional coalitions (Myers, 1994).

Within this subgenre, we include those activities that relate to the use of the Internet to reform large-scale societal ills and to advocate for another (see Figure 6-1). According to Schneider and Lester (2001), social reform and social advocacy differ mainly in terms of scale. Social reform targets large-scale social problems by influencing change in organizations and institutions; in contrast, social advocacy maintains a strong focus on client needs (Schneider & Lester, 2001, 70). In this chapter, we discuss the impact of the Internet on social reform with reference to specific endeavors; in the next we address online social advocacy.
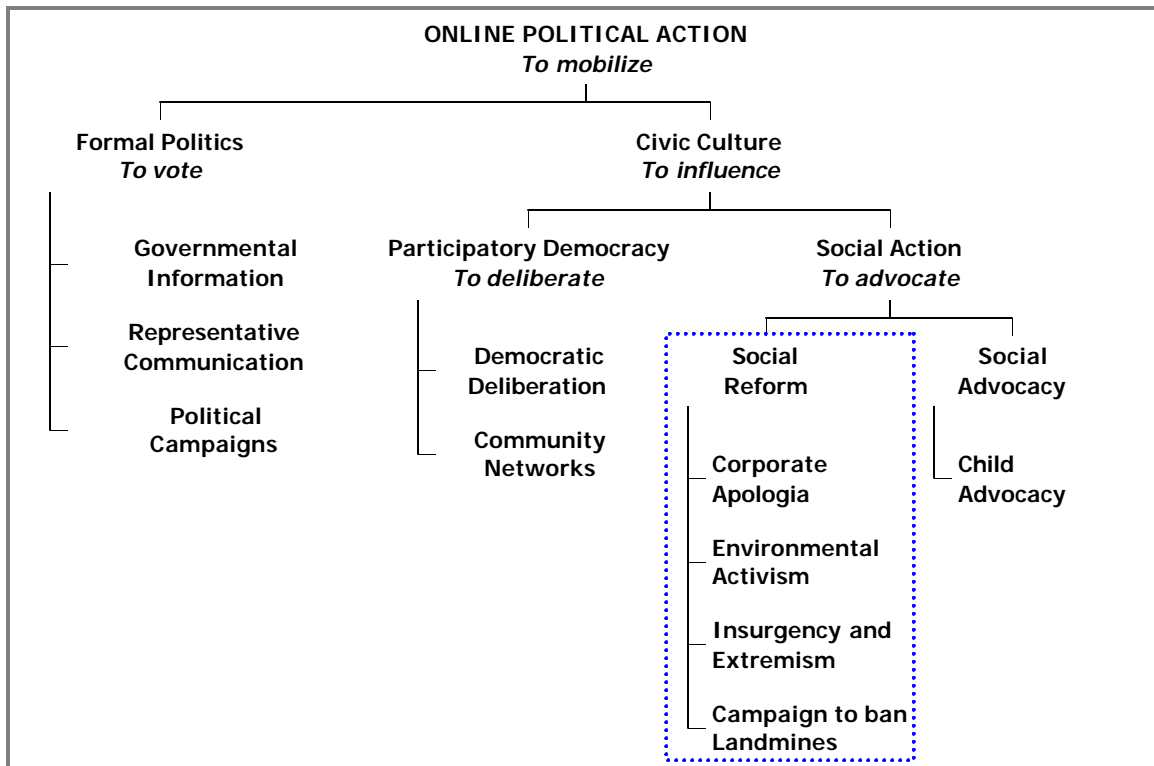
Figure 6-1. *Subgenre of Online Social Reform Within Framework*

Taylor and Burt (1999) claim that the Internet is enabling the emergence of a broadly based cyber-democracy that allows for democratic dialogue, discourse, and participation. The Internet thus increases the capability of grassroots groups to gather information, organize political action, change public opinion, and impact policy making (Taylor & Burt, 1999, 504). In the following sections, we discuss several online movements including protests against corporations, environmental activism, insurgent and extremist activities, and international coalition building. After reviewing this research, we define a framework of effectiveness for online social reform.

Corporate Apologia

Hearit (1999) has argued that the Internet has created a forum for criticism that encourages the development of activist publics, offering the following observations regarding the alliance between organizations and the Internet. First, the Internet and newsgroups specifically increase the speed by which latent publics become activist; furthermore, newsgroups enable the proliferation of single-issue publics. Second, companies face difficulty in establishing their identity in cyberspace, as many of the traditional cues used to verify an individual's or organization's integrity are missing. Third, for product safety accidents the best course for a company is to promptly apologize and announce a policy change. And lastly, organizations should maintain a presence in cyberspace and monitor newsgroups for criticisms. In the

following sections, we discuss the controversies surrounding Intel's Pentium chips, concerns about online privacy, and activist tactics.

Intel's Pentium Chip

The online protest waged regarding Intel's flawed Pentium processor illustrates the usefulness of the Internet for launching social protests. Hearit (1999) claims that the uniqueness of the Intel case lies in the role played by newsgroups. Specifically, he claims that cyberspace was instrumental in transforming customer dissatisfaction with the chip into a serious public issue. Hearit (1999) identifies three areas in which the Internet contributed to the controversy. First, 130,000 computer users visited the newsgroup comp.sys.intel in autumn 1994, of whom 1000 made vitriolic comments about the paternalism and arbitrariness of Intel's return policy, as well as doubts concerning the authorship of the online apologia issued by Grove, Intel's CEO. Second, the controversy illustrated that many reporters now get story ideas from newsgroups. Third, the Internet was leveraged by competitors to take strategic advantage of the controversy; in this case, IBM placed its research findings on the chip online for others to access.

The case illustrates how characteristics of a public and components of Internet technology combined to have an effect on Intel. Specifically, like-minded people had a forum on comp.sys.intel in which to discuss the problem, thereby increasing problem recognition in consumers. Furthermore, external constraints are low online because newsgroups are not closely monitored for accuracy. And lastly, levels of involvement for those visiting the newsgroup were high. Hearit concludes "newsgroups provide a forum for frustrated consumers to interact: to find each other; to co-define a problem; and potentially, the opportunity to coordinate their action against a company" (1999, 302).

Privacy Issues

One large-scale social problem targeted by online social activists has been the threats to privacy enabled by new electronic technologies. Typically, these activist endeavors target either corporate or governmental attempts to collect personal information, whether for marketing or surveillance purposes. For example, Gurak (1997) describes the online protests against Lotus Marketplace and the Clipper Chip, both of which focused on computer privacy and the use of the Internet. Participants leveraged several forms of online communication to launch their protest, including Usenet newsgroups, electronic conferences and forums, email, and bulletin boards. While the Lotus protest was successful, resulting in the withdrawal of a product containing information on one-hundred and twenty million American consumers from eighty million households (Gurak, 1997, 19), the Clipper Chip protest failed to halt the government's adoption of the encryption standard.

A more recent case of privacy invasion also invoked an online protest. Specifically, activists protested the inclusion of the electronic personal serial number (PSN) on Intel's Pentium III processor (Leizerov, 2000). According to Leizerov (2000), the case is interesting because the protest was executed almost exclusively online and took place between two parties of widely unbalanced power. Regardless, three small groups were able to successfully challenge Intel, which eliminated the PSN 16 months after its introduction. Furthermore, this protest was the

second launched against Intel over the Internet (the first was discussed in the previous section), and Leizerov (2000) notes that Intel had learned a lesson that it implemented successfully. Using this case, he discusses the new tactics available to activists online.

Activist Tactics

Leizerov (2000) defines strategy as the logic behind specific actions or the broad outline for conflict; tactics are specific actions that fill in that strategy. A strategy has five dimensions— time, space, force, mind, and culture—that must be considered by social activists before confrontation. Leizerov (2000) discusses each of these dimensions, identifying specific strategies associated with each. First, the dimension of time forces people to choose certain priorities over others. Leizerov (2000) notes several ways in which time entered into the protestors' agenda:

1. Minimize public's investment of time by providing online protest flyers, ready-made protest letters, links to information

2. Unlimited space and low cost of posting allows issues to remain online indefinitely

3. Tools provided online are available immediately as well as allow for spontaneous action

4. The Internet forces companies to react quickly.

The dimension of space refers to the spatial containment of people in homes, neighborhoods, schools, and so on. Although traditionally groups that occupied permanent spaces held the advantage, this is no longer true. In a sense, cyberspace provides a permanent space to anyone with a computer and a phone. Thus, activists in cyberspace have a permanent space from which to organize, recruit, and strategize. Leizerov (2000) identifies two uses of space:

1. The Internet allows for the informal, loosely structured organization typical of activist groups

2. Low cost of establishing protest sites in cyberspace

Force is the type of confrontation—discourse, physical, economic—deployed against adversaries, and the most important dimension. The privacy groups used two types of force:

1. Instrumental—calling for a boycott and distributing flyers and symbols

2. Communicative—involving media and governmental officials

The mind dimension refers to the necessity of changing the way that people view themselves and their grievances. Leizerov (2000) identifies two ways in which the activists achieved this change in perspective:

1. Symbolism and imagery are powerful tools and the Internet is well-suited to these tactics

2. Corporations have lost credibility by using their power to influence legislation and public opinion

Culture consists of three levels: the organizational culture of the protest movement; the issue pursued, the reason for taking political action, and the means of confrontation; and those

individuals in the public who would identify with and participate in the cause. Leizerov (2000) identifies two ways in which the privacy groups used culture in their tactics:

1. The importance of maintaining membership is diluted online—visitors can enact one protest act without obligation

2. The Internet is compatible with American individualism, allowing people to examine different perspectives on an issue and form their own opinions

Leizerov (2000) claims that the protest against the PSN was successful in three ways: (1) Intel was forced to add disable mechanisms and later decided not to install the PSN on future processors; (2) privacy advocates raised the awareness of political figures; and (3) privacy advocates raised the awareness of the public. He argues that the Internet has changed the paradigm of power for social movements: the credibility of the movement is now more important than the cause. This change has come about because the quality of online information is known to be questionable. Thus conventional media has an advantage over the Internet, especially for the first-time protestor.

Environmental Activism

The history of the environmental movement can be divided into four stages: (1) nineteenth to early twentieth century preservationist/conservationist movements, (2) a brief period of environmental legislation from the mid-1960s until Reagan, (3) current mainstream environmental politics, and (4) an emerging grassroots environmental movement (Kutner, 2000). We discuss the latter two forms in the pages that follow.

Mainstream Environmental Politics

Zelwietro (1998) focuses on mainstream environmental politics, examining the way in which the Internet has contributed to the politicization of the environmental movement. Politicization refers to the transformation of a private issue into a public issue outside of government channels. Zelwietro (1998) speculates that the Internet more than any other medium has contributed to the politicization of the environmental movement because it allows for the distribution of information not conveyed by traditional media, for unprecedented interaction between members, and for the decentralized flow of information.

Zelwietro (1998) distributed a survey to four-hundred environmental organizations in ten countries that assessed their use of the Internet as a tool for raising awareness (public awareness), publicizing the environmental agenda (education), and announcing political actions (activism). Organizations had a love-hate relationship with activism—they either ranked it as most or least important. Education was most likely to be the primary purpose if the organization was international or relatively small. The types of information most prevalent online were news items, newsletters, and other organizational information. Zelwietro (1998) found that print is still the most dominant means of information dissemination, followed by the telephone, face-to-face communication, the Internet, TV, and the radio. Most organizations responded that they used the Internet for two-way communication rather than for merely sending or receiving information. They used email most frequently, then websites, Usenet, listservs, FTP, and gopher. In a question

regarding the extent to which the Internet had replaced other forms of communication, most respondents indicated that they viewed it as supplemental rather than substitutional.

Approximately one-third of the organizations surveyed did not have access to the Internet. Based on a comparison of those with and without Internet access, Zelwietro (1998) found that online groups do have greater contact with other individuals and organizations than offline groups. Online groups were also more likely to experience growth or no change in their number of campaigns. Interestingly, 11% of online groups thought that face-to-face communication was most important in achieving their purpose and 35% of offline groups found it most important, a difference only marginally significant. And lastly, online organizations get more information requests than offline organizations.

Grassroots Environmentalism

The emerging movement differs from mainstream environmental politics in that while the latter focuses on wilderness and conservation issues, the grassroots environmental movement focuses on health problems such as toxics facing families and communities. The Internet has proven useful for these grassroots organizations as it is fast, easy, and cost-effective. Email allows for communication with other activists or government representatives; listservs allow for conversations about focused topics; and Web pages allow for the dissemination of information supporting environmental causes.

Kutner (2000) briefly discusses two frameworks that illuminate the impact of the Internet on information practices. First, the insider/outsider dichotomy provides a model for understanding how the Internet is eroding the marginalization of certain groups. Insiders such as government officials have had privileged access to information and have failed to consult other sources, or outsiders, for information and advice. The Internet, however, enables the disenfranchised to access information. Second, the concept of disintermediation also sheds light on the impact of the Internet. In contrast to traditional media, which have served as intermediaries that filter political information, the Internet is unmediated. In other words, the Internet allows disenfranchised groups to bypass information gatekeepers and thus facilitates the emergence of the grassroots environmentalism described by Kutner (2000).

Individual Activist Behavior

While they do not focus specifically on environmental activism conducted online, Seguin et al. (1998) provide an interesting perspective on predicting individual activist behavior. A questionnaire examining environmental attitudes and behaviors was mailed to three-thousand randomly selected residents of the Cornwall area in Ontario, Canada. Seven-hundred and thirty-three questionnaires were returned. Overall Seguin et al. (1998) found that the majority of individuals were not engaged in activism. They found that voting for a government proposing environmentally conscious policies was the activist behavior with the highest mean; participating in protests and writing letters had the lowest mean. The other three behaviors—participating in events, circulating petitions, and helping with financial support—had intermediate means.

Environmental Reporting Websites

Jones et al. (1998) propose a framework, comprised of both content and design criteria, for creating and maintaining environmental reporting websites. While these criteria specifically refer to environmental reporting websites, they may be applicable to other types of activist websites. Jones et al. (1998) maintain that the Internet is rapidly becoming the medium of choice for reporting on environmental performance. In contrast to other media, the Internet supports text, still image, moving image, sound, *and* interaction. The Internet also allows for rapid access by users and a reduction in printing and distribution costs for companies. Furthermore, the Internet allows companies to gather information regarding the number of visitors, their identity and locale, and the pages they access. Jones et al. (1998) provide the following content guidelines for an environmental reporting website:

1. Environmental reports online
2. Environmental reports in PDF
3. Additional environmental documents online and PDF
4. Interactive and multimedia environmental information
5. Environmental education
6. Information about the environmental team and contact details
7. Automatic order forms
8. Automatic feedback forms
9. Environmental forums

With respect to design, they identify the following criteria:

1. Internal hyperlinks
2. External hyperlinks
3. Site design
4. Graphics and backgrounds
5. Navigation
6. Regular updates
7. Site promotion

Insurgency and Extremism

Insurgency online has been defined as "Internet communications by anti-government movements in both democratic and non-democratic societies" (Dartnell, 1999, 116). These movements are characterized by calls for far-reaching change and radical opposition to existing political regimes. Anti-government movements include white supremacists, animal rights activists, and ethnic nationalists in democratic societies and liberal democratic ideologists in non-democratic societies, among others (Dartnell, 1999). Below, we discuss several online insurgency efforts: the Peruvian Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru, the Free Burma movement, the Far Right, Islamic fundamentalists, and neo-Nazi groups.

Insurgency and Information Terrorism

Insurgency movements are distinct from information terrorism in that the former engages in information provision, recognizing that "power in a global society is linked to ability to articulate, organize and communicate information over distance" (Dartnell, 1999, 117). Dartnell argues that political violence is often seen from a state-centered mindset, in which non-state violence is assumed illegitimate; however, "where peaceful opposition is impossible or futile, violence is a tool to draw attention to opposition views or make demands on unresponsive systems" (1999, 123). An example of information terrorism is "netwar," which Whine defines as "offensives conducted by often geographically separate, diverse, interconnected non-state actors rather than by hierarchies" (1999, 232). According to him, the new terrorism is transnational, often millenialist, driven by religious fervor, and sanctions violence. Targets of the new extremism are not only military or governmental, but also civilian. In parallel with growing concerns about this new terrorism are concerns about the use of new ICTs (information communication technologies) by political extremists. ICTs allow for the diffusion of command and control, for communication between extremists, and for the targeting of information stores by extremists. Based on this distinction, we can characterize the political movements in Peru and Burma as forms of online insurgency, and the religious movements in the U.S. and Afghanistan as forms of information terrorism. All four cases have been examined with respect to how the Internet facilitates insurgency and extremism.

Peruvian Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA)

The Peruvian Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA) illustrates the connection between information technologies and a new public sphere, which requires the production of images and text representing values, interests, and needs (Dartnell, 1999). The Internet's distinct, interconnected informational and communicative characteristics shape the political messages of insurgent groups. According to Dartnell (1999), communication and community are intertwined: communication is necessary for articulating the values shared by a group. For example, the information disseminated by the MRTA in its online communications is a narrative that expresses values and constructs political identities. And the Internet allows the MRTA to transmit their version of events across domestic political boundaries. As Dartnell states, "online insurgents belong to a relatively privileged strata that benefits from speed, low costs, asynchronicity, many-to-many communications, capacity for automation, and intelligent

applications" (1999, 125). The Internet provides them with improvements in organization, efficiency, recruitment, and morale. Dartnell (1999) concludes that information technologies will not replace or overwhelm the state, but rather they provide one more avenue for political action.

Free Burma Movement

The role played by the Internet in the Burma crisis has been examined by Danitz and Strobel (1999). Specifically, the establishment of BurmaNet in 1993 provided the Burmese diaspora, dispersed worldwide since 1962, with a means of accessing up-to-date information on human rights abuses and the usurpation of democracy in Burma and with a means of communicating. Simultaneous efforts to ease the State Law and Order Restoration Council's (SLORC) restrictions on information have resulted in the leaking of information in and out of Burma via computer diskettes, newsletters, and broadcasts from other countries. In 1994 and 1995, students and expatriates in the U.S. organized the Free Burma movement, pressuring American and European companies to cease business relations with the SLORC. Again, the medium of choice was the Internet, which was used to transmit speeches, campaign materials, and images of student demonstrations. Danitz and Strobel (1999) conclude that the Internet is not a panacea for international grass-roots movements; rather, it is powerful for organizing dispersed elements of a movement, rapidly sharing news or replicating successful strategies, and focusing members on a single goal. Traditional means of activism such as face-to-face lobbying remain critical.

Fundamentalist Groups—Far Right, Islamic Fundamentalists, Neo-Nazis

Extremist groups that have been quick to use the Internet are the Far Right, Islamic fundamentalists, and neo-Nazis (Whine, 1999; Chroust, 2000). All of these movements are fundamentalist, or "reactions against the very complex, world-wide process of modernization, against the political and social crises and the deep changes of values and cultures connected with them" (Chroust, 2000, 102-03). ICTs have played a role in the rise of these fundamentalist groups, as online networking and interconnectivity have facilitated a shift from absolute hierarchies to hydra-headed networks (Whine, 1999). Whine states, "the Afghan War was a seminal event in promoting the networked form in that it showed that fluidly organized groups, driven in this case by a religious imperative, could defeat an experienced hierarchically structured army" (1999, 238). These hydra-headed networks are difficult to decapitate; in addition, geographical dispersion provides security in the form of decentralized and internationalized command and control. Islamist terrorists in particular are well-suited to this type of networked command and control, as many of their supporters are geographically dispersed in sympathetic or neutral states providing safe haven (Whine, 1999; Chroust, 2000).

These groups use ICTs for propaganda, secure communications, intelligence gathering, and funds management (Whine, 1999, 243; Chroust, 2000). The Internet has neither replaced other communications media nor increased mobilization. But the danger of the Internet may be that it facilitates communication and community building between these individuals, thereby sustaining relationships otherwise difficult to establish and maintain. However, Chroust (2000) notes that the relationship between online communication and offline political action has not been established. Like other scholars, he states that "there is no possible sustained and living Internet

presence for political movements without a real basis in social life" (Chroust, 2000, 115). He foresees not a cyber-war launched by Web terrorists, but rather a higher presence of social and political conflicts online.

Online Insurgency and Extremism

Based on these examples, Dartnell (1999) and Whine (1999) identify features of the Internet that are particularly suitable for online insurgency and extremism. Specifically, the Internet

1. Facilitates direct contact across large geographic distances

2. Provides up-to-date information instantaneously from distant physical locations

3. Integrates radio, TV, telephone, email, multi-user functions, and database access

4. Provides covert and anonymous communication

5. Transmits text, audio, video, and other materials

6. Extends the reach and influence of a group

7. Provides cheap communication

Danitz and Strobel (1999) identify several advantages and disadvantages to using the Internet for nonviolent action. Specifically, the Internet is advantageous in the following ways:

1. It is inexpensive

2. It is an organizational tool "par excellence"

3. It puts information in the hands of organizers fast

4. It allows rapid replication of a successful effort

5. It allows users to select their level of activity

6. It helps publicize the cause and the campaign

7. It seems to give decentralized, grass-roots activists an advantage over their opponents

The disadvantages to using the Internet for nonviolent action are the following:

1. It is dangerous for activists to rely solely on a single source of communication

2. Communications over the Internet can be easily monitored

3. Opponents may try to use the Internet for sabotage

4. Information transmitted online is "unmediated," and can be of questionable accuracy

5. Access to the Internet is not equal

6. The Internet cannot replace human contact in lobbying and other campaign activities

7. The Internet may contribute to a lack of historical memory and archives

8. Movements based on the Internet, because of their decentralized nature, may be unstable

International Coalition Building

International coalition building is difficult because of logistics and expense: ethnic, geographical, national, cultural, and religious boundaries make coordination difficult and costly (Rutherford, 2000). However, the Internet can facilitate coalition building because it increases reach across geographic distance and lowers costs of communication (Rutherford, 2000; Warkentin & Mingst, 2000). In this section, we discuss the campaign to ban landmines and the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). Both of these campaigns illustrate how nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have leveraged the Internet to facilitate communication between NGOs and international organizations and governments.

Global Civil Society

Warkentin and Mingst (2000) note that most studies have viewed NGOs as lobbying or interest groups working through mediators such as states or international institutions to influence global politics. But NGOs have become significant political actors in a global civil society, acting independently of states and international institutions. This global civil society has been defined as an arrangement of political interactions that construct networks of knowledge and action by local actors that cross spatial boundaries. The emergence of the World Wide Web and a global civil society have occurred in conjunction, playing off of and reinforcing each other: "the Web's multimedia capabilities, interactivity, and immediacy have proven to be invaluable tools in facilitating the transnational communication, networked social relationships, and participatory politics that characterize a global civil society" (Warkentin & Mingst, 2000, 240). Warkentin and Mingst (2000) identify four implications of a global civil society for international politics:

1. A shift in focus from state-based institutions to social and political relations

2. A recognition of NGOs as significant and effectual political actors

3. A shift toward more democratically oriented transnational political processes

4. The recognition of the World Wide Web as an increasingly important political tool (239)

They examine the campaigns against the MAI and landmines in terms of these implications.

Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment resulted from a proposal from the U.S. and the EU to "codify and protect liberal transnational investment practices" (Warkentin and Mingst, 2000, 237). Initially opposed by developing countries, action on the MAI proceeded behind closed doors for two years. In February 1997, however, a draft of the treaty was leaked and published on the Web, resulting in an extensive protest involving more than six-hundred organizations in seventy countries. Warkentin and Mingst (2000) state that this campaign against the MAI took place primarily on the World Wide Web, on which drafts of the MAI, analyses, position papers, fact sheets, and calls to action were posted and was supplemented by traditional tactics such as letter-writing campaigns, petitions, and public demonstrations. Subsequent to the leaking of the MAI draft, the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) rescheduled the completion date three times before ending negotiations in December 1998.

Warkentin and Mingst (2000) discuss the MAI with respect to the four implications outlined above. First, although the NGOs' relationships with each other were loose and their relationships with the state and the public primarily traditional, the methods they employed to facilitate those relationships were different. Specifically, the NGOs used the Web "to network with each other, provide information, and mobilize the public" (Warkentin & Mingst, 2000, 243). Second, the NGOs played a significant role by shaping the course of the debate in the public sphere, shifting the emphasis to environmental and human rights rather than economic and financial issues. Third, hundreds of NGOs, and thus the public were involved, resulting in a demand for a more democratically oriented MAI, both with respect to provisions and to negotiation process. Fourth, the protest was facilitated by the WWW, which allowed for quick and effective information dissemination and communication among the NGOs and between the NGOs and the public.

Campaign to Ban Landmines

The second example of an international campaign that has leveraged the power of the Internet is the campaign to ban landmines. The Mine Ban Treaty, signed on March 1, 1999, resulted from efforts on the part of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a coalition of more than fourteen-hundred NGOs from over seventy countries (Rutherford, 2000; Warkentin & Mingst, 2000). The goals of the ICBL were to ban landmines, undertake de-mining efforts, and offer victims assistance. The ICBL was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts, which according to the Nobel committee created a new form of diplomacy. The effort, coordinated by Jody Williams, leveraged email as a tool for organizing human rights and arms control groups internationally. Possessing no overall budget, permanent headquarters, or employees other than Williams, the ICBL's organizational structure was that of a loosely organized collection of NGOs. NGOs pursued local initiatives geared to their cultural circumstances with the common goal of a global, comprehensive ban on landmines constituting the tie that bound them together.

Warkentin and Mingst (2000) also discuss the campaign to ban landmines with respect to the four implications outlined above. First, NGOs formed close relationships with supportive states, few of which produced or used landmines and thus were receptive to influence on the issue. Second, NGOs were significant political actors in this campaign. The French secretary of state for humanitarian affairs invited an NGO representative to the 1996 Ottawa conference. And lastly, the ICBL's Nobel Peace Prize illustrates the increasing political legitimacy of NGOs.

According to Warkentin and Mingst (2000), NGOs used both traditional and newer persuasive techniques. They used traditional media such as the radio, TV, films, comic books, and elite media to disseminate information; relied on emotive images such as children in wheelchairs; personalized the campaign through the Adopt-A-Minefield program; commissioned a military assessment of landmines; and held workshops and training sessions for activists and landmine inspectors. However, NGOs also used three newer techniques (Warkentin & Mingst, 2000). First, they framed the discourse as a humanitarian rather than a security issue. Second, they forged close relationships with states, helping to organize conferences, participating in official deliberations, and mobilizing local activities supporting the protest. Third, NGOs leveraged the

new communication technologies, first the phone and fax and then email and the World Wide Web.

According to Rutherford (2000), the key activity provided by the ICBL was coordination and the key tool used was the Internet, specifically email. Email was used both to coordinate and to disseminate information internally among ICBL members and externally with the media and government officials. The ICBL donated computer access to national campaigns for writing press releases and contacting the media and the public. Furthermore, the Internet allowed the ICBL to recruit southern NGOs and retain their participation, a critical issue as those southern states were most affected by the issue. Southern NGOs participated actively by providing field data, which northern NGOs then disseminated to governments and the media.

The ICBL also used the Internet to communicate directly with governments, although the use of email in this context was de-emphasized. Governmental lack of email capability, limited capability for internal communications, or preference for other forms of communication limited its use. Instead, the ICBL emphasized personal lobbying. Rutherford (2000) also notes that communications technologies played a more significant role in Western and democratic states than in non-Western and non-democratic states, a discrepancy he attributes to the lack of political pluralism in the latter and thus the difficulty of mobilizing NGO lobbying groups. However, outside pressures and use of the Internet by local NGOs enabled the ICBL to influence political leaders in those latter states as well. The Internet allows local NGOs in authoritarian states to search out international allies, who then apply pressure from without.

Rutherford (2000) does not credit the success of the Mine Ban Treaty to the Internet alone. A second factor that also played a large role was the face-to-face meetings between the NGOs and governments. Although the trust and familiarity built during these meetings are difficult to achieve online, the Internet does play an important role in reducing costs, enabling coherence and focus, identifying issues, bringing attention to those issues, and increasing public pressure.

Global Civil Society and the World Wide Web

Warkentin and Mingst (2000) make five points with respect to the conjunction between the multilateralism of the global civil society and the contribution of the World Wide Web:

1. The success or failure of multilateral diplomacy will be affected by how an issue is framed in the public discourse. The World Wide Web contributed to successful framing by enabling communication between the NGOs, enabling them to post immediate and easily revised information as well as visual and audio information.

2. The success or failure of multilateral endeavors will be dependent on effective leadership. The World Wide Web facilitated the leadership activities of the NGOs by allowing them to gather and disseminate information and build transnational coalitions.

3. States will continue to play important roles in an enlarged multilateral diplomacy but with new "twists." Key states increasingly will take on different roles in their relationships with other actors.

4. An enlarged multilateralism may become more democratized at both the state and international levels. The conjunction of the shifts to emotionally based and publicly accessible discourse online opened the issues to public scrutiny and participation.

5. Given the dynamics of the Web and recent advances in transnational communication technologies generally, conventionally negotiated multilateral responses increasingly will lag behind the demand—and the need—for appropriate policy interventions.

Framework of Effectiveness for Online Social Reform

Each of the studies discussed in this chapter addresses large-scale social movements attempting to change policy at either the national or international levels. For example, although protests against threats to privacy typically are directed at organizations, the underlying issue is one concerning policy at both the national and international levels. Environmental and terrorist threats are global concerns requiring a global response. And the MIA and the campaign to ban landmines are similarly international issues.

Based on our literature review of online social reform, we have constructed a framework of effectiveness (see Table 6-1 on the next page). For each criterion, we have counted each mention of a specific feature in our literature review. Most of these studies report on features that have been implemented rather than test whether the features are effective. This framework provides only a general sense of those features that appear to be most critical to effective online social reform; thus it should be used as a guideline rather than as a prescription.

Table 6-1. *Framework of Effectiveness for Online Social Reform*

Criteria	Rank
Information—Agency information (interviews, membership lists, statements); Campaign information (announcements, tracking campaigns, results); Community information; Contact information (email and postal addresses); Education information (instructions, training, workshops); Events information (calendar, daily diary, meeting announcements); Government information (reports); Issue information (analyses, fact sheets, position papers); Legislative information (Acts, Bills, papers, policies, programs, speeches); News information (media releases, news services, updates); Research information (findings, publications, reports); Scientific information (data, journal articles)	14
Email; Listservs; Discussion lists; Email lists; Mailing lists—Decision makers; Activists	12
Localism—Levels of involvement; Link online and offline activities; Local concerns as international issues; Local initiatives geared toward cultural circumstances; Real world political action; Supplement with traditional media; Supplements traditional means of activism	12
Multimedia—Audio; Clipart; Computer conferencing; Graphics; Internet-based fax; Photographs; Video	8
Links—Governmental sites; Industry-related sites; Other activist organizations	6
Mobilization—Contribution forms; Electronic petition; Ordering forms; Protest flyers and pamphlets; Template letters	6
Newsgroups	5
Empathy—Adventure stories; Electronic quizzes; Emotive appeal; Generating sympathy; Interactive games; Personalize; Postcards, Posters; Screensavers	5
Bulletin boards; Message boards	3
Chat rooms—Education or training sessions; Expert discussions; Topical issues	3
Feedback—Online surveys; Personal information form; User-provided data	3
Access—Donate computer access; Universal access	2
Action alerts—Calls to action	1
Databases	1
Media interactivity—Search engine	1
Targeting—Advertising banners; Marketing	1

Conclusion

Based on this framework, we surmise that other than information on an issue, discussion lists and localism are crucially important to online social reform. As the research discussed in this chapter shows, online social movements use the Internet primarily for information dissemination and communication. We use these effectiveness criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of child advocacy websites in reforming social ills, as summarized in chapter eight. In the next chapter, however, we focus on online social action that emphasizes the exclusive representation of a client in an attempt to right an injustice, or social advocacy.

Chapter 7 : THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE SOCIAL ADVOCACY

In chapter one, we proposed a genre of online political action for which we distinguished two subgenres: formal politics, which refers to the formal political process, and civic culture, which refers to attempts to influence that process. In the last chapter, we began our discussion of the effectiveness of civic culture with respect to social action, focusing on online social reform. In this chapter we complete our discussion, focusing on online social advocacy and narrowing to a discussion of child e-advocacy. Based on this discussion, we define a framework of effectiveness for online social advocacy.

Online Social Advocacy

The term "advocacy" has been used to refer to activities ranging from consumer education, to civil rights, to brokerage activities (Schneider & Lester, 2001). Schneider and Lester attempt to address this indiscriminate use of the term by providing the following definition: "Social work advocacy is the exclusive and mutual representation of a client(s) or a cause in a forum, attempting to systematically influence decision making in an unjust or unresponsive system(s)" (2001, 65). The *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (1995) provides a similar definition: advocacy is "the act of directly representing, defending, intervening, supporting, or recommending a course of action on behalf of one or more individuals, groups, or communities, with the goal of securing or retaining social justice." These definitions emphasize several of the key dimensions of advocacy, namely, a focus on client needs, an emphasis on acting in the client's behalf, and the importance of client empowerment.
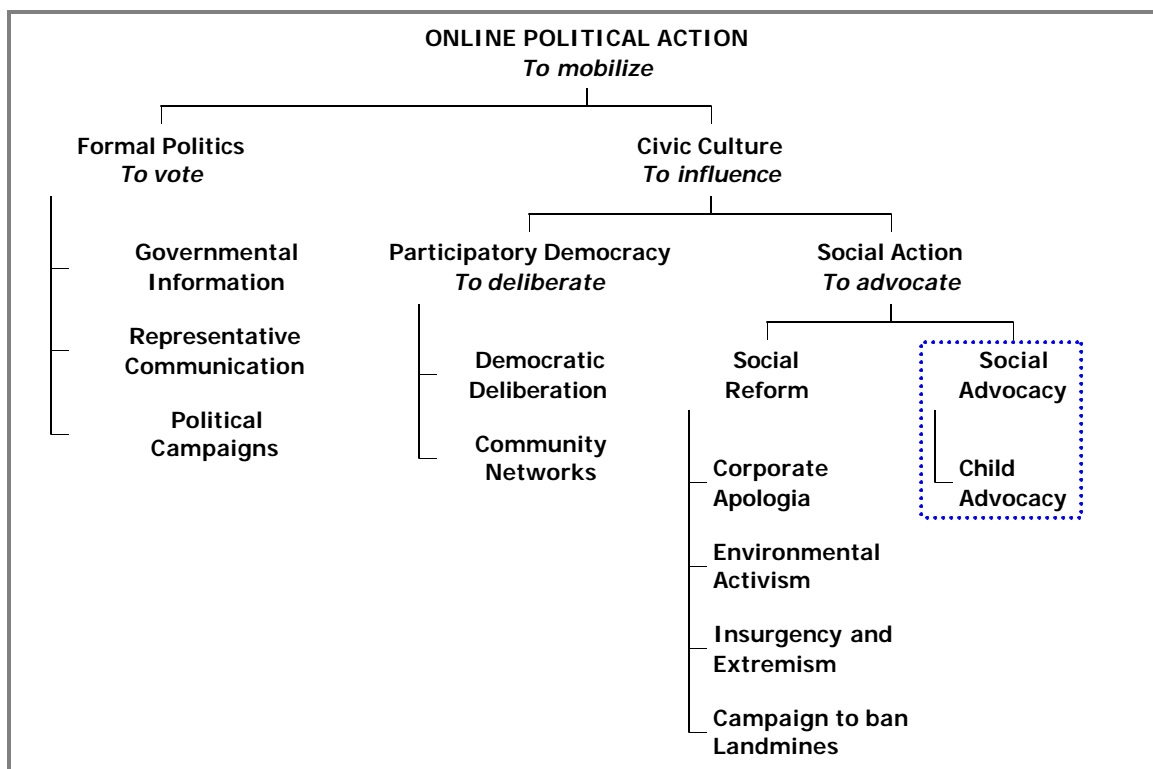
Figure 7-1. *Subgenre of Online Social Advocacy Within Framework*

Schneider and Lester (2001) have specifically distinguished between advocacy and social reform, emphasizing that the defining characteristic of advocacy is the exclusive relationship between the advocate and the client. They describe this relationship as "singular, unique, focused solely on the client, primarily responsible to the client, and centered on client needs" (Schneider

& Lester, 2001, 65). According to them, social reform encompasses attempts to correct a societal ill, an activity that occurs on a different scale than advocacy. We have addressed this distinction by separating social reform and social action into two subgenres (see Figure 7-1). (See chapter six for our discussion of the effectiveness of online social reform.)

The concept of advocacy can be further refined with respect to the specific actions it entails and the level at which it occurs. Crucial to advocacy is information, or an understanding of "the situation, polities, public perception, client-environment interaction, and issues relating to the problem" (*Encyclopedia*, 1995). This information must be obtained before any action can be undertaken on behalf of the client. Thus, advocacy is comprised of both information gathering and intervention, the latter of which takes place at both the individual and the environmental level. In other words, advocacy focuses on two things: (1) the client's interaction with the environment and (2) the social policy regulating that environment (*Encyclopedia*, 1995; Schneider & Lester 2001, 80). Based on their examination of over ninety definitions, Schneider and Lester (2001) isolated eleven dimensions of advocacy. The first two of these, pleading and representing, comprise the informational component of advocacy; the rest comprise the social action component.

1. Pleading or speaking on another's behalf

2. Representing another

3. Taking action

4. Promoting change

5. Accessing rights and benefits

6. Serving as a partisan

7. Demonstrating influence and political skills

8. Securing social justice

9. Empowering clients

10. Identifying with the client

11. Using a legal basis (59)

Within this chapter, we summarize research on electronic advocacy (or simply, e-advocacy), narrowing to a focus on e-advocacy for children. After reviewing this research, we define a framework of effectiveness for online social advocacy.

Electronic Advocacy

In the wake of decentralization resulting from welfare reform, managed care, privatization, and a conservative political climate, Fitzgerald and McNutt (1999) suggest the integration of electronic advocacy techniques into social work. Welfare reform has shifted responsibility for welfare support programs from the federal to state governments; managed care has shifted control and authority from social workers to insurance companies and other groups; and privatization has resulted in loss of protections and job security as well as competition. Decentralization complicates social advocacy because the decision makers and arenas to be addressed are more numerous and diffuse. Fitzgerald and McNutt (1999) claim that devolution, "the moving of social welfare programs from the federal level to the state and local level" (332), and the emergence of the 'shadow state,' which "consists of private agencies that mirror public agencies but do not provide the constitutional protections afforded to clients of governmental entities" (333), limit the effectiveness of traditional social advocacy approaches. Traditionally, social advocacy has focused on social and economic justice, targeting the national and state levels. Traditional social advocacy techniques have included lobbying, political action committees, referendums, grassroots organizing, monitoring the bureaucracy, campaigning, and running for office. All of these techniques are geared toward centralized power structures and are thus most effective at the national and state levels. Furthermore, social advocacy efforts are more efficient at these levels, which encompass issues at their source and the appropriate people. But traditional techniques are costly when there are multiple policy targets. These techniques must be supplemented with more suitable techniques, such as electronic advocacy.

Electronic advocacy has been defined as "the use of technologically intensive media to influence stakeholders to effect policy change" (Fitzgerald & McNutt, 1999, 334). Fitzgerald and McNutt (1999) divide these techniques into traditional and evolving forms of electronic advocacy. Traditional forms of electronic advocacy include direct mail, telephone campaigns, targeted advertisements, and other forms of mass media, frequently relying on computers (Fitzgerald & McNutt, 1999, 334). Direct-mail advocacy integrates computer databases and information technology to process and mail targeted messages; however, it is costly. Telephone campaigns integrate databases with messaging systems, which although less costly than targeted direct mailing may still be expensive. And television advertising is limited by both cost and expertise. Furthermore, access may be problematic due to the growing centralization of the media.

Emergent electronic advocacy includes the following techniques: (1) email-based techniques such as individual email, discussion lists, newsgroups; (2) Web-based techniques such as websites and other Web-based tools; and (3) related techniques such as fax, conference calling, video teleconferencing (McNutt & Boland, 1999, 434). McNutt and Boland (1999) categorize these techniques along three dimensions: active versus passive style, use of telephony, and focus. The dimension of active or passive refers to the amount of effort the recipient must expend; passive techniques in particular depend upon the motivation of the recipient to seek access or search for the message. Telephony refers to the integration of voice, data, text, and pictures. More sophisticated telephony, such as video teleconferencing, can humanize the technology; however, it can be difficult to use and costly. Focus refers to the relationship between the senders

and the receivers, such as one-to-one or many-to-many. McNutt and Boland (1999) state that relationships involving multiple recipients lead to cost savings. Briefly, they categorize email-based techniques as active, with varying focus and low telephony, and Web-based techniques as passive, with one-to-many focus and low to medium telephony (McNutt & Boland, 1999, 436).

According to McNutt (2000), the principal uses of Internet-based advocacy techniques are

1. Providing information to stakeholders through email, websites, and fax

2. Providing information to the general public through websites

3. Coordinating policy change via websites, email, newsgroups, and fax

4. Providing information to decision makers

The advantages of electronic advocacy techniques are that they are inexpensive and easy to use, reduce transaction costs, and extend geographic reach (McNutt, 2000). However, McNutt (2000) argues that electronic advocacy techniques are most effective when used in conjunction with traditional techniques.

Forces Affecting Electronic Advocacy

McNutt (2000) identifies four forces that are affecting electronic advocacy: (1) changes in technology, (2) changes in infrastructure, (3) transformation of the nature of the political system, and (4) improvements in the support and preparation of social work practitioners. First, technology changes are providing new capabilities, lowering the cost of more esoteric technologies, and refining existing technologies (McNutt, 2000). Technologies that may be leveraged by electronic advocacy in the future include: (1) more elaborate Web technologies (new programming languages, streaming video, sophisticated databases, and portals); (2) sophisticated geographic information systems (GIS) and targeting software, which enable the targeting of supporters and identification of needs; (3) PUSH technology and webcasting, which combines the interactivity of email and the information presentation of the Web to send information to a client computer; (4) videoteleconferencing, which combines voice, image, and data; (5) online fundraising; (6) online surveys; (7) advanced groupware applications; (8) wireless applications; and (9) personal assistants.

Second, changes to the information infrastructure, by which McNutt (2000) refers to network linkages and protocols both with respect to the Internet itself and with respect to specific organizations, may affect electronic advocacy. He notes that although the nonprofit sector has tended to lag behind the corporate sector with respect to technology implementation, recent studies indicate that more nonprofit organizations now have the technology base needed for electronic advocacy. With respect to the information infrastructure at the national level, trends toward higher bandwidth and deregulation as well as the digital divide will impact electronic advocacy. While higher bandwidth will facilitate the use of more sophisticated technologies such as teleconferencing, deregulation may result in a lack of a framework for public service and universal access. Lastly, the digital divide, in combination with the expense of higher bandwidth, may result in the disenfranchisement of those who cannot afford access.

Third, changes in the political landscape may expand the use of electronic advocacy. Within this category, McNutt (2000) discusses three developments: devolution, electronic government, and digital democracy. The devolution of government authority from the national to the state and local levels will lead to greater use of electronic advocacy, as the latter both reduces transaction costs and extends reach. With respect to e-government, the trends toward electronic delivery of governmental services and online provision of governmental information will increase the acceptability of cyberspace as a forum for political action. And lastly, digital democracy, which includes virtual town meetings and forums as well as online elections, will create a more amenable environment for electronic advocacy.

Fourth, improvements in the support and preparation of practitioners will be essential for advocates to take advantage of these other changes. As McNutt (2000) notes, technological literacy has not been provided in social work education, even though advocacy organizations are starting to take advantage of online technologies.

Adoption of Electronic Advocacy

Although the effectiveness of electronic advocacy has not yet been determined, there is evidence that groups are using it successfully. To determine what factors predict the successful adoption of electronic advocacy techniques, McNutt and Boland (1999) surveyed the affiliates of a national social work professional association to answer the following questions:

1. What types of electronic or online advocacy techniques are used by affiliates in their policy change efforts?

2. What types of issues do affiliates use electronic or online advocacy to address?

3. What are the perceived barriers to the use of electronic or online advocacy by affiliates?

4. What factors explain variation among affiliates in the use of electronic or online advocacy techniques?

McNutt and Boland (1999) use the diffusion of innovation theory as a framework for understanding the adoption of electronic advocacy by nonprofits. This theory holds that innovations are communicated over time from innovators to successively less receptive population groups, comprising a continuum of early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. The following characteristics of an innovation affect its chances of being adopted: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. McNutt and Boland summarize, "innovations that are considered effective, are compatible with the organization's situation, are easy to use, can be tried on a partial basis, and have results that can be observed are more likely to be adopted" (1999, 437). Diffusion of innovation theory would thus predict that affiliates would be more likely to adopt email than a website, as it is more familiar, less expensive, and less complex to implement. McNutt and Boland (1999) sent surveys to fifty-four affiliates representing fifty state chapters, two city chapters, and two U.S. territorial chapters, getting forty-eight responses.

They report the following results:

1. What types of electronic or online advocacy techniques are used by affiliates in their policy change efforts?

   More familiar innovations are more likely to be adopted; for example, all affiliates had email and many used fax and conference calls. Web-based technologies are adopted less often and teleconferencing, chat, and online surveys are rarely implemented or planned.

2. What types of issues do affiliates use electronic or online advocacy to address?

   Affiliates used electronic advocacy to address social welfare issues such as welfare reform and managed care more frequently than professional issues (licensing and vendorship) or national association priorities (violence).

3. What are the perceived barriers to the use of electronic or online advocacy by affiliates?

   The most frequently mentioned barriers were expertise and expense, then equipment and awareness. Expense and equipment are financial problems, expertise and awareness educational problems.

4. What factors explain variation among affiliates in the use of electronic or online advocacy techniques?

   McNutt and Boland find that "affiliates that use a consultant, are larger, have observed other groups using the technique, and do not perceive electronic advocacy as effective will be more likely to plan the use of a wider range of electronic advocacy techniques" (1999, 447). However, they do not reach the same conclusions about current usage.

Use of Electronic Advocacy

While McNutt and Boland (1999) focus primarily on the adoption of electronic advocacy, Turner (1998) reports on an OMB Watch study of current uses of Internet-based technologies for nonprofit public policy purposes. He reports ten major findings:

1. The Internet is not yet a major policy tool for involving participants. Nonprofits tend to use the Internet to make documents available. Visitors are not asked (1) if they would like to get involved or (2) to provide either demographic or professional information.

2. There are not many examples of "effective" uses of information and communication technology by nonprofits in public policy activities. Although there are relatively few nonprofits using the Internet for policy purposes, those that are using it are touted as models without rigorously assessing their actual effectiveness in influencing policy.

3. Website content is not consistently maintained or kept current.

4. The Web is more passive than listservs. Websites are more effectively used as virtual libraries rather than as response systems on time-sensitive issues. Listservs are more effective for addressing time-sensitive issues but lack the breadth of content of websites.

5. Nonprofits are using a narrow set of technologies and applications. The most commonly used technologies are listservs, then online registration forms, email, online databases, and downloadable files.

6. Interactivity is narrowly defined by nonprofit activities. The term "interactive" is poorly defined, lacks a set of standards, and carries various connotations. Tools such as listservs, chat rooms, and surveys manifest different levels of interactivity.

7. Creating a strong identity on the Internet is important for nonprofits. Nonprofits need to understand how to establish a consistent and easily recognizable presence, primarily via selection of domain names and registration with major search engines.

8. Barriers to Internet use are prevalent. Frequently cited barriers include lack of knowledge about and access to tools, training, and expertise.

9. Politically conservative and progressive nonprofits use the Internet at different levels and in different ways. Conservative groups tend to use high-end Internet tools to coordinate predefined public policy activities such as writing Congress and chatting online; in contrast, progressive groups tend to emphasize access to Internet tools to help visitors develop their own public policy efforts.

10. There appears to be a disconnect between nonprofit interest in using technology for public policy purposes and funding from foundations for such activities.

Turner (1998) cautions that his report merely provides examples of current uses that are neither exhaustive nor necessarily best practice, suggesting that more rigorous discussion is needed on using new technologies for engaging in public policy matters and on measuring the effectiveness of the Internet in facilitating civic participation. In lieu of these measures, Turner states that "the few activities that do exist are often replicated without fully knowing whether they are effective" (1998, 38).

Electronic Child Advocacy

An emerging trend is the adoption of electronic techniques by child advocacy organizations, which has been studied by McNutt et al. (2001). Surveying sixty-two member organizations of the National Association of Child Advocates, McNutt et al. (2001) focused on the current and planned use of electronic technologies by state-level nonprofit child advocacy organizations. They used diffusion of innovation theory as a framework, which predicts that organizational and innovation characteristics determine whether an innovation is likely to be adopted.

The organizations studied were predominantly small, and advocacy tended to be central to the organizations. McNutt et al. (2001) found that there was a relatively uniform use of less sophisticated technologies—email, phone, fax—and little use of more sophisticated technologies—teleconferencing, secure Intranets, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The organizations did not use fax on demand, chat rooms, or newsgroups. Organizations most often used email and most often characterized it as effective. Areas for which organizations used electronic advocacy techniques included child health, early childhood education, day care, and child protective services. As expected, the major barrier to the use of electronic advocacy was

expertise, followed by expense and equipment, a surprising result as more than half of the respondents used a consultant and/or had an internal technology person.

Boland (1998) discusses how nonprofit advocacy groups can use electronic advocacy technologies to their benefit. Her research, commissioned by the New England Network for Child, Youth and Family Services, describes electronic tools for effecting social change. She gives several tips on how advocacy groups can use these technologies:

1. Include email and website addresses in the information collected from professional connections

2. Add email and website addresses to organizational databases

3. Create distinct topic/subscriber email lists for communicating with constituents

4. Open discussion lists for ongoing communication with collaborators

5. Create websites to disseminate information about issues and activities

6. Bookmark helpful websites such as Internet search engines, activist sites, public policy sites, sites of elected representatives, and daily news sites

Hick and Halpin (2001) discuss the positive effects that the Internet is having on the efforts of child advocates: the Internet has encouraged education and increased information sharing and communication. They situate the rise of new ICTs like the Internet within the global economy, claiming that, although the global economy widens the divide between the rich and poor, it contributes to technological breakthroughs in wealthier nations. For example, ICTs have allowed cheap, rapid, and accurate information dissemination for NGOs and individuals who wish to promote and protect the rights of children. Specifically, ICTs stimulate a growth in the number of formal and informal information groups, because ICTs allow these groups to mobilize more effectively and cheaply, to encourage the development of broad coalitions and networks that remain decentralized, to circulate large amounts of information through networks and to encourage co-production of that information, and to constrain the capacities of governmental agencies by empowering NGOs and reducing monopolies on knowledge and expertise.

Many of the technologies that Boland (1998) and Hick and Halpin (2001) discuss have been adopted by Childwatch International. Childwatch International is a research network of 30 organizations that initiates and coordinates research and information projects on children's living conditions and rights (Miljeteig & Bistrup, 1999). According to Miljeteig and Bistrup (1999), Childwatch International launched the Children's House in Cyberspace website in 1996 to take advantage of electronic communication technologies. The website serves as an electronic meeting place for professionals who work as researchers, advocates, legislators, policy makers, planners, and programmers on behalf of children.

However useful the Internet is for child advocates, children's use of the Internet—particularly websites—is viewed with caution by Montgomery (2000). She argues that, despite an abundance of quality academic, government, and nonprofit websites, children are increasingly drawn to commercial sites. With the exception of MaMaMedia.com, these commercial sites are typically

interested in transforming children into faithful consumers. According to eMarketer's *eRetail Report*, the reason for this is not surprising: by 2002, it is predicted that teens will spend more than 1.4 billion dollars online (Montgomery, 2000, 156). Montgomery (2000) argues that, because of an unfortunate concentration on the marketing tactics of commercial websites and the proliferation of child pornography, child advocates often judge the quality of children's websites based on what these sites are lacking—inappropriate or sexual content—not their actual content. To ensure that children have a high-quality media culture, she recommends a comprehensive, multidisciplinary research agenda that guides the development of children's digital media; the development of a vibrant, noncommercial civic sector; and an expanded notion of what constitutes quality in media, not what detracts from quality.

Harbeck and Sherman (1999) provide some guidance on how to ensure quality in websites designed for young children. Based on the arguments of childhood development specialists and the unique characteristics of young children, they recommend seven design principles:

1. Websites should be concrete, provide clear and simple navigation, have simple page design, and use large, obvious icons

2. Adults or older children should guide children's interactions with websites

3. Websites should be progressive and individualized in their content and design so that they remain relevant as young children mature

4. Web activities should be relevant to real world situations, and they should provide integrated experiences

5. Web activities should cover a variety of content areas, each independent of others

6. Websites should provide active and enjoyable experiences to ensure a positive, affective response

7. Websites should be exploratory, include branching options (that are age-specific), and provide predictable responses

Effectiveness of Electronic Techniques

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of specific electronic techniques with respect to activism. For example, the effectiveness of online mailing lists (Menon, 2000), online action alerts (Agre, 1999), online fundraising (Parker, 1999; Reis, 2000a, 2000b), online volunteer recruitment (Finn, 1998), and online community organizing (Scott, 2000) have all been examined. We discuss each of these studies in turn.

Online Mailing Lists

Menon (2000) discusses the effective use of an online discussion group for orchestrating a campaign. He distinguishes between synchronous groups such as chat rooms, which support real time conversations, and asynchronous groups such as newsgroups and listservs, which support reading of messages at any time. The difference between newsgroups and listservs is that newsgroups post messages to a common site, and listservs send them to personal email

addresses. Menon (2000) focuses on electronic advocacy in online support groups, and specifically on a case study of a campaign to help a mentally ill person arrested for not paying for a cup of coffee.

The discussion group Menon (2000) studies is the schizophrenia listserv (SCHIZOPH), an open unmoderated group in which consumers, parents, and professionals share information about medications, side effects, and symptoms, as well as provide support for schizophrenics. The case upon which he focuses occurred in March 1997, when the members formed a community around the arrest of a schizophrenic woman who couldn't pay for a seventy-nine-cent cup of coffee. This posting generated many responses, one of which suggested sending the money with a nice letter to the restaurant. Members picked up on the idea, discussing strategy and eventually deciding to post individual letters online as well as send letters (with seventy-nine cents enclosed) and emails to the news station that carried the story. The strategizing occurred within thirty-six hours of the first message, prompting one-hundred and fifty postings. A week later, the news station broadcast the story of the campaign.

Menon (2000) claims that the case exemplified a shift from a discussion group to a virtual community, in which mutual support and cohesiveness were displayed. According to him, one of the most important aspects of electronic technologies for engaging in advocacy is their speed and low cost: "Action can be taken when issues are still hot" (Menon, 2000, 79). Menon (2000) suggests the following guidelines for conducting a campaign such as this:

1. Execute the campaign according to a plan

2. A few members should take the lead in organizing the campaign

3. Members should the sharing ideas and drafts

4. The final draft should be posted to a common site

5. Each individual should only send one email to each target to avoid the appearance of spamming

Online Action Alerts

Based on his observations of online action alerts, Agre (1999) provides twenty guidelines for designing them effectively. He defines an action alert as "a message that someone sends out to the net asking for a specific action to be taken on a current political issue." There are two types of action alerts: single messages and structured campaigns. Single alerts are sent with the hope that they will be disseminated to the maximum number of sympathetic online users. Structured campaigns use mailing lists specifically created for the campaign to send action alerts to an audience consisting of either everyone online or a smaller group of partisans. In contrast to real-world action alerts, online alerts are forwarded from person to person without imposing any additional costs. Agre's (1999) twenty guidelines are as follows:

1. Establish authenticity

2. Include the day's date

3. Include clear beginning and ending markers

4. Beware of second-hand alerts

5. Think about whether you want the alert to propagate at all

6. Make it self-contained

7. Ask your reader to take a simple, clearly defined, rationally chosen action

8. Make it easy to understand

9. Get your facts straight

10. Start a movement, not a panic

11. Tell the whole story

12. Do not just preach to the converted

13. Avoid polemics

14. Make it easy to read

15. Do not use a chain-letter petition

16. Urge people to inform you of their actions

17. Do not overdo it

18. Do a post-mortem

19. Do not mistake email for organizing

20. Encourage good practices

Online Fundraising

Nonprofits' use of the Internet to raise funds, either by requesting funds online, using visitor address information to target direct mail, selling products online, or soliciting online credit card contributions, has also been a topic of interest (Finn, 1998, 41). Citing a recent study by CMS Interactive, a division of Craver, Mathews, Smith & Co and a direct marketing and fund raising firm, Parker (1999) states that

> 25% of America adults are both online and say they give time or money to social causes. That translates into some 50 million people. Of that group, two-thirds say that they've heard little or nothing from charities about opportunities to take action online; 56% have never visited the Web site of a charity; and only about 7% say they have given online. (39)

The study also notes "8% said they would be willing to make a donation to a charity or public-interest group over the Internet" (Parker, 1999, 39). These numbers suggest that nonprofits are not taking full advantage of the many capabilities of the Web. Reis, editor of *Fund Raising Management*, reports on a first-ever survey conducted by the Peppers and Rogers Group, which notes "none of the 20 national and international nonprofit online charities reviewed recognize

donors already in their offline databases… 70% of the charity Web sites reviewed wouldn't even recognize a visitor on his second visit to the site, one of the most basic capabilities of an online for-profit enterprise" (2000b, 3).

According to Reis (2000a), another reason nonprofits' websites are ineffective is "they offer only one-way content, typically just at the national level. Yet, the power of advocacy for nonprofits is often driven by grassroots activities where members know each other, are personally involved and are passionate about their common interests and causes" (Reis, 2000a, 24). Consequently, interactivity is a frequently mentioned component to nonprofit fundraising online; providing activities for advocates at the regional and local levels is also emphasized. Indeed, the challenge facing nonprofits is best summarized by Reis, who says that having a presence online or being listed with other organizations in a Web database is not enough: "Web sites need to be interactive, informative, communicative and create a support structure from the international to the local chapter level. All this has to be done before you can begin to expect the Internet to significantly increase fund raising efforts" (2000a, 22).

Online Volunteer Recruitment

Finn (1998) has discussed online volunteer recruitment, arguing that devolution has resulted in an increasing dependence on volunteers for health and human service organizations. Thus, Finn (1998) has studied how the Internet has been used for soliciting volunteers and in-kind contributions (money, goods, services). According to him, the Internet is an ideal medium for reaching a vast audience quickly and inexpensively. And agencies have begun using it to promote their visibility, provide community education, offer information and referral services, obtain community feedback, and engage in advocacy (Finn, 1998, 40-41). In addition, nonprofits are using the Internet to recruit volunteers; however, there is a lack of research concerning how many volunteers are recruited online or how satisfied agencies are with those volunteers.

From a pool of two-thousand websites, Finn (1998) selected four-hundred agencies based on whether they had a social service function and whether they were nonprofit. He mailed a survey to those agencies' directors, two-hundred and nine of which responded. The survey asked about agency demographics; online goals; online development issues; extent of online activity (number of hits); experiences and satisfaction with volunteers and contributions; and general comments. Finn (1998) asked who developed the site (volunteer, staff, consultant), what it cost to develop, and what it cost to maintain. A majority of the agencies reported that the site was developed for free (65.3%) and that there was no cost to them for its maintenance (58.1%). A majority of agencies did not report how many hits they received; however of those that did, the median was one-hundred hits per week. Finn (1998) notes that agencies that paid more to develop and maintain their sites and that updated their sites more frequently were likely to receive more hits. With respect to management, a majority of agencies reported that the site was managed by in-house staff (49.0%). With respect to updating, more than a third stated that they updated only a few times per year (37.5%).

Finn found that "the primary purposes of agency Web sites are to provide information about agency mission, goals, and services and to educate the community about related social problems

rather than to solicit volunteers and contributions" (1998, 51). However, most agencies are receiving volunteers through their websites of comparable quality to those recruited more traditionally. With respect to in-kind contributions, only one third of the agencies received these through their websites, accounting for less than 5% of total donations. Finn (1998) claims that there are two factors associated with success in online volunteer recruitment—frequent updates and establishing an autonomous site. With respect to number of hits, those agencies that paid more for developing and maintaining the site and those that updated their site frequently received more hits. Finally, Finn (1998) notes that his study indicates that many agencies are not evaluating the costs and benefits of being online. When asked what advice they would give to other agencies, respondents made the following recommendations:

1. Plan the development and the administration of the website carefully:

   • Clear and current content is important

   • Involve a broad range of staff in defining the site's mission, reviewing site material, and suggesting improvements

   • Have a specific staff member responsible for the site

   • Choose a Web designer and Internet service provider carefully

   • Consider ongoing costs and the need to keep up with technology

2. Publicize the website:

   • Put Web address on all materials—business cards, stationary, newsletters, ads, and brochures

   • Register the site with search engines

   • Establish links to sites from local organizations—Chamber of Commerce, State Information and Referral, local colleges and universities, FreeNets, and local businesses

   • Post the site on listservs and Usenet groups that focus on agency mission

   • Having a website indicates to constituencies that agency is progressive, professional, and up-to-date

Online Community Organizing

Finally, Scott (2000) examines the effectiveness of online community organizing. He defines community organizing as "an activity that enables ordinary people to gain more control over their own lives by building relationships with each other so that they can act collectively around their own interests" (Scott, 2000, 5). He defines five common strategies for building community:

1. To build power through organized people

2. To develop common spaces where people can talk, disagree, and build trust

3. To build self-sustaining, long-lasting relationships among citizens based on shared interests

4. To create democratically governed organizations owned by citizens

5. To focus on leadership development of people in communities (5)

Nonprofit uses of the Internet have had several objectives: to impact a public policy issue, to acquire new supporters and develop two-way communication through email, and to build community (Scott, 2000). However, these efforts have relied primarily on email; thus efforts to build community have been limited. These current uses of email replicate the one-to-many communication of issue-based organizing. Instead, Scott (2000) advocates community organizing, which emphasizes developing relationships among constituents.

Community organizing consists of three types of relationships: those between the organizer and citizens, those among citizens with shared interests and values, and those between organized citizens and institutions with whom they are attempting to negotiate changes in public policy. Thus, community organizers must use the Internet both to disseminate information and to build relationships, the latter of which is problematic owing to the difficulty of establishing intimate, honest relationships online. This barrier can be breached if the number of participants is relatively small, admission to the discussion is controlled, and people drop their online masks. Scott (2000) describes five categories of best practices for online community organizing:

1. Developing content—create content that is actionable (a way for citizens to act), localized and personalized, and/or member-generated

2. Building community—develop discussion rules; create opportunities for the formation of smaller communities and various levels of involvement; develop mechanisms for members to hold each other responsible for actions; facilitate social interactions; translate online community into offline activity and vice versa; and provide event-based online community activism

3. Leading consumers to action—provide community members with meaningful gifts of action and mechanisms for supporting collective action; aggregate their actions for maximum impact; use the Internet to identify and recruit leaders; follow email advocacy rules; implement a transparent hierarchy of advocacy; collaborate and partner; and publicize results

4. Personalization and responsible technology use—ask permission to collect and use information; leverage Internet profiling and measurement technologies; establish clear privacy policies; and let users create self-profiles

5. Management and strategy concepts—conduct market research on users; use managers or consultants for executing strategies; conduct real-time prototyping; develop democratic governance of activities; and expand constituent base by marketing

Framework of Effectiveness for Online Social Advocacy

Research in electronic advocacy shows that advocates mainly use basic technologies such as email and websites; more advanced technologies such as chat rooms or online surveys are less commonly used. And as Turner notes, "interactivity is narrowly defined by nonprofit activities" and there are few criteria for assessing effective uses of online technologies (1998, 3). However, researchers have argued that electronic technologies need to be integrated into social work advocacy.

Based on our literature review, we have constructed a framework of effectiveness for online social advocacy (see Table 7-1 on the next page). For each criterion, we have counted each mention of a specific feature in our literature review. Most of these studies merely reported on features that have been implemented rather than tested whether the features were effective. This framework provides only a general sense of those features that appear to be most critical to effective online social advocacy; therefore, it should be used as a guideline rather than as a prescription.

Table 7-1. *Framework of Effectiveness for Online Social Advocacy*

Criteria	Rank
Information—Agency information; Child advocacy (rights, child health, early childhood education, day care, child protective services, living conditions); Community education; Educational information; Election information (voter education); Event information (calendars); Governmental information; Instructions (campaigning, lobbying); Issue information (news and opinions, results of advocacy); Lawsuit information; Legislative information (analyses of bills, committee votes, referenda, resolutions); Policies and procedures (rulemaking, legislature); Policy information; Project information (descriptions, findings, reports, fact sheets, transcripts)	30
Email; Listservs; Discussion lists; Email lists; Mailing lists—Advocates; Citizens; Congressional members; Legislators; Policy experts	25
Feedback—Community-based research; Community feedback; Guest book; Online surveys; Registration forms; Submission of published papers; Subscription forms	20
Multimedia—Graphics; Groupware; Internet-based faxing; PUSH technologies; Streaming audio and video; Teleconferencing; Video-teleconferencing; Webcasting/Cybercasting; TV news feeds	16
Action alerts—Calls to action; Legislative alerts; News alerts; Single messages; Structured campaigns; Weekly mail alert	15
Database—Geographic information systems (GIS); Job bank; Searchable	15
Localism—Levels of involvement; Link online and offline activities; Personalize; Smaller communities; Supplement with traditional activism	15
Chat rooms—Internet relay chats; Issue-based	11
Links—Activist sites; Agency offices (local, state, national); Chamber of Commerce site; College and university sites; Community networks; Congressional members' sites; Gateways (specific networks); Local business sites; News sites; Online resources; Portals (issue-specific); Public policy sites; Representatives' sites; State Information and Referral	11
Media interactivity—Directory; Interactive map; Issue matching; Search engine; Zip-code identifiers	11
Mobilization—Activist network; Contribution forms; Template email/letter; Volunteer forms	11
Empathy—Animations; Enjoyable; Interpersonal appeals; Personalization; Quizzes	9
Newsgroups—Usenet	6
Targeting—Market research; Profiling and measurement technologies; Targeted messages	5
Access—ISPs; Community networks; Public terminals; Universal access	4
Bulletin boards; Message boards	4
Electronic events—Live chat sessions; Live concerts; Online elections; Online event-based activism; Virtual town meetings	3
Services—Governmental services; Information and referral services	2
Rules and guidelines—Advocacy rules (get permission, deliver simple message; make it easy to act); Discussion rules	1

Conclusion

From this framework, we conclude that advocates mainly use the Internet for providing information and communicating. Mobilization efforts focused on recruitment, fundraising, or discussion forums such as bulletin boards seem to be less commonly used. In the next chapter, we present the results of our evaluations of thirty-two child advocacy websites using the frameworks developed from our literature review. These evaluations provide a broad overview of how online advocacy is currently being implemented.

Chapter 8 : EVALUATION OF CHILD ADVOCACY WEBSITES

B ased on the effectiveness frameworks constructed in the preceding chapters, we developed a form for our evaluation of websites. In this chapter, we discuss our sample websites, method, and evaluation form, as well as present the results of our evaluation of child advocacy websites.

Sample and Method

Our purposive sample consisted of forty-two websites: thirty-two child advocacy sites, five political sites, and five environmental sites. We selected these sites based on an online search, examples from the literature, and expert consultation. In addition, we attempted to select representative examples providing different levels of information—international, national, regional, state, county, city, and issue-based. We included the ten environmental and political sites for purposes of general comparison with the child advocacy sites. In this chapter, we focus on the results from our evaluation of the thirty-two child advocacy sites. (See Appendix A for a list of websites. See Appendix B for our evaluation of the political and environmental websites.)

For each website, we noted which features were implemented using an evaluation form consisting of a series of simple checklists. We marked a feature as implemented if we found at least one example. This approach provides a general overview of the features on each website in an objective sense; however, we did not distinguish subjectively those websites that we felt implemented certain features more effectively than others did. (We provide subjective descriptions of the websites in Appendix C.)

One research assistant evaluated all of the websites with respect to informational and motivational features. Two other research assistants each evaluated half of the websites with respect to basic and interest-invoking features. We achieved high inter-rater reliability between the latter two evaluators through joint examination of five additional websites: three child advocacy sites, one environmental site, and one political site.

Evaluation Form

Our effectiveness framework consists of four main sections, which we based on our continuum of action—from informing, to engaging, to motivating the user to act (see Chapter 1). Correspondingly, the framework is divided into Informational, Interest-Invoking, and Motivational Features, as well as the Basic Features considered essential for any website. Each of these sections is comprised of several features. (See Appendix A for definitions of features and a blank copy of our evaluation form.)

These four sections can be distinguished in terms of type of interaction. Current best practice in both writing instruction and instructional computing share the assumption that active rather than passive learning is more effective and, furthermore, that interactivity is an essential part of active learning (Mehlenbacher et al., 2000). But Mehlenbacher et al. (2000) caution that the meaning of "interactivity" online is not stable: definitions include a high degree of learner control; an information-rich environment; the extent to which sequential messages relate; and the use of video/audio, simulations, online forms, and collaborative learning technologies. Correspondingly, they propose four different types of interactivity: student-environment, student-content, student-instructor, and student-student. Stromer-Galley (2000) has suggested a similar distinction between computer-mediated human interaction and media interaction. According to her definition, computer-mediated human interaction is "prolonged interaction between two or more people through the channel of a computer network," an interaction characterized by both responsiveness and reflexivity (Stromer-Galley, 2000, 117). In contrast,

media interaction refers to the interactive capabilities of the technology itself, or the interaction between the user and the medium (Stromer-Galley, 2000).

We appropriated Mehlenbacher et al.'s (2000) distinction between environment, content, instructor, and student to define the sections of our evaluation form. Within the context of our evaluation, we distinguished between those features characteristic of an online environment in general, those specific to the content or subject matter of a website, and those that facilitate communication between two or more individuals. Features characteristic of the online medium or specific to a website's subject matter correspond loosely to Stromer-Galley's (2000) concept of media interaction. In addition, features that facilitate communication between two or more individuals correspond to the computer-mediated human interaction that Stromer-Galley (2000) describes. Furthermore, those features can facilitate communication either between citizens and decision makers or among citizens themselves, the former of which has been termed vertical communication, the latter horizontal communication (Stromer-Galley, 2000).

We drew from these concepts to construct our evaluation form. Our sections Basic Features and Interest-Invoking Features focus on features of the online environment in general. Basic features are those that are taken for granted on any website; interest-invoking are those that are employed to engage the interest or emotions of users. Both sections, however, address features that may not be specific to the subject of the website and that do not require interaction between individuals. Our Informational Features section focuses on the information specific to the website's subject matter. And our Motivational Features section focuses on features that facilitate communication between individuals, either vertically or horizontally. Below we describe the four main sections of our evaluation form—Basic, Informational, Interest-Invoking, Motivational—citing the research used to construct it. (See Appendix A for a blank copy of our evaluation form.)

Basic Features

This section includes features that are essential for any basic, informational website. Certain features are taken for granted by users, such as the provision of a privacy policy or the necessity of online security when buying online. In their empirical study of design factors that affect user satisfaction or dissatisfaction in online information-gathering tasks, Zhang and von Dran (2000) discuss these features in detail. Drawing on hygiene-motivator theory, they propose that there are two types of factors that determine user satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a website: hygiene factors, which provide basic and essential functionality, and motivator factors, which increase users' satisfaction and motivate them to return to the site.

Zhang and von Dran (2000) identify three hygiene categories: technical aspects, navigation, and privacy and security. In general, hygiene categories emphasize the functional aspects of a website and include those online features that users take for granted; if they are absent, users become dissatisfied. Zhang and von Dran (2000) also identify three motivator categories: enjoyment, cognitive outcomes, and credibility. In general, motivator categories emphasize users' interactions with a site rather than just the site itself. As Zhang and von Dran state, "these factors make users feel they are involved, either cognitively or emotionally, while interacting with the Web site" (2000, 1265).

We drew from these categories selectively when constructing our evaluation form. First, we do not address cognitive outcomes. Zhang and von Dran (2000) define cognitive outcomes as features related to learning while surfing, but identify only one feature: level of learned new knowledge or skills. As this feature would be difficult to measure in lieu of a usability study, we did not include it. Second, we have added two additional categories identified in Zhang and von Dran's study, although they had less success clearly identifying these categories. The first of these, organization of information, includes features related to the arrangement of information—overviews, table of contents, summaries and headings, and logical information structure (Zhang and von Dran, 2000). These features would seem to be essential for any website attempting to inform users about a specific issue. The second, information content, includes features related to the currency, relevance, accuracy, and completeness of information (Zhang and von Dran, 2000), features frequently associated with online credibility (Constantinides & Swenson, 2000). As credibility was addressed in this section, we included this category as well. (We address the category of enjoyment later under Interest-Invoking Features section.)

Technical aspects

The technical aspects category includes features related to basic site functionality, such as load times, platform and browser support, and site availability (Zhang and von Dran, 2000). However, evaluating these features would have required testing on various platforms with multiple browsers, as well as repeat visits over an extended period of time. Therefore, we evaluated only two technical features: informative URL and informative keywords. An informative URL makes a site more accessible for users trying to find specific information online, thus contributing to site availability. Furthermore, Turner (1998) has stressed the importance of using informative keywords, as many search engines restrict their searches to keywords rather than the full content of a website. Correspondingly, the ease of finding a site also relates to site availability.

Privacy and security

The privacy and security category includes features such as registration or access mechanisms, authorized collection or use of user data, and data encryption (Zhang and von Dran, 2000). In their literature review of credibility and medical websites, Constantinides and Swenson (2000) have identified several features addressing privacy and security concerns: disclaimers, disclosure statements, privacy policies, and security mechanisms. We based this section of our evaluation framework on research identified in their review.

Disclaimers are statements explicitly outlining the limitations, purpose, scope, and authority of information (Terry, 1999; Mitretek, 1999; Spielberg, 1998; Rosoff, 1999). Disclosure statements explain the collection, use, and distribution of information; the mechanisms for maintaining security; and/or website ownership, sponsorship, advertising, underwriting, commercial funding, and potential conflicts of interest (Mitretek, 1999; Online Privacy Alliance, 2000; Silberg et al., 1997). A privacy policy explains how the privacy of individually identifiable information is ensured (Online Privacy Alliance, 2000; TRUSTe, 1997). And the use of security mechanisms protect personal information from loss, misuse, or alteration (Online Privacy Alliance, 2000).

Credibility

The credibility category includes features such as the reputation of the website owner, the presence of external recognition, and the identification of website owners or designers (Zhang and von Dran, 2000). For this category, we based our evaluation form on research referenced in Constantinides and Swenson's (2000) literature review. We include attribution, authorship, and external recognition in this category. Attribution refers to the posting of relevant copyright information and reference sources for the content of the website (Silberg et al., 1997). Authorship refers to the clear articulation of authors and contributors, their affiliations, and their credentials (Silberg et al., 1997). And external recognition is indicated by seals of approval, website awards, and recommendations from outside organizations (Mitretek, 1999).

Navigation

The navigation category includes features related to moving around the site, such as location indicators, navigation aids, and directions (Zhang and von Dran, 2000). We include within this category broken links, navigation aids, and a search capability. A broken link is the only feature in our evaluation form that should not be found on a website.

Organization of information

The organization of information category includes features related to the arrangement of information content, such as overviews, tables of content, summaries and headings, and the structure of information presentation (Zhang and von Dran, 2000). We include menu, headings, and summaries within this category.

Information content

The information content category includes features related to the amount and type of information covered, such as its currency, relevance, accuracy, and completeness (Zhang and von Dran, 2000). We felt that features such as the accuracy and completeness of information must be determined by experts; therefore, we limited this section to the relevance and currency of the information provided.

Relevant information entails that content be relevant to the subject or issue addressed by the website (Mitretek, 1999). Up-to-date information entails that information be current and frequently updated (Mitretek, 1999; Silberg et al., 1997). The currency of each website was based on the date of last update noted in the Identification section. If the last update was within one month, the website content was judged to be kept up-to-date.

Informational Features

This section includes features that provide a user with information relevant to the purpose of, or issue addressed by, the site. A website has been defined as a "collection of linked files that can contain text, audio, and visual content" (Turner, 1998, Appendix). We view both the text contained by a website and external hypertext links to the text on another website as information.

Within the context of our evaluation, we view this category as more extensive than merely establishing a presence online. As Turner (1998) has stated, some organizations view a website

as an online brochure and provide only basic organizational materials online. The purpose of an online brochure is simply to make users aware of the organization (Ng et al., 1998; Fitzgerald & McNutt, 1999). However, although establishing an online presence is necessary for mobilizing users to act, it is not sufficient (Reis, 2000a). As a first step toward mobilizing a user, information about the issue or purpose of the website must be provided in addition to basic organizational information.

We include in this category information and external links, maintaining that the distinction between the two is important. First, while an organization can vouch for the information it provides on its own website, it cannot ensure the accuracy of information on another website. For this reason, many websites group external links on one page and provide a statement (a disclaimer; see our description under the Basic Features section) that explicitly limits their responsibility for the information on external sites. And second, the distinction between providing information on a website and linking to that information allows users to access different levels of information. For example, a website can summarize a legislative act and also provide an external link to the Library of Congress' database Thomas, which provides the full text of the act. The Summaries feature in the Basic Features section of our evaluation form reflects this approach to information provision.

Information

The information category includes the text contained by a website. We include in this category basic information about the website and contact information for the website owner. We also include legislative, governmental, judicial, research, interest groups, news, business, and international information, drawing some of these definitions from Turner's (1998) nine areas of public policy activity:

- Legislative information includes information on lobbying or "attempts to influence the introduction, enactment, or modification of local, state, and federal legislation" (Turner, 1998, 31).

- Governmental information includes information on "the rulemaking process on the federal, state, or local level" (Turner, 1998, 28). Turner (1998) refers to this category as administrative.

- Judicial information includes information on "the promotion of more responsible and accountable judicial and correctional systems and law enforcement practices" (Turner, 1998).

- Research information includes information on findings, data, or key data elements (Turner, 1998)

- Interest group information includes information on special interest groups or lobbyists. Interest groups have been defined as "any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes" (Hoefer, 1999).

- News includes information drawn from the traditional news media—newspaper, radio, TV—as well as newsletters and press releases provided by other agencies, individuals, or organizations.

- Business information includes information about businesses or economic development.

- International information includes information about international entities such as the United Nations or other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and their activities.

In addition, we include instructions; product information; information about a candidate, an elected official, a political issue, or voting; information regarding citizenry; information specific to a local region or community and its activities; and information specific to an activist issue and related activities.

External Links

The external links category includes links to text on another website. Within this category we include links to the websites of other offices of the website owner; links to websites containing legislative, governmental, judicial, research, interest group, news, business, or additional information; links to the website of a partner commercial organization; links to the website of a candidate, an endorser of a candidate, or a political party; links to a community network; and links to the websites of other activist organizations or endorsers, wider issue networks, and industry-related websites.

Interest-Invoking Features

This section includes features that we consider to be effective in invoking interest or engagement on the part of a user, in the absence of human interaction. According to Zhang and von Dran (2000), the enjoyment category includes features that make a website entertaining or fun, such as humor and multimedia. Furthermore, they classify enjoyment as a motivator factor, or as a factor that motivates users to return to a site. Studies in e-commerce and online education have similarly suggested that enjoyment is important for encouraging repeat visits as well as for learning. With respect to e-commerce, researchers have found that websites must be pleasing and fun to retain customers, as well as provide emotional appeal in the form of playfulness, personalization, and empathy (Helander & Khalid, 2000; Winn & Beck, 2002; Lerouge, 2000). In online education, it has been suggested that online courses should be enjoyable as well as useful to be successful (Soon et al., 2001; Tobin, 1998). And finally, based on the arguments of childhood development specialists and the unique characteristics of young children, Harbeck and Sherman (1999) have recommended that websites for children should provide active and enjoyable experiences.

However, Zhang and von Dran (2000) focus on information-gathering tasks, which implies that enjoyment occurs in lieu of human interaction. This implicit distinction between multimedia and human interaction resembles Mehlenbacher et al.'s (2000) distinction between student-environment and student-student or student-instructor interaction, as well as Stromer-Galley's (2000) distinction between computer-mediated human interaction and media interaction. We

limit this category to interaction with the medium itself, a type of interaction similar to student-environment interaction or media interaction.

Multimedia

The multimedia category includes those features that employ a communication medium in addition to the website itself. We include within this category audio, graphics, interactive graphics, and video.

Media interaction

The media interaction category includes those features that employ specialized software. We have appropriated Stromer-Galley's (2000) concept of media interactivity, although not her examples. She characterizes navigating hyperlinks, filling out surveys, and downloading information as examples of media interactivity. However, we addressed hyperlinks in the Basic Features section and will discuss online surveys in the Motivational Features section, below. Instead, we include in this category downloadable files, geographic information systems (GIS), and zip-code locators.

Emotional appeal

The emotional appeal category includes those features that appeal to the emotions of the user. We call this category "emotional appeal" rather than "enjoyment" as the former term includes empathy and sympathy as well as amusement, an important consideration given the often serious subject matter of advocacy websites. Within this category, we include interactive games and quizzes, narratives and personalized content, and postcards, posters, and screensavers.

Motivational Features

This section includes features that we consider to be effective in mobilizing users to take action, all of which rely on human interaction. Although Zhang and von Dran (2000) define motivator factors as those factors that increase users' satisfaction and motivate them to return to the site, their categorization is limited. Because they focus on general information-seeking tasks, none of their features address interaction between the user and the site owners or between the group of users as a community. Research in online education, e-commerce, and online political action has emphasized that mobilization, whether to learn, to buy, or to act, requires interaction.

Researchers have claimed that effective learning requires student interaction with peers and instructors (Sorg & McElhinney, 2000); correspondingly, many studies have focused on the effective use of online technologies for collaboration, interaction, and learning (Tolmie et al., 2000; Flottemesch, 2000; Navarro and Shoemaker, 1999; Tobin, 1998; Scifres et al., 1997). With respect to e-commerce, Nel et al. (1999) state the following: "At the moment it would seem that technical and creative considerations are the driving forces in Web site design—one can not but wonder at the pitfalls of ignoring the human interaction considerations" (109). Rather, they view relationship building to be crucial to e-commerce. And as discussed above, Stromer-Galley (2000) distinguishes between two forms of interaction in her study of online political campaigns, the first and most important of which is computer-mediated human interaction.

In this section, we address human interaction, distinguishing between its various forms based on both the direction (vertical or horizontal) and the form (email, electronic forum, online forms, real-world) of communication. We include the following categories: email links, human interaction, feedback, and mobilization. The features for each category are classified by the purpose of the site designers: to establish a presence, to inform, to educate, or to mobilize a user to donate, vote, deliberate, or advocate. (See Chapter 1 for a general description of our online genres and related purposes. See Chapters 2-7 for descriptions of the purposes with respect to specific features.)

Email Links

The email links category includes interaction in which the user contacts another individual but does not necessarily provide any personal or issue-related information. The direction of communication tends to be vertical and one-way. We include within this category email links to the owner and the webmaster of the website; candidates for office, their endorsers, and party officials; media contacts and public officials; and other activists or advocates, business contacts, and policy experts.

Human Interaction

The human interaction category includes interaction in which more than two individuals communicate. The direction of communication tends to be horizontal and is many-to-many. This section corresponds most closely to Stromer-Galley's (2000) concept of computer-mediated human interaction, in that the communication can be both responsive and reflective. Within this category we include listservs, bulletin or message boards, newsgroups, and chat rooms.

Feedback

The feedback category includes interaction in which the user provides information to another individual, information that may be personal or issue-related and therefore indicates some degree of commitment by the user. The direction of communication tends to be vertical and one-way. Within this category we include guest books, job and resume banks, online forms, and online surveys; forms for submitting political issues and problems; and forms for submitting data and website content.

Mobilization

The mobilization category includes those features that allow a user to take action online. The direction of communication tends to be one-way and vertical; however, the action taken by the user has real-world consequences. Therefore, this section encompasses the desired outcomes for each online genre. Within this category we include volunteer and contribution forms; online auctions and order forms; electronic events with candidates or public officials; electronic lobby registration forms; online voting; community networks and virtual town meetings; and action alerts, electronic petitions, flyers and pamphlets, online event-based activism, and template emails or letters.

Evaluation Results

For each section—Basic, Informational, Interest-Invoking, Motivational—we have presented the results from our evaluation of the child advocacy websites below. We have sorted the websites based on the number of features they implement. In other words, a website that implements all of the features included in our Basic Features section will be ranked first. Finally, we have calculated the percentage of child advocacy websites that have implemented each feature.

Basic Features

The results from the Basic Features section of our evaluation form are shown in Table 8-1. First, we found that less than half of the advocacy websites provide informative keywords (47%). As some search engines search for the keywords provided in the HTML code rather than searching the entire content of a website, the lack of informative keywords may prevent users from finding a site.

In addition, we found that a surprisingly low percentage of advocacy sites implement those features addressing privacy and security issues: only 34% of the sites provide disclaimers; 47% provide disclosure statements; 56% explain their privacy policies; and 41% indicate their security mechanisms.

With respect to credibility, advocacy websites fared very well. Eighty-four percent provide references for website content and 91% provide owner or author credentials. However, there is a low percentage of external recognition features such as awards or seals of approval: only 28%. Whether or not external recognition affects users' impressions of a site has yet to be determined definitively in the literature.

Our results regarding navigation were mixed. Although 88% of the sites provide some type of navigation aid, only 56% implement search functionality. The lack of a search capability greatly reduces the ease with which users can access site content. Furthermore, 56% of advocacy websites had a broken link—including four of the top five websites in this section. (We did not include broken links as a feature in the total used to rank the sites as this is the only feature on our form that is not desirable. And we did not check every link to verify that none were broken.)

However, advocacy websites also fared well with respect to information organization. We found that 97% of the sites have menus, 91% have headings, and 72% provide summaries. Our results for information content were also respectable: all of the websites provide relevant information and 84% had been updated within the past month.

Table 8-1. *Basic Features*

Code	Informative URL	Informative keywords	Disclaimer	Disclosure	Privacy policy	Security	Attribution	Authorship	External recognition	Broken links	Navigation aids	Search capability	Menu	Headings	Summaries	Relevant information	Up-to-date information	Total # of features (out of 16)
Child Advocacy Websites																		
3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
4	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
19	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
1	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14
34	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14
42	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	14
39		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14
21	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	13
36	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	13
10	X	X		X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	13
17	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	13
37	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	12
2	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X		X	X	12
31		X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12
7	X	X			X	X		X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	12
33	X	X					X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	11
16	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		11
20				X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11
29				X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11
14		X					X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	10
40	X						X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	9
27			X				X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	9
9		X					X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	9
35		X						X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9
11						X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	8
12	X						X	X			X		X		X	X	X	8
13	X					X	X	X			X		X	X		X		8
25	X						X	X		X	X		X	X		X		7
6	X						X	X		X	X		X	X		X		7
15								X			X		X	X	X	X	X	7
28							X	X				X				X	X	5
41							X	X		X			X			X		4
%	63	47	34	47	56	41	84	91	28	56	88	56	97	91	72	100	84	

Informational Features

The results from the Informational Features section of our evaluation form are shown in Tables 8-2 and 8-3. Table 8-2 includes the results from the Information category and Table 8-3 shows results from the External Links category. All of the advocacy websites have information on the site owner and 97% give contact information. In addition, 84% provide information on advocacy events or results and 94% provide information on the issue of child advocacy. In addition, we found that 88% of the advocacy sites provide research or instructions, 84% provide news, and 75% provide legislative information. However, only 28% of the advocacy sites post community information. As we discussed in our chapter on online democracy (Chapter 5), localism is viewed by many scholars as critical for online deliberation. Advocacy websites should enable users to engage in real-world action in their community by providing information about local events or issues.

A similar result is found with respect to external links (see Table 8-3). Only 31% of child advocacy websites link to wider issue networks, which we defined as webrings or advocacy organizations at a higher level (national or international). However, 97% of advocacy organizations do link to other activist organizations. External links are one way in which advocacy organizations can establish coalitions with similar organizations. Other results from our evaluation of links are as follows: 63% link to other offices, 78% link to governmental information, and 59% link to research. Less than half of the sites provide external links to information in the remaining categories.

One finding that bears closer examination is the low percentage of advocacy sites providing information on or links to political candidates or issues: 38% of the sites provide information on candidates and only 3% provide information on political issues. Similarly, only 3% link to candidate or political party sites. Advocacy includes campaigning for those candidates or issues most supportive of child welfare, the first step of which is providing information.

Table 8-2. *Informational Features—Information*

Code	Agency / Ind / Org	Contact	Legislative	Governmental	Judicial	Research	Interest groups	News	Business	International	Instructions	Products	Candidate / Official	Political issue	Voting	Citizenry	Community	Municipal / Regional	Activism	Activist issue	Total # of Features
Child Advocacy Websites																					
39	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				X		X	X	15
1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X				X		X	X	13
7	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X		X	X			X		X	X	13
21	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X				X		X	X	13
29	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X		X				X		X	X	13
10	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X		X				X		X	X	12
37	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X	X						X	X	12
2	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X								X	X	11
3	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X							X	X	11
4	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X		X						X	X	11
12	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X						X		X	X	11
20	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X							X	X	11
34	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X		X						X	X	11
42	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X								X	X	11
13	X	X	X	X		X		X			X	X	X							X	10
36	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X								X	X	10
9	X		X	X	X	X		X			X		X						X	X	10
14	X	X	X	X		X		X			X	X								X	9
19	X	X	X	X		X		X			X								X	X	9
6	X	X	X			X		X			X								X	X	8
11	X	X				X		X					X				X		X	X	8
17	X	X	X			X		X			X								X	X	8
31	X	X				X				X	X	X							X	X	8
35	X	X				X		X		X	X								X	X	8
16	X	X	X			X		X			X									X	7
25	X	X		X		X					X								X	X	7
33	X	X	X			X					X								X	X	7
41	X	X						X			X						X		X	X	7
15	X	X	X					X			X								X		6
27	X	X				X				X	X									X	6
40	X	X						X											X	X	5
28	X	X											X								3
%	100	97	75	59	31	88	16	84	6	31	88	28	38	3	0	0	28	0	84	94	

Table 8-3. *Informational Features—External Links*

Code	Agency / Ind / Org offices	Legislative	Governmental	Judicial	Research	Interest groups	News	Business	Additional resources	Affinity programs	Candidate	Endorsers of candidate	Political party	Community networks	Other activist orgs / Endorsers	Wider issue networks	Industry-related sites	Total # of Features
Child Advocacy Websites																		
39	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X		11
1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X	10
29	X		X	X	X			X	X					X	X	X	X	10
10	X	X	X		X	X			X	X					X	X		9
19	X	X	X		X	X	X		X				X		X			9
4	X	X	X	X			X	X		X					X			8
7	X	X	X		X	X	X		X						X			8
21	X	X	X	X	X		X								X			7
34	X	X	X		X		X			X					X			7
12	X		X		X	X	X		X						X			7
13	X	X	X	X						X					X			6
27	X		X	X	X										X	X		6
16		X	X		X			X		X					X			6
31	X		X		X		X								X			5
35	X				X		X								X	X		5
20		X	X	X										X	X			5
33		X	X	X	X										X			5
3			X		X			X							X	X		5
25			X		X		X			X					X			5
15	X	X													X	X		4
28	X	X	X												X			4
2	X		X												X	X		4
36	X		X												X		X	4
37		X	X							X					X			4
9			X	X	X										X			4
17			X	X	X										X			4
6	X						X									X		3
14		X			X										X			3
42								X		X					X			3
11	X														X			2
41										X					X			2
40															X			1
%	63	47	78	34	59	19	38	19	19	25	3	0	3	6	97	31	9	

Interest-Invoking Features

The results from the Interest-Invoking Features section of our form are shown in Table 8-4. The most common multimedia feature provided by advocacy websites is graphics: 97% display some type of graphic. However, less than half of the sites provide interactive graphics, audio, or video.

The most common feature in the category of media interaction is downloadable files; 81% of the advocacy websites allow users to download files. But only 25% of the advocacy sites offer some method of zip-code identification. A zip-code locator allows a user to identify and contact their local representatives and media personnel. In this manner, taking action is made more convenient. This finding is surprising given that several organizations provide zip-code locator capabilities to nonprofits. (Capitol Advantage and Votenet are two examples; see Appendix D for a list of resources.) In particular, zip-code locators allow users to access local information, a capability deemed to be critical for not only engaging but also mobilizing users.

In the category of emotional appeal, advocacy websites appear to lag far behind. The only feature provided by at least 50% of the sites is narratives. Less than one fourth of the sites provide postcards, personalized content, interactive quizzes, interactive games, or screensavers. Although some of these features may appear frivolous, the literature shows that enjoyment, or some type of emotional response, invokes return visits. In general, advocacy websites implement very few of the features that engage users' interests or appeal to their emotions, failing to capitalize on those capabilities unique to the medium. These findings indicate one possible area for improvement.

Table 8-4. *Interest-Invoking Features*

	Engagement													
Code	Audio	Graphics	Interactive graphics	Video	Downloadable files	GIS	Zip-code locator	Interactive games	Interactive quizzes	Narratives	Personalized content	Postcards / Posters	Screensavers	Total # of Features
Child Advocacy Websites														
1	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	11
3	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	9
42	X	X	X		X			X	X		X	X		8
31		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X				8
7	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X			8
29	X	X	X		X			X		X	X	X		8
19	X	X	X	X	X						X			6
4		X	X				X		X	X		X		6
34		X	X		X		X		X			X		6
37		X	X		X		X			X		X		6
21		X			X		X				X	X		5
13		X	X		X		X							4
28		X	X				X			X				4
40	X	X								X				3
6		X			X					X				3
14		X	X		X									3
16		X			X					X				3
17		X			X					X				3
20		X			X					X				3
33		X	X		X									3
35		X		X	X									3
41		X	X							X				3
2		X			X									2
9		X			X									2
10		X			X									2
11		X			X									2
12		X			X									2
25		X								X				2
27		X			X									2
36		X			X									2
39		X					X							2
15					X									1
%	22	97	47	19	81	3	25	13	19	50	19	22	6	

Motivational Features

The results from the Motivational Features section of our evaluation form are shown in Tables 8-5, 8-6, and 8-7. Table 8-5 shows the results from the Email Links and Human Interaction categories, Table 8-6 includes the results from the Feedback category, and Table 8-7 presents the results from the Mobilization category. We discuss each in turn.

Eighty-eight percent of advocacy websites provide email links to the site owner and 63% provide email links to the webmaster (see Table 8-5). However, none of the sites provide email links to candidates, their endorsers, or party officials. Only 34% of the advocacy sites provide email links to public officials and only 16% provide email links to the media. These numbers are rather low, considering that part of advocacy should be contacting representatives and the media concerning specific issues. Furthermore, this capability is included in a zip-code locator, as mentioned previously. In addition, only 9% of advocacy websites provide email links to policy experts and only 28% provide email links to other activists or advocates outside of their organization. Again, these numbers could be higher.

However, a surprising number of advocacy websites do support listservs (72%). As discussed in our chapters on education and politics (chapters 2, 4, and 5), interactivity is essential for both education and deliberation. Twenty-five percent of the sites also provide bulletin boards. These two findings are promising, in that they illustrate that advocacy sites are aware of the importance of human interaction. Although only 6% of the sites support chat rooms, this finding is not unexpected. Real-time, online conversations are difficult both to coordinate and to moderate unless restricted in number of participants and governed by rules of discourse.

With respect to feedback features, advocacy websites implement only one feature with any frequency: online forms (66%). (See Table 8-6.) Only 25% of the sites provide surveys and only 13% provide guest books. Twenty-eight percent of the sites solicit content, such as events or issues. But generally, very few advocacy websites solicit information from users.

Finally, our results for the mobilization category are shown in Table 8-7. Few of the advocacy websites provide online forms for users to volunteer, only 25%. And surprisingly, only 53% of advocacy websites allow users to contribute online. Again, there are many organizations that offer this capability to nonprofits (Helping.org, iGive.com, Network for Good, Payments by PayPal; see Appendix D for a list of resources). These organizations address privacy and security concerns and are one avenue by which child advocacy organizations can leverage the power of the Internet for fundraising. Another avenue is by implementing an online store: 34% of the advocacy websites allow users to purchase products or services online. Finally, online auctions have been used by e-commerce sites; however, none of the advocacy sites provide this feature.

With respect to electronic events with either candidates or public officials, only one of the thirty-two websites provides this feature. Our results also reveal that advocacy organizations have not yet implemented those features provided by most environmental websites: only 41% provide action alerts and only 44% provide template emails. In general, the only feedback or mobilization features that were provided by more than half of the advocacy sites were online

forms for providing information and online contribution forms. Efforts in this area would benefit from more attention.

Table 8-5. *Motivational Features—Email Links & Human Interaction*

	Email Links										Human Interaction				
Code	Agency / Ind / Org contact	Webmaster	Candidate	Endorsers of candidate	Party officials	Media	Public officials	Activists / Advocates	Business	Policy experts	Listserv	Bulletin board / Message board	Newsgroup	Chat room	Total # of Features
Child Advocacy Websites															
29	X	X					X	X		X	X			X	7
39	X	X					X	X		X	X				6
21	X	X				X	X				X				5
31	X	X								X	X	X			5
33	X	X					X				X	X			5
7	X					X	X	X			X				5
34		X				X	X				X	X			5
1	X	X					X				X				4
3	X	X									X	X			4
6	X	X						X			X				4
19	X	X									X	X			4
37	X	X					X				X				4
40	X	X										X		X	4
13	X					X	X				X				4
4						X	X				X	X			4
2	X	X									X				3
9	X	X						X							3
11	X	X						X							3
16	X	X									X				3
25	X	X									X				3
28	X	X					X								3
42	X	X									X				3
35	X							X			X				3
12	X										X				2
14	X										X				2
15	X							X							2
17	X											X			2
27	X							X							2
36	X										X				2
20		X									X				2
10	X														1
41															0
%	88	63	0	0	0	16	34	28	0	9	72	25	0	6	

Table 8-6. *Motivational Features—Solicitation*

Code	Guest books	Job and resume bank	Online forms	Online surveys	Political issues	Problems	User-provided data	User-provided content	Total # of Features
Solicitation									
Child Advocacy Websites									
10	X		X	X				X	4
3	X		X	X					3
4			X	X				X	3
7			X	X				X	3
42	X		X						2
16	X			X					2
33		X	X						2
1			X	X					2
34			X	X					2
39			X	X					2
6			X					X	2
19			X					X	2
29			X					X	2
35							X	X	2
2			X						1
12			X						1
14			X						1
15			X						1
17			X						1
20			X						1
21			X						1
31			X						1
36			X						1
27								X	1
40								X	1
9									0
11									0
13									0
25									0
28									0
37									0
41									0
%	13	3	66	25	0	0	3	28	

Table 8-7. *Motivational Features—Mobilization*

	Mobilization															
Code	Volunteer forms	Contribution forms	Online auctions	Order forms	Electronic events w/candidates	Electronic lobby registration forms	Online voting	Community networks	Electronic events w/public officials	Virtual town meetings	Action Alerts	Electronic petitions	Flyers and pamphlets	Online event-based activism	Template emails/ Template letters	Total # of Features
Child Advocacy Websites																
21	X	X		X							X		X		X	6
29		X		X							X	X		X	X	6
34	X	X		X							X				X	5
4	X	X									X				X	4
13		X		X							X				X	4
37		X		X							X				X	4
39		X		X							X				X	4
3		X							X		X	X				4
42	X	X		X												3
7	X										X				X	3
12	X										X				X	3
17		X		X							X					3
2		X									X	X				3
6	X	X														2
11		X		X												2
25		X		X												2
19		X													X	2
36		X													X	2
1													X		X	2
31	X															1
41		X														1
40				X												1
9											X					1
28															X	1
33															X	1
10																0
14																0
15																0
16																0
20																0
27																0
35																0
%	25	53	0	34	0	0	0	0	3	0	41	9	6	3	44	

Conclusion

Table 8-8 on the next page shows the complete set of child advocacy sites ranked by total number of features. Table 8-9 shows the best child advocacy websites by section, as well as the number of features each provided out of the total number possible. Based on our data, we cannot state categorically whether the implementation of the features we identified resulted in an effective website. However, as the features included were drawn from studies assessing the effectiveness of online endeavors, our evaluation has a firm foundation in research. More importantly, our evaluation has identified how child advocates currently are using the Internet. In the next chapter, we summarize the responses to our online questionnaire.

Table 8-8. *Complete Ranking of Child Advocacy Websites*

Rank	Site	Code	Basic	Information	External Links	Interest-Invoking	Email & Human Interaction	Solicitation	Mobilization	Total Features
1	Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network	[29]	11	13	10	8	7	2	6	57
2	Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids	[1]	14	13	10	11	4	2	2	56
3	Child Welfare League of America	[39]	14	15	11	2	6	2	4	54
4	Afterschool Alliance	[7]	12	13	8	8	5	3	3	52
5	UNICEF	[3]	15	11	5	9	4	3	4	51
6	YouthNOISE	[4]	15	11	8	6	4	3	4	51
7	Children's Defense Fund	[21]	13	13	7	5	5	1	6	50
8	National PTA	[34]	14	11	7	6	5	2	5	50
9	Connect for Kids	[19]	15	9	9	6	4	2	2	47
10	National Center for Missing & Exploited Children	[42]	14	11	3	8	3	2	3	44
11	Save the Children	[37]	12	12	4	6	4	0	4	42
12	Action Alliance for Children	[10]	13	12	9	2	1	4	0	41
13	United Nations Cyberschoolbus	[31]	12	8	5	8	5	1	1	40
14	Oxfam America	[2]	12	11	4	2	3	1	3	36
15	Prevent Child Abuse America	[13]	8	10	6	4	4	0	4	36
16	100% Campaign	[12]	8	11	7	2	2	1	3	34
17	Zero to Three	[17]	13	8	4	3	2	1	3	34
18	The New England Network for Child, Youth, and Family Services	[33]	11	7	5	3	5	2	1	34
19	National SAFE Kids Campaign	[36]	13	10	4	2	2	1	2	34
20	Kids Count	[20]	11	11	5	3	2	1	0	33
21	The Children's Partnership	[16]	11	7	6	3	3	2	0	32
22	Child's Rights Information Network (CRIN)	[35]	9	8	5	3	3	2	0	30
23	Youth in Action	[6]	7	8	3	3	4	2	2	29
24	Children's Advocacy Institute's Clearinghouse on Children	[9]	9	10	4	2	3	0	1	29
25	National Center for Children in Poverty	[14]	10	9	3	3	2	1	0	28
26	Stand for Children	[25]	7	7	5	2	3	0	2	26
27	Children's House in Cyberspace (Childwatch International)	[27]	9	6	6	2	2	1	0	26
28	The National Children's Advocacy Center	[11]	8	8	2	2	3	0	2	25
29	YO! Youth Outlook	[40]	9	5	1	3	4	1	1	24
30	National Children's Alliance	[15]	7	6	4	1	2	1	0	21
31	Texas Industrial Areas Foundation	[28]	5	3	4	4	3	0	1	20
32	Kids 4 Kids	[41]	4	7	2	3	0	0	1	17

Table 8-9. *Top Site by Section*

Section	Site	# of features
Child Advocacy Websites		
Basic Features	UNICEF	15 / 16
Informational Features: Information	Child Welfare League of America	15 / 20
Informational Features: External Links	Child Welfare League of America	11 / 17
Interest-Invoking Features	Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids	11 / 13
Motivational Features: Email & Human Interaction	Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network	7 / 14
Motivational Features: Solicitation	Action Alliance for Children	4 / 8
Motivational Features: Mobilization	Children's Defense Fund	6 / 15

Chapter 9 : ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

In addition to evaluating our sample of websites, we also canvassed contacts at each website to answer a series of questions. The goal of our questionnaire was to elicit their opinions as to the purpose and related effectiveness of their websites. In this chapter, we describe our sample, method, and questionnaire as well as summarize the respondents' answers. (See Appendix A for a blank copy of our questionnaire.)

Sample and Method

Our purposive sample consisted of forty-two websites: thirty-two child advocacy sites, five political sites, and five environmental sites. This pool was not randomly generated and thus our results are not generalizable. (See the list of websites in Appendix A.)

For each website, we searched online for the email address of a contact—either a public relations director, the webmaster, or an executive. We then emailed the contact, requesting that they complete an online questionnaire. The URL of the online questionnaire and a password were provided in the email message, the latter ensuring that respondents were those contacted directly. We also sent two email reminders to maximize our response rate. Using a similar method, Zelwietro (1998) had a response rate of 38% for surveys distributed using email. Our response rate was 9.5% (four respondents). This low rate is probably due to our limited timeframe and to technical problems encountered. This part of our study received an IRB exemption.

Questionnaire

The online questionnaire consisted of eight questions. Our first question simply asked the respondent to identify the target audience. This question allowed us to identify the type of site— child advocacy, environmental, or political, as our questionnaire was anonymous. The remaining questions focused on the intended purpose of the respondent's website; the barriers faced when designing the site for a specific purpose; and the measures, if any, used to assess the effectiveness of the website in achieving its purpose. For each question that required the respondents to select from a fixed list, we also provided an open-ended comment field.

We pilot tested the questionnaire with three graduate students. Based on their comments, we more clearly defined our terms using parenthetical descriptions. We discuss each set of questions below.

Purpose of the Website

Two questions focused on the intended purpose of the website. The first question asked the respondents to select, from a list of purposes, all that applied to their website. The second question asked the respondents to select the two purposes most important for their website. Drawing from our discussion of genres, our list included ten possible purposes for an activist site, each of which we discuss below.

1. Establish a presence online

2. Inform

3. Educate

4. Receive feedback

5. Engage interest

6. Build community

7. Raise funds

8. Recruit volunteers

9. Organize online actions

10. Organize offline actions

Establish a Presence

As mentioned in the previous chapter, many organizations view a website as an online brochure, providing only basic organizational materials online (Turner, 1998). This approach serves mainly to increase the visibility of an organization (Finn, 1998; Ng et al., 1998; Fitzgerald & McNutt, 1999).

Inform

In addition to providing basic organizational material, an organization may view their website as a means of informing users about a certain issue. Therefore, they may provide information specific to the issue as well as information on associated legislation, governmental reports, court cases, news articles, etc. In the questionnaire, we included a parenthetical definition of inform as "information and referral" (Finn, 1998).

Educate

Based on our literature review, we distinguished between inform and educate as purposes. For example, in their analysis of information processing, Eveland and Dunwoody (2000) maintain that repeating information in short-term memory and navigating or managing that information contribute little to learning. However, making connections between new and existing information and assessing information are integral to learning. Similarly, Noveck (2000) and Bimber (2001) both have stated that distilled, contextualized knowledge rather than a surplus of information is necessary for an informed democrat. Thus in our questionnaire, we defined educate in terms of tutorials and quizzes.

Receive Feedback

Organizations may also use their websites to solicit feedback. As discussed in our previous chapter, Stromer-Galley (2000) has characterized human computer-mediated interaction as communication occurring between two or more individuals. We further distinguished between one- and two-way human interaction. Correspondingly, we view feedback as one-way communication for the purpose of soliciting comments, responses, suggestions, or personal information from the user.

Engage Interest

Another purpose for a website, and one paramount for an advocacy organization, is to engage the interest of the user in the hope of motivating that user to take action. As discussed in Chapter 8, engagement may be achieved through multimedia, media interaction, or emotional appeal. We parenthetically defined this purpose in our questionnaire as follows: "interest website visitors in the issue addressed by the site."

Build Community

An organization can also use a website to build an online community. The formation of a community facilitates collective action on an issue. As Scott states, one strategy for building community is "to develop common spaces where people can talk, disagree, and build trust" (2000, 5). In our questionnaire, we defined this purpose as the promotion of issue-based dialogue (London, 1997).

Raise Funds

In addition to the previous purposes, organizations can use the Internet as a fundraising tool (Finn, 1998). There are several methods for raising money online, including straightforward donations, membership or subscription fees, stores, auctions, and affinity programs. In our questionnaire, we specified online donations as one example of fundraising.

Recruit Volunteers

Not only funds, but also volunteers can be solicited online. In particular, the Internet allows users to volunteer to do services that can be conducted at a distance, such as newsletter writing; online mailing; online communicating with clients; and online tutoring or mentoring of clients (Finn, 1998). However, users can also volunteer using an online form.

Organize Online Actions

Organizations also can use the Internet to organize online events. These events can include emailing public officials, chatting with candidates or public officials online, and attending electronic town meetings (Scott, 2000; Owen et al., 1999; Carter, 1999; Clift, 2000; Dahlberg, 2001; Wittig and Schmitz, 1996; Becker, 2001). We specified emailing policymakers and signing online petitions as examples of this purpose.

Organize Offline Actions

Finally, organizations can organize events in the real world using online technologies (Scott, 2000). For example, they can post calendars of events. They can also provide sample letters for users to print out and mail, as well as organize national or international events such as marches or special days of celebration or remembrance. In our questionnaire, we used marches and letter writing as examples of activities that can be organized online.

Implementation Barriers

We also asked respondents whether they had been prevented from implementing any purposes. Using the same list discussed above, we asked them to indicate which purpose or purposes they were unable to implement. We further asked them to select the barriers that had prevented them from doing so. Drawing from our literature review, we identified seven possible barriers:

1. Equipment
2. Expense
3. Expertise

4. Software

5. Time

6. Training

7. Universal access

Our list of barriers is based on McNutt and Boland's (1999) study of electronic advocacy and Turner's (1998) study of nonprofit uses of the Internet for public policy. In their survey of the affiliates of a national social-work professional association, McNutt and Boland (1999) asked a question regarding the sources of resistance to electronic advocacy. Expertise, expense, and equipment were the most frequently reported barriers. In addition, several of McNutt and Boland's (1999) respondents indicated that time was a barrier. In his analysis, Turner (1998) stated that the most frequently cited barriers are tools, training, and technical assistance.

We merged these two lists, resulting in six main barriers: (1) equipment: the hardware necessary for maintaining an Internet presence; (2) expense: the cost of implementation; (3) expertise: the level of expertise needed to implement the site; (4) software: the tools needed to implement the site; (5) time: the time required for implementing the site; and (6) training: staff training necessary for maintaining the site. We also added universal access, or whether the target population has access to online technologies, as access was a critical element in our discussion of online participatory democracy (see Chapter 5).

Measures of Effectiveness

Finally, we asked the respondents if and how they assessed whether their website was effective in fulfilling the purpose or purposes they had selected in the first question. Again, we provided a list of possible measurements:

1. Number of hits

2. Number of online information requests

3. Number of online donations

4. Number of volunteers recruited online

5. Number of new members recruited online

6. Number of subscribers to listservs

7. Number of messages posted on online bulletin boards or message boards

8. Number of participants in online discussion forums or chat rooms

9. Increased participation in online actions

10. Increased participation in offline actions

11. Usability tests

12. Other forms of assessment

We based this set of possible measurements on our literature review and the list of purposes discussed above. Using a survey, Zelwietro (1998) studied the impact of the Internet on 400 environmental organizations; specifically, he examined whether the Internet had served to politicize those organizations. He operationalized politicization as comprised of four measures: (1) change in number of interactions with other organizations, (2) change in number of campaigns of organizations, (3) change in number of information requests, and (4) change in membership of organizations (Zelwietro, 1998, 47). Taking a similar approach, we identified possible measures with respect to our list of purposes. We also included usability tests, or testing with users, as a possible measure.

Questionnaire Results

We report the results from our questionnaire below, organized by topic and question.

Target Audience

Three of our respondents were associated with a child advocacy website (respondents A, B, and C), one with a political website (respondent D).

Purpose of the Website

1. What is/are the purpose(s) of your organization's website?

The results from our question concerning intended purposes were as follows:

- **A**: Establish a presence online, Inform, Educate, Receive feedback, Engage interest, Build community, Raise funds

- **B**: Establish a presence online, Inform, Engage interest, Build community

- **C**: Establish a presence online, Inform, Educate, Receive feedback, Engage interest, Build community

- **D**: Establish a presence online, Inform, Educate, Receive feedback, Engage interest, Build community, Raise funds, Recruit volunteers

Interestingly, none of the respondents are using their website to organize activities and only the political website attempts to recruit volunteers online. Furthermore, only two raise funds online. However, one of the two respondents whose website currently does not raise funds online responded that they would do so in the near future. In the comment field, the respondents also indicated that e-commerce (online publication sales), a central repository for documentation, and self-organization of online and offline activities were additional purposes for their sites.

2. Think about the purposes of your organization's website marked in question #1. Please select up to two that you consider the <u>most</u> important to your organization.

The responses to our question concerning the most important purposes are shown below by respondent. This response was split evenly between informing and building community.

- **A**: Establish a presence online, Inform

- **B**: Establish a presence online, Build community

- **C**: Inform, Build community
- **D**: Inform, Build community

Implementation Barriers

3. Are there website purposes you did not select in question #1 that your organization wanted to implement but could not?

Respondent A answered no, the other three answered yes.

4. If your response to #3 was yes, mark the purpose(s) that your organization wanted to implement for its website but could not.

The responses to our question regarding excluded purposes were as follows:

- **A**: <N/A>
- **B**: Inform, Educate, Engage interest, Organize online actions, Organize offline actions
- **C**: Build community, Raise funds
- **D**: <None>

Interestingly, respondent B did indicate an interest in using the Internet to organize activities both on- and off-line. Respondent D indicated that rather than additional purposes, their organization wishes to expand their current activities to a broader scale. And lastly, one respondent indicated a desire to translate their information to several other languages.

5. Which of the following factors prevented your organization from implementing the purpose(s) selected in #4 above?

The responses to our question concerning barriers were as follows:

- **A**: <N/A>
- **B**: Expense, Time, Universal access
- **C**: Expense, Expertise, Software, Time, Training
- **D**: <None>

Notably, universal access was a barrier for the international organization. Furthermore, both expense and time were barriers for two of the respondents. In addition, one respondent indicated that the language of the target population was a barrier.

Measures of Effectiveness

6. Do you measure or assess whether your organization's website fulfills the purpose(s) you selected in #1 above?

All of the respondents indicated that they assess whether or not their website fulfills its intended purpose or purposes.

7. If you do measure or assess whether your organization's website is fulfilling its purpose(s), what measure(s) do you use?

The responses to our question concerning measures of effectiveness were as follows:

- **A**: Number of hits, Number of online information requests, Number of online donations, Number of participants in online discussion forums or chat rooms, Usability tests

- **B**: Number of hits, Number of volunteers recruited online, Number of new members recruited online, Number of subscribers to listservs

- **C**: Number of hits, Number of online information requests, Number of subscribers to listservs, Number of messages posted on online bulletin boards or message boards, Number of participants in online discussion forums or chat rooms

- **D**: Number of hits, Number of online donations, Number of volunteers recruited online, Number of subscribers to listservs, Number of participants in online discussion forums or chat rooms

These results were somewhat surprising to us, as we had assumed (erroneously) that the organizations primarily would rely on number of hits. However, all of the respondents use several methods of assessment. Furthermore, it is interesting that all four have either listservs or chat rooms.

Three of the respondents also included comments on this question. One respondent indicated that they also measure effectiveness by online publication sales and registration for training conferences. Another indicated that although they only evaluate hits and feedback currently, they will evaluate other factors when they establish their online community. Finally, one of the respondents indicated that their assessment is informal; however, as a volunteer organization, maintaining their efforts and increasing the number of online forums is an indication of effectiveness.

Conclusion

Although we cannot draw any general conclusions from our questionnaire, we did obtain some insight into current uses of the Internet by advocates. First, the respondents assign multiple purposes to their sites, viewing them as more than tools for advertising themselves or passively informing users. Second, the respondents implement several measures for assessing the effectiveness of their sites. Posting this questionnaire online for an extended period of time and a large number of respondents would provide illuminating information regarding current practices.

In the next chapter, we briefly return to our discussion of online genres and their associated purposes, suggesting features and measures for each purpose, as well as identifying illustrative websites.

Chapter 10 : RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, we answer our main research questions and offer our recommendations. As stated in chapter one, our two questions were (1) How can advocates potentially use the Internet for informing current advocates, building advocacy communities, and recruiting new advocates? and (2) How can they most effectively do so?

Recommendations

To answer the first question—How can advocates potentially use the Internet for informing current advocates, building advocacy communities, and recruiting new advocates?—we return to our online genres and their associated purposes, discussed in chapters one through seven. In chapter one, we identified three main online genres—distance/online education, e-commerce, and online political action. In addition, we argued that each genre spans a continuum of action, from informing to engaging to motivating the user. In chapters four through seven, we also distinguished between two forums for political action: formal politics and civic culture, the latter of which consisted of participatory democracy and social action. Each of these distinctions allowed us to identify features relevant to a specific purpose.

First, our continuum of action demarcates three purposes common to any website: to inform, to engage, and to motivate. For example, all websites seek to inform users about a specific topic. In addition, all websites must engage the interest of users, whether through media interaction or emotional appeal. Finally, all websites seek to motivate a user to perform a specific act. Second, our discussion of genre showed that both informing and motivating are specific to a genre—distance/online education sites attempt to motivate users to learn about a specific subject; e-commerce sites attempt to motivate users to buy certain products or services; and online political action sites attempt to mobilize users to take action on a particular issue. Furthermore, with respect to online political action, users can be mobilized to perform many distinct actions—donating, volunteering, voting, deliberating, and advocating.

Consequently, our evaluation form enumerated features categorized by eight distinct purposes: to inform, to engage, to educate, to donate, to volunteer, to vote, to deliberate, and to advocate. We identified each set of associated features by drawing from the relevant discussions in chapters one through seven. For example, we classified information and hypertext links as features corresponding to informing (chapter one) and multimedia, human interaction, and emotional appeal as features corresponding to engaging (chapters one and four). Features specific to educating were drawn from our discussion of distance education (chapter two), and those relevant to donating from our chapter on e-commerce (chapter three). Finally, we relied on chapters four through seven to identify the features specific to volunteering (chapter seven), voting (chapter four), deliberating (chapter five), and advocating (chapters six and seven).

Thus this framework allows advocates to design websites directed toward achieving certain specific goals. A website may be designed merely to inform users about an issue and therefore provide only information and hypertext links. However, with the addition of other features (such as a zip-code locator), the same website can enable users to advocate for the issue in the formal political arena. We have constructed a basic hierarchy of purposes by which Web designers can assess the features needed (see Figure 10-1). (The hierarchy is based on the assumption that all websites provide those features categorized as basic in chapter eight.) At the top of the hierarchy, we have inserted an additional purpose prior to informing—that of establishing a presence. At its most rudimentary level, a website may post basic organizational information to increase its visibility. In addition, we have situated the multiple goals of online political action under education, as education is necessary for any commitment to be made by a user.

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                      To Establish a                            │
│                        Presence                                │
│                           │                                    │
│                       To Inform                                │
│                           │                                    │
│                       To Engage                                │
│                           │                                    │
│                      To Educate                                │
│          ┌─────────┬──────┴──────┬───────────┬─────────┐       │
│  To Donate   To Volunteer   To Vote   To Deliberate   To Advocate │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
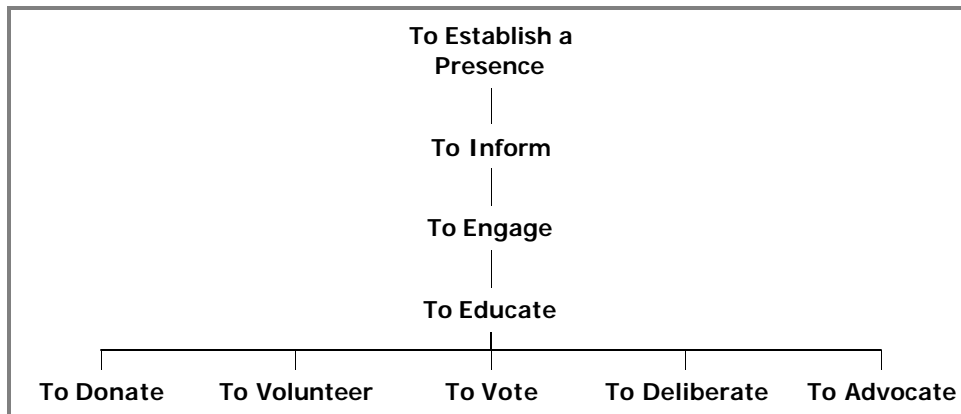
Figure 10-1. *Hierarchy of Purposes*

To return to our first research question, then, organizations can use the Internet to inform advocates by implementing features specific to the purposes of establishing a presence and informing. To build community, additional features related to engaging and educating must be added. But to recruit new members or, more specifically, to move users to action in support of an issue, organizations need to implement those features facilitating action on the part of users—whether that action is donating, volunteering, voting, deliberating, or advocating.

With respect to our second research question concerning effectiveness, we cannot categorically state that websites implementing all of the features identified will be effective. However, our framework was drawn from studies on the effectiveness of the three online genres and thus has a firm foundation in research. Future studies will have to determine empirically whether these specific features are effective in accomplishing the purposes identified in our hierarchy.

In the next two sections, we provide both general and specific recommendations. We base our general recommendations on the hierarchy above, proposing a set of specific features for each purpose, suggesting a means of measuring whether a site is succeeding in that purpose, and recommending exemplary websites that reflect the relevant features. We base our specific recommendations on the areas of concern identified in our evaluation (see chapter eight), proposing features that address each concern and recommending websites that reflect those features.

General Recommendations

In this section, we discuss our general recommendations with respect to each particular purpose: to establish a presence, to inform, to engage, to educate, to donate, to volunteer, to vote, to deliberate, and to advocate.

To Establish a Presence

To establish a presence online, post basic organizational materials.

Features

- Information on the goals, mission, or service of the agency, individual, or organization that owns the website

- Contact information, including email and postal addresses, for the agency, individual, or organization that owns the website

- Links to the websites of other offices of the agency, individual, or organization (that is, at the international, national, state, or local level)

- Email link to the contact for the agency, individual, or organization that owns the website

- Email link to the webmaster, or the individual responsible for maintaining the website

Measures

- Number of hits

- Number of online information requests

To Inform

To inform, provide, or link to other websites providing, information relevant to the subject addressed by the website.

Features

- Information on congress and its committees as well as information on specific legislation, bills, or acts

- Information about the rulemaking process of government, governmental resources, and relevant governmental information

- Information on the legal process as well as on lawsuits, amicus briefs, court cases, and reference and educational resources

- Information found in fact sheets, papers, poll results, reports, research, and transcripts

- Information on special interest groups or lobbyists

- Information drawn from the traditional news media—newspaper, radio, TV—as well as newsletters and press releases provided by other entities

- Information about businesses or economic development

- Information about international entities such as the United Nations or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and their activities

- Links to websites providing information on congress, congressional members, and congressional committees as well as on specific legislation, bills, and acts

- Links to websites providing information about the rulemaking process of government, governmental resources (reports, services), and relevant governmental information

- Links to websites providing information on the legal process as well as on lawsuits, amicus briefs, court cases, and reference and educational resources

- Links to websites providing research findings, data, or key data elements

- Links to websites providing information on special interest groups or lobbyists

- Links to websites providing information from the traditional ne ws media— newspaper, radio, TV—or newsletters and press releases of other entities

- Links to websites providing information about businesses or economic development

- Links to websites providing any other resources not covered in the categories above

Measures

- Number of hits

- Number of online information requests

Examples

- **Child Welfare League of America [39]**
  http://www.cwla.org/

  The website for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is an exemplary source of information focused on the well-being of children. The site provides information on legislation, governmental resources, court cases, research, and interest groups as well as statements on current developments related to child welfare. The site also provides links to legislative, governmental, judicial, educational, interest group, news-related, business-related, and other activist organizations sites. Lastly, the Dorothy L. Bernhard Library provides additional resources and information on multiple aspects of child advocacy.

□ **Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids [1]**
http://tobaccofreekids.org/

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids' website provides extensive information and links—legislative, governmental, judicial, educational, research results, news-related, industry-related, international—regarding smoking. In addition, it has a section geared toward young people, the Youth Action section, that provides facts, links, and interactive games and quizzes about smoking. The site also allows visitors to view facts on smoking by state.

To Engage

To engage the interest or emotions of the user, use multimedia, implement media interactivity, or provide emotional appeals.

Features

□ Audio

□ Graphics

□ Interactive graphics

□ Video

□ Downloadable files

□ Geographic information systems (GIS)

□ Zip-code locator

□ Interactive games

□ Interactive quizzes

□ Narratives

□ Personalized content

□ Postcards / Posters

□ Screensavers

Measures

□ Number of hits

□ Number of online information requests

Examples

□ **UNICEF [3]**
http://www.unicef.org/

UNICEF's website provides screensavers, quizzes, puzzles, profiles and stories, virtual exhibits, and TV webcasts. At The Meeting Place, users select from the following headings: Children and Work, Children's Rights, Children and War, The Girl Child, and Cities and Children. They can then explore (explore images and stories, take an interactive quiz, and read other web sources); discuss (give their opinion and read what others have said); and take action (tell about their organization or project and read about other organizations or projects). At The Learning Place, users can find activities to do and problems to solve. At The Teacher's Place, teachers and others can discuss rights education and global issues. The site uses RealAudio to tell stories; animations and actual videos about kids in other countries are shown.

□ **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children [42]**
http://www.missing.org/

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's website posts pictures and descriptions of missing children. One of the most impressive features of this website is the online database of missing children, which visitors can search by region, description, or specific information (name or case type). Other features of the site include downloadable posters and a SafeKids song, interactive quizzes, web banners, a demo of CyberTipline, a library of resource materials (all pdfs), and an Internet-based phone hotline (the user's computer must have a microphone and speakers).

□ **United Nations Cyberschoolbus [31]**
http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/

The site's Quizzes and Games area includes an animated learning adventure and several online quizzes. The Community area provides a photo and art gallery and descriptions of UN events, including webcasts.

□ **National PTA [34]**
http://www.pta.org/

An impressive feature of this site is the Common Sense center, which offers quizzes, games, and activities for parents to do with their children. The site also offers an interactive map for locating local PTAs as well as their contact information and websites. Lastly, the site provides testimonials from PTA members.

To Educate

To educate, provide answers to questions and mechanisms for discussion and collaboration.

Features

- ☐ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), guidelines, how-to's, lessons, tips, training manuals
- ☐ Email discussion lists or listservs
- ☐ Bulletin or message boards

Measures

- ☐ Number of subscribers to listservs
- ☐ Number of messages posted on online bulletin boards or message boards

Examples

- ☐ **Zero to Three [17]**
  http://www.zerotothree.org/index.htm

  Zero to Three's website is a great resource for parents. The site provides information on issues such as adoptive parents, beginnings of literacy, dynamic play therapy, and infant massage (much of this information comes from the organization's bulletin); a guide to understanding developmental assessment; a guide to choosing child care; descriptions of developmental milestones; and parent polls on early childhood development. The site also provides several bulletin boards for professionals.

- ☐ **United Nations Cyberschoolbus [31]**
  http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/

  The UN's CyberSchoolbus is a wonderful example of an educational website. The Resources area provides briefing papers on 19 major global issues; summaries of the UN's core treaties; global trends represented in charts and graphs; statistical information either by country or by comparison with other countries; profiles on twenty cities from around the world; a virtual tour of the UN; and basic information on the UN. The Curriculum area includes units on peace education; the briefing papers with student activities and resources; a unit on demining; a unit on UN treaties and principles on outer space; a health curriculum; a poverty curriculum; a cities curriculum; school kits on the UN; and units on the environment. One learning tool provided is The Model UN Discussion Area [MUNDA]. MUNDA is a place where MUNers from anywhere in the world can exchange ideas, discuss topics, and request information from each other.

To Donate

To motivate users to donate money, implement affinity programs, online auctions, or an online store, or provide mechanisms for online donations.

Features

- ☐ Product and price information
- ☐ Affinity programs, or partner commercial organizations that offer incentives when a user buys from them
- ☐ Online contribution forms
- ☐ Online auctions
- ☐ Order forms for buying a product or service

Measures

- ☐ Amount of online donations

Examples

- ☐ **YouthNOISE [4]**
  http://www.youthnoise.com/

  YouthNOISE is a truly remarkable website for young people. One of the more innovative features is Just 1 Click, by which YouthNOISE donates five cents to a specific charity every time a visitor clicks a button.

- ☐ **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children [42]**
  http://www.missing.org/

  Motivational features offered by this website include online contributions, online purchases of memberships, and an affinity program by which NCMEC receives a percentage of online purchases.

- ☐ **The New England Network for Child, Youth, and Family Services [33]**
  http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/ElecAdvo/index.html

  A clever feature on this site is called Donate Your Old Car: "When I tried to sell my 1992 Taurus Wagon with 172,000 miles on it, I was told I could only get $500-$750. Instead, I avoided the hassle, donated it to New England Network and got a Blue Book value tax write-off of $2,500! My net was $825 in cash, NEN got a direct $650 cash donation, and everyone was happy."

To Volunteer

To motivate users to volunteer time or information, provide mechanisms for soliciting personal information, comments, or opinions.

Features

- Online volunteer forms
- Guest books
- Job and resume bank
- Online comment forms
- Online surveys

Measures

- Number of volunteers recruited online
- Number of new members recruited online

Examples

- **Children's Defense Fund [21]**
  http://www.childrensdefensefund.org/

  With respect to motivational features, the Children's Defense Fund's site offers online volunteer forms for various initiatives and online order forms for publications and other items in its giftshop.

- **Blacksburg Electronic Village [24]**
  http://www.bev.net/

  Feedback features offered by the Blacksburg Electronic Village include a job bank, online forms for registering as a "Villager" and ordering publications, and online surveys. The site also allows Villagers to submit links to other community networks, business listings, events for the online calendar, jobs, and organization listings. Lastly, the site allows visitors to volunteer online as well as register for classes.

To Vote

To motivate users to vote, provide information, mechanisms, or electronic forums addressing candidates, parties, issues, or the voting process.

Features

- Information on a candidate or elected official, including biographies, endorsers, campaign financing, issue positions, and voting record
- Information about a political issue or ballot measure and arguments for or against it
- Information about the voting process, absentee ballots, polling places, and voter registration
- Links to candidate websites
- Links to the websites of endorsers of a specific candidate
- Links to political party websites at the national, state, or local level
- Email link to the candidate
- Email link to endorsers of the candidate
- Email link to party officials
- Electronic events with candidates
- Electronic lobby registration forms
- Online voting

Measures

- Increased participation in online voting
- Increased participation in offline voting

Examples

- **DNet [5]**
  http://www.dnet.org/

  For each state, DNet provides information on the candidates including their biography, voting record, positions, and endorsers as well as descriptions of the office. This information is presented in a two-dimensional grid that lists candidates and issues. Checkmarks in the grid indicate whether the candidate has submitted a statement on a particular issue, and the candidate who most recently accessed the grid is placed on the top row.

□ **Project Vote Smart [38]**
http://www.vote-smart.org/

Project Vote Smart's (PVS) website is by far the most comprehensive political website in our evaluation. The site provides extensive information on candidates including biographies, campaign financing, issue positions based on the National Political Awareness Test, performance evaluations from special interest groups, and voting records. Candidates are identified using either a zip-code locator or an interactive state map. The site also allows visitors to access the status of major legislation, the text of legislation and the Congressional record, voting records, Congressional committees, and contacting Congress.

The section Government & Issues allows visitors to download issue briefs and a list of sources by issue; access state information by an interactive map, including ballot measures, historical elections, voter registration, election offices, state contacts, other state links, and state facts; access ballot measures by state; access voter registration by state; link to other resources categorized by issue; access historical and educational information on the government; and link to both the executive and judicial branches of government.

To Deliberate

To motivate a user to deliberate, provide information, mechanisms, or electronic forums addressing citizenry, community, or local issues.

Features

□ Information regarding citizenry, including citizen rights and responsibilities

□ Information specific to activities in a local region or community such as event calendars, press releases, and reports

□ Information specific to a local region or community such as information on crime, traffic, and weather

□ Links to community networks

□ Email link to media personnel

□ Email link to public officials at the international, national, state, or local level

□ Chat room

□ Online solicitation of political issues for debate or vote

□ Online solicitation of problems

□ Community network

□ Electronic events with public officials

□ Virtual town meetings

Measures

❑ Number of participants in online discussion forums or chat rooms

Examples

❑ **Minnesota E-Democracy [23]**
   http://www.e-democracy.org/

   The centerpieces of Minnesota E-Democracy are its numerous email discussion lists. Minnesota E-Democracy supports MN-POLITICS, a state-level political forum system; four Capitol Topics lists addressing education policy, tax reform, redistricting and elections, and privacy respectively; and four local community lists for Minneapolis, St. Paul, the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and Winona; as well as a list for Democracies Online and a Minnesota political announcements list.

❑ **Blacksburg Electronic Village [24]**
   http://www.bev.net/

   The Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) is a community network serving the Town of Blacksburg. Established in 1993, the site serves the local community by providing training and Internet services and by facilitating community building. The site consists of seven main areas: Community, Education, People, Government, Health, Village Mall, and Visitor's Center. The Community area provides a list of links to local organizations, sorted by category; categories include arts, religion, and sports. The Education area provides lists of links to local public schools, universities, libraries, and museums. The People area hosts the Seniors Information Page, an extensive resource with upcoming events, a newsletter, a listserv, and links to senior-related websites, government resources for seniors, news sites, and financial, time, weather, and temperature information. Visitors can also access local Usenet newsgroups and BEV mailing lists from the People section.

   The Government section provides links to governmental resources at the local, regional, state, and federal levels. The Health area provides email addresses for health professionals; links to facilities, organizations, and health resources; as well as news, FAQs, and wellness information. The Village Mall provides a list of links to local businesses, sorted by category. And the Visitor's Center provides travel information, a town guide, business and industry information and suggests things to do. Finally, the site provides an online events calendar.

To Advocate

To motivate a user to advocate, provide information, mechanisms, or electronic forums addressing issues or advocacy actions.

Features

☐ Information specific to activities on the issue such as event calendars, issue endorsers, results or updates on the activities, and training

☐ Information specific to the issue addressed by the site

☐ Links to websites of other organizations either advocating for or endorsing the specific issue

☐ Links to wider issue networks either advocating for or endorsing the specific issue

☐ Links to websites of businesses or industrial organizations either involved in or responsible for the specific issue

☐ Email links to other individuals advocating for an issue

☐ Email links to individuals at an organization responsible for the issue

☐ Email links to experts on the issue

☐ Online solicitation of research data

☐ Online solicitation of content to be posted on a website, such as conferences, events, issues, site URLs, or stories

☐ Action alerts, calls to action, legislative alerts, news alerts

☐ Electronic petitions

☐ Downloadable flyers and pamphlets

☐ Online event-based activism

☐ Template emails or letters

Measures

☐ Increased participation in online actions (emailing policy makers, online petitions)

☐ Increased participation in offline actions (marches, letter writing)

Examples

☐ **Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network [29]**
   http://www.amnesty-usa.org/children/

Online motivational features provided by AIUSA are extensive. The site provides email action alerts as well as email updates; allows visitors to join, donate, and renew memberships online; sells publications online; provides template emails and international email addresses of decision makers as well as a zip-code locator facility for U.S. representatives; provides electronic petitions; and hosts electronic events along with chat. Also, there are several Urgent Action Networks that a visitor can join, such as the Children's Human Rights Network or the Legal Support Network. These networks are organized locally and hold meetings once or twice a month.

☐ **Child Welfare League of America [39]**
   http://www.cwla.org/

Motivational features offered by the CWLA website include an online contribution form, an online order form for CWLA publications, and a section called CWLA Kids' Advocate Online. Kids' Advocate Online allows visitors to send emails to their representatives (identified using a zip-code locator) using several sample letters addressing specific issues.

☐ **Greenpeace International [30]**
   http://www.greenpeace.org/

Greenpeace International's website is extensive, providing information and action on several main areas: climate, toxics, nuclear, oceans, genetic engineering, ocean dumping, and forests. Each section includes information on the issue, reports and press releases, related links, and a section entitled What You Can Do. Current campaigns include the US Corporate 100 Campaign directed toward the corporations opposing the Kyoto Protocol; the Greenpeace Toxics Campaign focused on pressuring Dow chemicals to clean up Bhopal; and a campaign to stop Japanese whaling. The Greenpeace Interactive Community provides motivational features that allow visitors to email edited sample letters to public officials and businesses targeted for specific campaigns.

☐ **Rainforest Action Network [8]**
   http://www.ran.org/

Rainforest Action Network's website is a streamlined, easy-to-use, issue-based example of activism. The site focuses on three main campaigns: Stop Boise Cascade, a campaign to preserve ancient forests; Campaign for a Sane Economy, a campaign focused on Citigroup's business practices; and Support the U'wa, a campaign focused on the threat posed by Occidental Petroleum to the U'wa culture. Possible alternatives in each case are provided, as well as timelines,

related links, and suggestions for action. Motivational features include action alerts with sample letters that can be mailed to the relevant public officials or CEOs. Lastly, the site offers several innovative suggestions for activism, including guerilla theatre, songbooks, and mock billing statements directed toward Citigroup.

Specific Recommendations

In addition to the general recommendations specific to each purpose, we also recommend that advocates pay special attention to the areas of concern identified in our evaluation. The first area that should be improved is basic functionality, which was implemented inconsistently on the websites we evaluated. Furthermore, with respect to our first research question concerning the use of the Internet for informing, building community, and recruiting, we found that advocacy websites are successfully informing users. However, their efforts at building community and recruiting new advocates can be improved. In particular, to better build community, advocacy sites should implement localism, establish coalitions, and appeal to users' emotions. To motivate users, sites should engage in legislative advocacy, solicit feedback, raise funds, and provide mechanisms for enabling activism in support of children.

Provide Basic Functionality

As we have stated previously, certain features are taken for granted on all websites; the absence of those features results in a disinclination on the part of users to provide information or take action. In our evaluation of advocacy websites, we identified several features that advocates have not provided consistently: privacy and security, informative keywords, and search engines. By far the most important of these is privacy and security, especially in cases in which websites are soliciting information from users or attempting to motivate them to act. In addition, as noted in chapter eight, there was a high percentage of websites with broken hypertext links. Care should be taken to maintain links, as well as to update information frequently.

The two example websites, Connect for Kids and the Child Welfare League of America, offered all four of the features categorized under privacy and security, as well as provided informative keywords and a search engine.

Features

- Disclaimers
- Disclosure statements
- Privacy policy
- Security mechanisms
- Informative keywords
- Search engine
- Maintain external links

Examples

- **Child Welfare League of America [39]**
  http://www.cwla.org/

- Connect for Kids [19]
  http://www.connectforkids.org/

Implement Localism

As discussed in our chapter on partic ipatory democracy (chapter five), localism is considered by many scholars to be the solution for problems with electronic democracy. Localism refers to those attempts to connect online issues to local concerns. Some features that contribute to localism are the provision of community information and event calendars, as well as interactive maps or external links to local or regional websites. The use of a zip-code locator also contributes to localism, as this mechanism allows users to identify and contact local representatives and media personnel.

Features

- Community / regional information
- Events calendar
- Interactive maps linking to local / regional websites
- Links to local / regional websites
- Zip-code locator

Examples

- **Afterschool Alliance [7]**
  http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/

  The Afterschool Alliance's website provides activist events by state as well as a Legislative Action Center. The Action Center uses a zip-code locator for identifying representatives and local media, providing email address and URL information for both representatives and media personnel as well as detailed background information on representatives.

- **Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network [29]**
  http://www.amnesty-usa.org/children/

  Amnesty International's (USA) provides several Urgent Action Networks that a visitor can join, such as the Children's Human Rights Network or the Legal Support Network. These networks are organized locally and hold meetings once or twice a month.

> ☐ **Children's Defense Fund [21]**
> **http://www.childrensdefensefund.org/**
>
> The Children's Defense Fund's Legislative Action Center allows visitors to email template letters on various issues to their representatives and local media (identified using a zip-code locator) as well as to check the status of legislation and their representatives vote on the issue. The site also provides information on a state-by-state basis, as well as links to state and local offices.

Establish Coalitions

Our evaluation of environmental and political websites in particular illustrated how effective the Internet is at facilitating the creation of coalitions (see appendix B). In light of the changing political atmosphere, as reflected in devolution, electronic government, and digital democracy (McNutt, 2000), the Internet may be especially useful for extending the reach and coordinating the efforts of advocacy organizations. Features such as email or hypertext links, wider issue networks, and webrings may prove to be especially effective in this respect.

Features

> ☐ Email links to other activists/advocates
>
> ☐ Links to the websites of other activist organizations
>
> ☐ Links to wider issue networks
>
> ☐ Webring dedicated to child advocacy

Examples

> ☐ **Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network [29]**
> **http://www.amnesty-usa.org/children/**
>
> Amnesty International's Children's Human Rights Network's site provides email links to other activists and policy experts as well. In addition, it is part of a wider issue network, Amnesty International, as well as links to other activist organizations' sites.
>
> ☐ **Child Welfare League of America [39]**
> **http://www.cwla.org/**
>
> The Child Welfare League of America's website provides email links to other activists and policy experts. In addition, the site links to other activist organizations' sites including Child Welfare, a gateway to information related to the welfare of children, and the Urban Institute, which conducts general research on economic and social policies.

Appeal to Users' Emotions

As we noted in our evaluation of child advocacy websites, many do not leverage the unique capabilities of the Internet, including interactive games and quizzes or downloadable postcards, screensavers, and e-cards. These features appeal to users' emotions and serve to engage their interest; therefore, we recommend that more attention be paid to implementing them.

Features

- Interactive games / quizzes
- Personalized content
- Postcards / screensavers / e-cards

Examples

- **Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids [1]**
  http://tobaccofreekids.org/

  The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids' Youth Action section provides interactive games and quizzes about the dangers of smoking. The section also solicits comics and ads from users, which it then posts online.

- **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children [42]**
  http://www.missing.org/

  The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's website provides downloadable posters, a SafeKids song, interactive quizzes, web banners, and a demo of CyberTipline.

Engage in Legislative Advocacy

Our evaluation also showed that very few advocacy websites provide information about candidates or political issues, or link to candidate or political party websites. Similarly, very few of the sites provided email links to candidates, endorsers, party officials, media contacts, or public officials. And finally, only one quarter of the websites provided zip-code locators. All of these features facilitate legislative advocacy and provide avenues by which advocates can impact the formal political process with respect to children's issues.

Features

- Email links to candidates, endorsers, party officials, media contacts, public officials
- Information on candidates or issues
- Links to candidate or political party websites
- Zip-code locator

Examples

◻ **Afterschool Alliance [7]**
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/

The Afterschool Alliance's website provides news releases on legislation regarding afterschool programs as well as sample letters to both representatives and the media that can be emailed using the Legislative Action Center (which uses a zip-code locator). The Action Center also provides information on current legislation, including summaries, status information, and key votes.

◻ **National PTA [34]**
http://www.pta.org/

The PTA and Washington section focuses on current legislative issues, the PTA's position on those issues, and taking action. This section allows visitors to email sample letters to their representatives and local media (identified using a zip-code locator) as well as link to representatives sites and current legislation. The section offers an e-newsletter on developments in Washington as well as posts action alerts.

Solicit Feedback

As noted in our evaluation, the only feedback feature that advocacy websites implemented frequently was an online form, usually requesting responses or comments pertaining to the site itself. However, the Internet represents a cheap and fast channel for soliciting personal information, opinions regarding issues, and content such as upcoming events from users. Advocacy sites should use guestbooks and online surveys to solicit detailed feedback.

Features

◻ Guest books

◻ Online surveys

◻ User-provided content

Examples

◻ **Action Alliance for Children [10]**
http://www.4children.org/

The Action Alliance for Children's website requests comments about current issues and suggestions for new issues, as well as provides an online survey. It also posts a master calendar to which visitors can submit activities at the regional, state, or national level (specifically not at the local level).

□ **YouthNOISE [4]**
http://www.youthnoise.com/

The YouthNOISE website conducts polls and solicits content such as articles and causes worthy of support. Furthermore, in response to the September 11 attack, it has implemented the Memory Chain Memorial, for which users are solicited for messages, and the YouthNOISE Unity Map, comprised of submitted quotes, lyrics, pictures, or messages.

Raise Funds

In our evaluation, we also found that many of the advocacy websites did not take advantage of the Internet to raise funds. E-commerce sites have used many methods for selling online, including affinity programs, online stores, and online auctions. In particular, affinity programs (partnerships with commercial websites in which nonprofits receive a percentage of sales) would seem to offer a very effective avenue for advocacy organizations.

Features

□ Affinity programs

□ Online donations

□ Online stores

Examples

□ **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children [42]**
http://www.missing.org/

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's website allows users to contribute money and purchase memberships online, as well as has an affinity program by which NCMEC receives a percentage of online purchases.

□ **Prevent Child Abuse America [13]**
http://www.preventchildabuse.org/

Prevent Child Abuse America accepts online donations and membership payments and sells greeting cards.

Facilitate Online Activism

Finally, we noted that unlike environmental websites, advocacy sites do not provide many of the activist features enabled by the online medium. In particular, we found that only one site hosted electronic events and that less than half of the sites provided action alerts or template emails. These features are particularly important as they have real-world consequences.

Features

        □ Action alerts

        □ Electronic events

        □ Template emails / letters

Examples

        □ **Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network [29]**
            http://www.amnesty-usa.org/children/

AIUSA provides extensive online motivational features. The site provides email action alerts as well as email updates; provides template emails and international email addresses of decision makers as well as a zip-code locator facility for U.S. representatives; provides electronic petitions; and hosts electronic events along with chat.

        □ **UNICEF [3]**
            http://www.unicef.org/

UNICEF's site allows visitors to subscribe to UNICEF ALERT, UNICEF's news alert listserv; sign an online guest book; complete an online survey; make online donations; and sign a global electronic petition—Say Yes to Children.

Conclusion

Our recommendation is that when designing a website, advocates should implement all of the features providing basic functionality as well as those features that serve to establish a presence, to inform, to engage, and to educate users. In addition, advocates should implement those features that pertain to the specific purpose(s) of their site. Special attention also should be paid to redressing those weaknesses identified in our evaluation of child advocacy websites. Lastly, those designing advocacy websites should implement mechanisms by which to measure whether their online efforts impact their real-world endeavors. These mechanisms should include those measures specific to each purpose as well as general measures such as usability testing. It is only by assessing the outcome of their online ventures that advocates can determine what features have been effective.

Appendix A : Definitions for Evaluation Form

Our evaluation form consisted of five sections: Identification, Basic Features, Interest-Invoking Features, Informational Features, and Motivational Features. The first of these, Identification, includes basic information about each specific website and our evaluation. The latter four are distinguished by the type of interaction. (See chapter eight for a discussion of the research upon which the form is based.) This evaluation form is exploratory and its categories are not strictly distinct; however, it does provide a solid basis for further research.

Identification

This section includes basic information about the website and our evaluation.

Website Identification

This section includes information specific to the evaluation, such as the website evaluated, the date of the evaluation, and the specific evaluators.

- □ **Title**. Title of the website as it appears on the home page.

- □ **URL**. URL pointing to the website.

- □ **Date of Evaluation**. Date evaluation was conducted. As this date was automatically updated, each time an evaluator accessed the form it was changed. Therefore, this date is only approximate.

- □ **Date of Last Update**. Date of the last update to the website. This date was determined based on content rather than the date automatically posted on each web page. In other words, evaluators looked for content that was date stamped, such as a story in the news, to determine the most recent content posted to the website.

- □ **Names of Evaluators**. The names of the evaluators. Each website was evaluated by two research assistants. One research assistant evaluated the informational and motivational features for all of the websites. Two other research assistants evaluated the basic features and interest-invoking features, each focusing on half of the total number of websites evaluated.

- □ **Code**. A numerical code assigned to each website. The code was used to organize and correlate the evaluations.

Comments

This section includes information applicable to the site as a whole; specifically, the type of information provided and a short, holistic description of the website.

- □ **Type of Information**. Categorization of the website based on type or level of information. Choices include the following: International, National, Regional, State, County, City, and Issue-based. This categorization allowed us to compare and recommend certain websites for each type of information.

- □ **Description**. A subjective assessment and description of each website. Innovative features or effective implementations of specific functionality are noted in this description, as well as features that detract from the usefulness or appeal of the website.

Basic Features

This section includes features that are essential for any basic, informational website.

Essential Functionality

We define essential functionality as including the following categories: technical aspects, privacy and security, credibility, navigation, organization of information, and information content. Each of these categories and their related features are discussed below.

Technical aspects

The technical aspects category includes features related to basic site functionality. We include only two technical features: informative URL and informative keywords.

- □ **Informative URL**. A URL that indicates the purpose or content of the site.
- □ **Informative Keywords**. Keywords, including possible synonyms, which indicate the purpose or content of the site. These keywords are included in the source code used to build the site.

Privacy and security

The privacy and security category includes features such as registration or access mechanisms, authorized collection or use of user data, and data encryption. Within this category, we include disclaimers, disclosure statements, privacy policies, and security mechanisms.

- □ **Disclaimer**. Statements explicitly outlining the limitations, purpose, scope, and authority of information.
- □ **Disclosure**. Statements explaining the collection, use, and distribution of information; the mechanisms for maintaining security; and/or website ownership, sponsorship, advertising, underwriting, commercial funding, and potential conflicts of interest.
- □ **Privacy policy**. Policies explaining how the privacy of individually identifiable information is ensured.
- □ **Security**. Mechanisms protecting personal information from loss, misuse, or alteration.

Credibility

The credibility category includes features such as the reputation of the website owner, the presence of external recognition, and the identification of website owners or designers. Within this category, we include attribution, authorship, and external recognition.

- □ **Attribution**. Relevant copyright information and reference sources for content.
- □ **Authorship**. Authors and contributors, their affiliations, and their credentials.

☐ **External recognition**. Seals of approval, website awards, and recommendations from outside organizations.

Navigation

The navigation category includes features related to moving around the site, such as location indicators, navigation aids, and directions. Within this category, we include broken links, navigation aids, and search capability. **Note that broken links are not the only features on our evaluation form that are undesirable.**

☐ **Broken links**. Links that go to an error page or cause the site to crash.

☐ **Navigation aids**. Highlighted menus, breadcrumb trails, and/or site maps.

☐ **Search capability**. A search engine that allows you to search the website.

Organization of information

The organization of information category includes features related to the arrangement of information content, such as overviews, tables of content, summaries and headings, and the structure of information presentation. Within this category, we include menu, headings, and summaries.

☐ **Menu**. Top categories on a website, reflecting how information is grouped.

☐ **Headings**. Titles of sub groupings of information (second in hierarchy to the menu).

☐ **Summaries**. Information included with the heading, reflecting what can be found at that link (not rollovers).

Information content

This category includes features related to the amount and type of information covered, such as its currency, relevance, accuracy, and completeness. Within this category, we include relevant information and up-to-date information.

☐ **Relevant information**. Content relevant to the subject or issue addressed by the website.

☐ **Up-to-date information**. Current and frequently updated information.

Informational Features

This section includes features that provide a user with information relevant to the purpose of the site or issues addressed on the site.

Information

We define information as the text contained by a website. The types of information provided depend on the purpose of the site designers: to establish a presence, to inform, to educate, or to mobilize a user to donate, vote, deliberate, or advocate.

To establish a presence

The category to establish a presence refers to information about the specific website owner.

□ **Agency / Individual / Organization**. Basic information about the goals, mission, and/or services of the agency, individual, or organization that owns the website.

□ **Contact**. Contact information, including email and postal addresses, for the agency, individual, or organization that owns the website.

To inform

The category to inform refers to information relevant to the subject addressed by the website.

□ **Legislative**. Information on congress and its committees as well as information on specific legislation, bills, or acts.

□ **Governmental**. Information about the rulemaking process of government, governmental resources (reports, services), and relevant governmental information.

□ **Judicial**. Information on the legal process as well as on lawsuits, amicus briefs, court cases, and reference and educational resources.

□ **Research**. Fact sheets, papers, poll results, reports, research, and transcripts.

□ **Interest groups**. Information on special interest groups or lobbyists.

□ **News**. Information drawn from the traditional news media—newspaper, radio, TV—as well as newsletters and press releases provided by agencies, individuals, or organizations.

□ **Business**. Information about businesses or economic development.

□ **International**. Information about international entities such as the United Nations or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and their activities.

To educate

The category to educate refers to information provided to teach the user about the subject addressed by the website.

- □ **Instructions**. Information in the form of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), guidelines, how-to's, lessons, tips, and training manuals.

To donate

The category to donate refers to information provided to mobilize the user to buy or donate funds.

- □ **Products**. Information in the form of a catalog, product descriptions, and prices.

To vote

The category to vote refers to information provided to mobilize the user to vote for a specific candidate or issue.

- □ **Candidate / Elected official**. Biographies, endorsers, campaign financing, issue positions, and voting record.

- □ **Political issue**. Information about a ballot measure and arguments for or against it.

- □ **Voting**. Information about the voting process, absentee ballots, polling places, and voter registration.

To deliberate

The category to deliberate refers to information provided to mobilize the user to become involved in formal deliberation on a specific issue.

- □ **Citizenry**. Information regarding citizenry, including citizen rights and responsibilities.

- □ **Community**. Information specific to activities in a local region or community such as event calendars, press releases, and reports.

- □ **Municipal / Regional**. Information specific to a local region or community such as information on crime, traffic, and weather.

To advocate

The category to advocate refers to information provided to mobilize the user to advocate for a specific cause or issue.

- □ **Activism**. Information specific to activities on the issue such as event calendars, issue endorsers, results or updates on the activities, and training.

- □ **Activist issue**. Information specific to the issue addressed by the site, be it child advocacy, global warning, or taxes.

External Links

External links refer to hypertext links to another website. The types of links provided depend on the purpose of the site designers: to establish a presence, to inform, to educate, or to mobilize a user to donate, vote, deliberate, or advocate.

To establish a presence

The category to establish a presence refers to links to additional offices of the website owner.

- ☐ **Agency / Individual / Organization offices**. Links to the websites of other offices (international, national, state, local) of the agency, individual, or organization that owns the website.

To inform

The category to inform refers to links to websites containing information relevant to the subject addressed by the website. We use the same categorization that we used for information on a previous page.

- ☐ **Legislative**. Links to information on congress, congressional members, and congressional committees as well as on specific legislation, bills, and acts.

- ☐ **Governmental**. Links to information about the rulemaking process of government, governmental resources (reports, services), and relevant governmental information. We have included links to all levels of government: international, national, state, and local.

- ☐ **Judicial**. Links to information on the legal process as well as on lawsuits, amicus briefs, court cases, and reference and educational resources. We have included links to the courts; the Department of Justice; and Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; as well as to organizations such as the American Bar Association.

- ☐ **Research**. Links to research findings, data, or key data elements. We have included links to publications, journals, and educational institutions.

- ☐ **Interest groups**. Links to information on special interest groups or lobbyists.

- ☐ **News**. Links to the traditional news media—newspaper, radio, TV—as well as to newsletters and press releases provided by agencies, individuals, or organizations.

- ☐ **Business**. Links to information about businesses or economic development.

- ☐ **Additional resources**. Links to any other resources not covered in the categories above.

To donate

The category to donate refers to links to websites in an attempt to mobilize the user to donate by buying.

☐ **Affinity programs**. Links to partner commercial organizations that offer incentives when a user buys from them.

To vote

The category to vote refers to links to websites in an attempt to mobilize the user to vote for a specific candidate.

☐ **Candidate**. Links to candidate websites.

☐ **Endorsers of candidate**. Links to the websites of endorsers of a specific candidate.

☐ **Political party**. Links to political party websites at the national, state, or local level.

To deliberate

The category to deliberate refers to links to websites in an attempt to mobilize the user to become involved in formal deliberation on a specific issue.

☐ **Community networks**. Links to community networks.

To advocate

The category to advocate refers to links to websites in an attempt to mobilize the user to advocate for a specific cause or issue.

☐ **Other activist organizations or endorsers**. Links to websites of other organizations either advocating for or endorsing the specific issue.

☐ **Wider issue networks**. Links to wider issue networks either advocating for or endorsing the specific issue. We have included international networks and webrings.

☐ **Industry-related sites**. Links to websites of businesses or industrial organizations either involved in or responsible for the specific issue.

Interest-Invoking Features

This section includes features that we consider to be effective in invoking interest or engagement on the part of a user in the absence of human interaction.

Engagement

We define engagement as including the following categories: multimedia, media interaction, and emotional appeal. Each of these categories and their related features are discussed below.

Multimedia

The multimedia category includes those features that employ a communication medium in addition to the website itself.

- **Audio**. Links to recorded interviews, speeches, radio broadcasts.
- **Graphics**. Visual images and/or photographs.
- **Interactive graphics**. Virtual tours, clickable maps, slide shows, PowerPoint presentations.
- **Video**. Television broadcasts, webcasting.

Media interaction

The media interaction category includes those features that employ specialized software.

- **Downloadable files**. Files the user can download, usually in pdf (portable document format), MS Word, or RTF (rich text format).
- **Geographic information systems (GIS)**. Computer-assisted system for gathering, storing, manipulating, and displaying geographic information. GIS allows users to use a database to analyze data based on location, and to generate maps and reports in a variety of formats (Turner, 1998).
- **Zip-code locator**. Retrieval of geographically-specific information based on a user-provided zip code.

Emotional appeal

We call this category "emotional appeal" rather than "enjoyment" as the former term includes empathy and sympathy as well as amusement, which is an important distinction given the often serious subject matter of advocacy websites.

- **Interactive games**. Playful activity that requires participation between user and website in the medium.
- **Interactive quizzes**. A test-your-knowledge activity where the website responds with correct answers to user-provided choices.
- **Narratives**. Victims' stories, issue-based stories, organizations' success stories.

- ☐ **Personalized content**. Opportunity to request specific research, news articles, action alerts, recipes.

- ☐ **Postcards / Posters**. Downloadable for free, these are also called e-cards.

- ☐ **Screensavers**. Downloadable screensavers.

Motivational Features

This section includes features that we consider to be effective in mobilizing users to take action, all of which rely on human interaction. The type of mobilization depends on the purpose of the site designers: to establish a presence, to inform, to educate, or to mobilize a user to donate, vote, deliberate, or advocate.

Email Links

We define this section as including interaction in which the user contacts another individual but does not necessarily provide any personal or issue-related information. The direction of communication tends to be vertical and one-way.

To establish a presence

The category to establish a presence refers to email links to individuals responsible for the website.

- ☐ **Agency / Individual / Organization contact**. Email link to contact for the agency, individual, or organization that owns the website.

- ☐ **Webmaster**. Email link to webmaster or the individual responsible for maintaining the website.

To vote

The category to vote refers to email links to individuals associated with a candidate for elected office.

- ☐ **Candidate**. Email link to the candidate.

- ☐ **Endorsers of candidate**. Email link to endorsers of the candidate.

- ☐ **Party officials**. Email link to party officials.

To deliberate

The category to deliberate refers to email links to individuals who can impact formal deliberation on a specific issue.

- ☐ **Media**. Email link to media personnel.

- ☐ **Public officials**. Email link to public officials at the international, national, state, or local level.

To advocate

The category to advocate refers to email links to individuals involved with a specific cause or issue.

☐ **Activists / Advocates**. Email link to other individuals advocating for an issue.

☐ **Business**. Email link to individuals at an organization responsible for the issue.

☐ **Policy experts**. Email link to experts on the issue.

Human Interaction

We define this section as including interaction in which more than two individuals communicate. The direction of communication tends to be horizontal and is many-to-many.

To educate

The category to educate refers to collaboration and interaction occurring in an asynchronous online forum.

☐ **Listserv**. Discussion forum where new postings are automatically sent via email to subscribers (Turner, 1998, Appendix). We have included e-newsletters and email action alerts.

☐ **Bulletin board / Message board**. Electronic bulletin board system, or a message database where people can log in and leave broadcast messages within topic groups for others.

☐ **Newsgroup**. "Informal group of systems that exchange news and discussion" (Turner, 1998, Appendix). Subscribers to a newsgroup see the messages posted as well as have the option of responding to the original poster, the entire group, or a different message. Unlike a listserv, messages are not automatically sent to subscribers. We have included Usenet newsgroups.

To deliberate

The category to deliberate refers to collaboration and interaction occurring in a synchronous or real-time online forum.

☐ **Chat room**. Online forum in which participants can engage in live discussions.

Feedback

We define this section as including interaction in which the user provides information to another individual. This information may be personal or issue-related, and it therefore indicates some degree of commitment by the user. The direction of communication tends to be vertical and one-way.

To volunteer

> The category to volunteer refers to interaction in which the user makes a commitment to take action.

> □ **Guest books**. Provision of personal information.

> □ **Job and resume bank**. Provision of resume to a job bank.

> □ **Online forms**. Provision of comments, opinions, responses, or reviews.

> □ **Online surveys**. Provision of opinions on a poll or rating form.

To deliberate

> The category to deliberate refers to interaction in which the user submits an issue or problem for formal deliberation.

> □ **Political issues**. Submitting an issue for debate or vote, setting the agenda, or conducting referenda.

> □ **Problems**. Submitting problems such as an abandoned car, a crime, or a complaint.

To advocate

> The category to advocate refers to interaction in which the user provides data or content to a website.

> □ **User-provided data**. Provision of research data.

> □ **User-provided content**. Provision of content to be posted on a website, such as conferences, events, issues, site URLs, or stories.

Mobilization

We define this section as including those features that allow a user to take action online. The direction of communication tends to be one-way and vertical; however, the action taken by the user has real-world consequences. Therefore, this section encompasses the desired outcomes for each online genre.

To volunteer

> The category to volunteer refers to online actions in which a user volunteers.

> □ **Volunteer forms**. User volunteers time or services online by submitting a form.

To donate

> The category to donate refers to online actions in which a user gives money.

> □ **Contribution forms**. User gives money online, either in the form of a donation, a gift, or an honorarium.

> □ **Online auctions**. User bids for a product or service online.

- ☐ **Order forms**. User buys a product or service online. We have included ads, books, and publications as well as memberships and subscriptions.

To vote

The category to vote refers to online actions in which a user participates in an election.

- ☐ **Electronic events with candidates**. User connects to an electronic event with a political candidate. We have included e-debates, live chats, and live interviews.

- ☐ **Electronic lobby registration forms**. User registers for a lobby online.

- ☐ **Online voting**. User votes online.

To deliberate

The category to deliberate refers to online actions in which a user participates in formal deliberation.

- ☐ **Community networks**. User connects to a local community network.

- ☐ **Electronic events with public officials**. User connects to an electronic event with public officials. We have included live chats and live interviews.

- ☐ **Virtual town meetings**. User connects to a virtual town meeting.

To advocate

The category to advocate refers to online actions in which a user advocates for a specific cause or issue.

- ☐ **Action alerts**. User receives or accesses action alerts. We have included calls to action, legislative alerts, news alerts, and email reminders.

- ☐ **Electronic petitions**. User signs a petition online.

- ☐ **Flyers and pamphlets**. User downloads flyers or pamphlets that advocate for an issue.

- ☐ **Online event-based activism**. User participates in an online event that has real-world significance.

- ☐ **Template emails / Template letters**. User edits a sample email or letter advocating for a specific cause and then sends it electronically to a public official or a friend. We have included messages sent both by email and by Internet-based fax.

Evaluation Form for Activist Websites

I.   Identification

Website Identification	
Title:	
URL:	
Date of evaluation:	
Date of last update:	
Name of evaluators:	
Code:	
Comments	
Type of information:	
Description:	

II. Basic Features

Essential Functionality	
Technical aspects:	☐ Informative URL
	☐ Informative keywords (source code)
Privacy and security:	☐ Disclaimer (site limitations; scope; purpose; liability)
	☐ Disclosure (collection/use of information; conflicts of interest; funding)
	☐ Privacy policy (privacy of individually identifiable information)
	☐ Security (icon; secure server)
Credibility:	☐ Attribution (references; sources; publication information)
	☐ Authorship (site owners; site sponsors; site designers)
	☐ External recognition (awards; ratings)
Navigation:	☐ Broken links
	☐ Navigation aids (breadcrumb trail; site map; highlighted in menu)
	☐ Search capability
Organization of information:	☐ Menu
	☐ Headings
	☐ Summaries (not rollovers)
Information content:	☐ Relevant information
	☐ Up-to-date information (within the last month)

III. Informational Features

Information	
To establish a presence:	☐ Agency / Individual / Organization (goals; mission; service)
	☐ Contact (email address; postal address)
To inform:	☐ Legislative (congress; laws; bills; acts; committees)
	☐ Governmental (constituent services; reports; grants)
	☐ Judicial (lawsuits; amicus briefs; court cases)
	☐ Research (fact sheets; papers; polls; reports; research; transcripts)
	☐ Interest groups (lobbyists)
	☐ News (media; newsletters; press releases)
	☐ Business (economic development; local business)
	☐ International (United Nations; nongovernmental organizations)
To educate:	☐ Instructions (FAQs; guidelines; how-to's; lessons; tips; training manuals)
To donate:	☐ Products (catalog; description; price; standards; publications)
To vote:	☐ Candidate / Elected official (bio; positions; voting record; endorsers)
	☐ Political issue (ballot measures; arguments for and against)
	☐ Voting (absentee ballots; polling places; voter registration)
To deliberate:	☐ Citizenry (responsibilities; rights)
	☐ Community (activities; press releases; reports; awareness; calendars)
	☐ Municipal / Regional (crime; traffic; weather; economy)
To advocate:	☐ Activism (calendar; endorsers; events; results; training; updates)
	☐ Activist issue (child advocacy; programs; social security; taxes)

External Links	
To establish a presence:	☐ Agency / Individual / Organization offices (international; national; state; local)
To inform:	☐ Legislative (congressional members; committees; legislation)
	☐ Governmental (international; national; state; local)
	☐ Judicial (courts; American Bar Association; Dept. of Justice; ATF)
	☐ Research (books; colleges; journals; universities)
	☐ Interest groups
	☐ News (newspapers; radio; television)
	☐ Business (businesses)
	☐ Additional resources
To donate:	☐ Affinity programs (partnerships with commercial organizations)
To vote:	☐ Candidate
	☐ Endorsers of candidate
	☐ Political party (national; state; local)
To deliberate:	☐ Community networks
To advocate:	☐ Other activist organizations or endorsers
	☐ Wider issue networks (international; webring)
	☐ Industry-related sites

IV. Interest-Invoking Features

Engagement	
Multimedia:	☐ Audio (interviews; speeches; radio broadcasts)
	☐ Graphics (images; photographs)
	☐ Interactive graphics (virtual tours; maps; slide shows; PowerPoint)
	☐ Video (television broadcasts; webcasting)
Media interaction:	☐ Downloadable files (reports; forms)
	☐ Geographic information systems (GIS)
	☐ Zip-code locator
Emotional appeal:	☐ Interactive games
	☐ Interactive quizzes
	☐ Narratives (stories; testimonials)
	☐ Personalized content (research; news articles; recipes)
	☐ Postcards / Posters (downloadable for free)
	☐ Screensavers

V. Motivational Features

Email Links	
To establish a presence:	☐ Agency / Individual / Organization contact
	☐ Webmaster
To vote:	☐ Candidate
	☐ Endorsers of candidate
	☐ Party officials
To deliberate:	☐ Media
	☐ Public officials (international; national; state; local)
To advocate:	☐ Activists / Advocates
	☐ Business
	☐ Policy experts
Human Interaction	
To educate:	☐ Listserv (messages sent to email list automatically; e-newsletters)
	☐ Bulletin board / Message board (message database)
	☐ Newsgroup (Usenet distributed bulletin board system)
To deliberate:	☐ Chat room
Feedback	
To volunteer:	☐ Guest books (personal information)
	☐ Job and resume bank
	☐ Online forms (comments; opinions; registration; responses; reviews)
	☐ Online surveys (polls; rating)
To deliberate:	☐ Political issues (submit for debate and vote; set agenda; conduct referenda)
	☐ Problems (abandoned cars; crime; complaints)
To advocate:	☐ User-provided data (research data)
	☐ User-provided content (conferences; events; issues; sites; stories)

Mobilization	
To volunteer:	☐ Volunteer forms
To donate:	☐ Contribution forms (donate; gift; honoree)
	☐ Online auctions
	☐ Order forms (ads; books; memberships; publications; subscriptions)
To vote:	☐ Electronic events with candidates (E-debates; live chats; live interviews)
	☐ Electronic lobby registration forms
	☐ Online voting
To deliberate:	☐ Community networks
	☐ Electronic events with public officials (live chats; live interviews)
	☐ Virtual town meetings
To advocate:	☐ Action alerts (call to action; legislative alert; news alert; email reminder)
	☐ Electronic petitions
	☐ Flyers and pamphlets
	☐ Online event-based activism
	☐ Template emails / Template letters (officials; forward to a friend)

Questionnaire for Activist Websites

Code:

Who is the target audience of your website?

1. What is/are the purpose(s) of your organization's website?

   ☐ Establish a presence online   ☐ Raise funds

   ☐ Inform   ☐ Recruit volunteers

   ☐ Educate   ☐ Organize online actions

   ☐ Receive feedback   ☐ Organize offline actions

   ☐ Engage interest   ☐ Other:

   ☐ Build community

   Comments:

2. Think about the purposes of your organization's website marked in question #1. Please select up to two that you consider the <u>most</u> important to your organization.

   ☐ Establish a presence online   ☐ Raise funds

   ☐ Inform   ☐ Recruit volunteers

   ☐ Educate   ☐ Organize online actions

   ☐ Receive feedback   ☐ Organize offline actions

   ☐ Engage interest   ☐ Other:

   ☐ Build community

   Comments:

3. Are there website purposes you did not select in question #1 that your organization wanted to implement but could not?

4. If your response to #3 was yes, mark the purpose(s) that your organization wanted to implement for its website but could not.

    ☐ Establish a presence online   ☐ Raise funds

    ☐ Inform   ☐ Recruit volunteers

    ☐ Educate   ☐ Organize online actions

    ☐ Receive feedback   ☐ Organize offline actions

    ☐ Engage interest   ☐ Other:

    ☐ Build community

    Comments:

5. Which of the following factors prevented your organization from implementing the purpose(s) selected in #4 above?

    ☐ Equipment   ☐ Training

    ☐ Expense   ☐ Universal access

    ☐ Expertise   ☐ Other:

    ☐ Software   ☐ None

    ☐ Time

    Please explain your answer:

6. Do you measure or assess whether your organization's website fulfills the purpose(s) you selected in #1 above?

7. If you do measure or assess whether your organization's website is fulfilling its purpose(s), what measure(s) do you use?

☐ Number of hits

☐ Number of online information requests

☐ Number of online donations

☐ Number of volunteers recruited online

☐ Number of new members recruited online

☐ Number of subscribers to listservs

☐ Number of messages posted on online bulletin boards or message boards

☐ Number of participants in online discussion forums or chat rooms

☐ Increased participation in online campaigns

☐ Increased participation in offline campaigns

☐ Usability tests

☐ Other forms of assessment

☐ Other:

List of Websites Evaluated

Child Advocacy Websites by Name

Code	Title	URL
12	100% Campaign	http://www.100percentcampaign.org/
10	Action Alliance for Children	http://www.4children.org/
7	Afterschool Alliance	http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/
29	Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network	http://www.amnesty-usa.org/children/
1	Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids	http://tobaccofreekids.org/
39	Child Welfare League of America	http://www.cwla.org/
35	Child's Rights Information Network (CRIN)	http://www.crin.org/
9	Children's Advocacy Institute's Clearinghouse on Children	www.acusd.edu/childrensissues
21	Children's Defense Fund	http://www.childrensdefensefund.org/
27	Children's House in Cyberspace (Childwatch International)	http://childhouse.uio.no
19	Connect for Kids	http://www.connectforkids.org/
41	Kids 4 Kids	http://www.andrewsoft.net/kids4kids/index.html
20	Kids Count	http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/index.htm
14	National Center for Children in Poverty	http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/
42	National Center for Missing & Exploited Children	http://www.missing.org/
15	National Children's Alliance	http://www.nncac.org/
34	National PTA	http://www.pta.org/
36	National SAFE Kids Campaign	http://www.safekids.org/
2	Oxfam America	http://www.oxfamamerica.org/
13	Prevent Child Abuse America	http://www.preventchildabuse.org/
37	Save the Children	http://www.savethechildren.org/
25	Stand for Children	http://www.stand.org/
28	Texas Industrial Areas Foundation	http://www.tresser.com/IAF.htm
16	The Children's Partnership	http://www.childrenspartnership.org/
11	The National Children's Advocacy Center	http://www.ncac-hsv.org/
33	The New England Network for Child, Youth, and Family Services	http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/ElecAdvo/index.html
3	UNICEF	http://www.unicef.org/
31	United Nations Cyberschoolbus	http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/
40	YO! Youth Outlook	http://pacificnews.org/yo/
6	Youthlink – Youth in Action	http://www.youthlink.org/
4	YouthNOISE	http://www.youthnoise.com/
17	Zero to Three	http://www.zerotothree.org/index.htm

Child Advocacy Websites by Code

Code	Title	URL
1	Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids	http://tobaccofreekids.org/
2	Oxfam America	http://www.oxfamamerica.org/
3	UNICEF	http://www.unicef.org/
4	YouthNOISE	http://www.youthnoise.com/
6	Youthlink – Youth in Action	http://www.youthlink.org/
7	Afterschool Alliance	http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/
9	Children's Advocacy Institute's Clearinghouse on Children	www.acusd.edu/childrensissues
10	Action Alliance for Children	http://www.4children.org/
11	The National Children's Advocacy Center	http://www.ncac-hsv.org/
12	100% Campaign	http://www.100percentcampaign.org/
13	Prevent Child Abuse America	http://www.preventchildabuse.org/
14	National Center for Children in Poverty	http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/
15	National Children's Alliance	http://www.nncac.org/
16	The Children's Partnership	http://www.childrenspartnership.org/
17	Zero to Three	http://www.zerotothree.org/index.htm
19	Connect for Kids	http://www.connectforkids.org/
20	Kids Count	http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/index.htm
21	Children's Defense Fund	http://www.childrensdefensefund.org/
25	Stand for Children	http://www.stand.org/
27	Children's House in Cyberspace (Childwatch International)	http://childhouse.uio.no
28	Texas Industrial Areas Foundation	http://www.tresser.com/IAF.htm
29	Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network	http://www.amnesty-usa.org/children/
31	United Nations Cyberschoolbus	http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/
33	The New England Network for Child, Youth, and Family Services	http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/ElecAdvo/index.html
34	National PTA	http://www.pta.org/
35	Child's Rights Information Network (CRIN)	http://www.crin.org/
36	National SAFE Kids Campaign	http://www.safekids.org/
37	Save the Children	http://www.savethechildren.org/
39	Child Welfare League of America	http://www.cwla.org/
40	YO! Youth Outlook	http://pacificnews.org/yo/
41	Kids 4 Kids	http://www.andrewsoft.net/kids4kids/index.html
42	National Center for Missing & Exploited Children	http://www.missing.org/

Political Websites

Code	Title	URL
24	Blacksburg Electronic Village	http://www.bev.net/
5	DNet	http://www.dnet.org/
26	Markle Foundation's Web White & Blue	http://www.webwhiteblue.org/
23	Minnesota E-Democracy	http://www.e-democracy.org/
38	Project Vote Smart	http://www.vote-smart.org/

Environmental Websites

Code	Title	URL
32	EnviroLink Network	http://www.envirolink.org/
22	Environmental Defense Fund	http://www.edf.org/
30	Greenpeace International	http://www.greenpeace.org/
8	Rainforest Action Network	http://www.ran.org/
18	Sierra Club	http://www.sierraclub.org/

Appendix B : Evaluation of Political and Environmental Websites

B ased on the effectiveness frameworks we created, we developed a website evaluation form. In this appendix, we present the results of our evaluation of five political and five environmental websites.

Sample and Method

Our purposive sample consisted of forty-two websites: thirty-two child advocacy sites, five political sites, and five environmental sites. We selected these sites based on an online search, examples from the literature, and expert consultation. In addition, we attempted to select representative examples providing different levels of information—international, national, regional, state, county, city, and issue-based. We included the ten environmental and political sites for purposes of general comparison with the child advocacy sites. In this chapter, we focus on the results from our evaluation of the ten political and environmental sites. (See appendix A for a list of websites. See chapter eight for our evaluation of the child advocacy sites.)

For each website, we noted which features were implemented using an evaluation form consisting of a series of simple checklists. We marked a feature as implemented if we found at least one example. This approach provides a general overview of the features on each website in an objective sense; however, we did not distinguish subjectively those websites that we felt implemented certain features more effectively than others did. (We provide subjective descriptions of the websites in appendix C.)

One research assistant evaluated all of the websites with respect to informational and motivational features. Two other research assistants each evaluated half of the websites with respect to basic and interest-invoking features. We achieved high inter-rater reliability between the latter two evaluators through joint examination of five additional websites: three child advocacy sites, one environmental site, and one political site.

Evaluation Results

For each section—Basic Features, Informational Features, Interest-Invoking Features, Motivational Features—we have presented the results from our evaluation of the political and environmental websites below. We have sorted each set of websites based on the number of features they implement. In other words, a website that implements all of the features included in our Basic Features section will be ranked first. Finally, we have calculated the percentage of political and environmental websites that have implemented each feature.

Basic Features

The results from the Basic Features section of our evaluation form are shown in Table 1. A rather surprising finding concerns informative keywords: two of the political sites and three of the environmental sites do not provide informative keywords. As some search engines search for the keywords provided in the HTML code rather than searching the complete content of a website, the lack of informative keywords may prevent users from finding a site.

With respect to privacy and security features, all of the political websites provide disclaimers, disclosure statements, and privacy policies; four discuss security. All of the environmental websites provide disclosure statements and four provide disclaimers, explain their privacy policies, and discuss security mechanisms. These findings are unremarkable, given that user concerns with online privacy have been well-publicized. Therefore, one would expect that these features would be provided.

Based on our features of authorship and attribution, we can categorize the political and environmental sites we evaluated as being credible. All of the political websites provide references for website content and credentials for the site owners. Four of the environmental websites provide references; all provide credentials. However, our findings concerning external recognition are interesting. Although these ten sites in particular were chosen because the literature viewed them as exemplary, few have received Web awards: only two of the political sites, none of the environmental sites.

Our findings in the category of navigation were somewhat unexpected. First, we found a lower number of sites had implemented search capabilities than we expected: only two political sites and four of the environmental websites provide search functionality. Given that the search capability of the World Wide Web is one of its most powerful features, this finding was surprising. Second, we found a high number of broken links on the websites—two of the political sites and all of the environmental sites had a broken link. (We did not include broken links as a feature in the total used to rank the sites as this is the only feature on our form that is not desirable. Furthermore, we did not check every link to verify that a site did not have any that were broken.) Most of the sites, however, provide some type of navigation aid (four of the political sites, all of the environmental sites).

With respect to information organization, we found that all of the political and the environmental websites provided menus and headings. In addition, four of the political and four of the environmental sites provide summaries. Our findings in the information content category were similarly unsurprising: all of the sites provide relevant and up-to-date information.

Table 1. *Basic Features*

																		Essential Functionality		
Code	Informative URL	Informative keywords	Disclaimer	Disclosure	Privacy policy	Security	Attribution	Authorship	External recognition	Broken links	Navigation aids	Search capability	Menu	Headings	Summaries	Relevant information	Up-to-date information	Total # of features (out of 16)
Political Action Websites																		
23	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	**14**
24		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**14**
26	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	**14**
5		X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**13**
38	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		X	X	**12**
%	60	60	100	100	100	80	100	100	40	40	80	40	100	100	80	100	100	
Environmental Websites																		
30	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**15**
22	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**14**
18	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**13**
32	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	**13**
8		X		X			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	**10**
%	80	40	80	100	80	80	80	100	0	100	100	80	100	100	80	100	100	

Informational Features

The results from the Informational Features section of our evaluation form are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 includes the results from the Information category and Table 3 from the External Links category. With respect to information provision, our results are fairly unsurprising. Disseminating information is one of the most common reasons for establishing a presence on the Internet; therefore, very few websites would fail to provide the information that users expect to access.

The most common information provided on political websites is information concerning the owner of the site. However, in addition to information on the site owner, all of the environmental websites provide contact information, news, and information on environmental issues and related activities. Four out of five of the political websites provide legislative, governmental, and news information. Similarly, four out of five environmental websites provide governmental, research, and international information. And eight out of the ten sites provide instructions.

Surprisingly, only two of the political websites provide information on political issues and voting; only three provide candidate information. However, the sites that did not provide this type of information focused on regional rather than national audiences. This finding is more understandable with respect to environmental websites, only one of which provides candidate

information. Lastly, three of the political websites provide community information, two environmental websites do so.

Table 2. *Informational Features—Information*

	Information																				
Code	Agency / Ind / Org	Contact	Legislative	Governmental	Judicial	Research	Interest groups	News	Business	International	Instructions	Products	Candidate / Official	Political issue	Voting	Citizenry	Community	Municipal / Regional	Activism	Activist issue	Total # of Features
Political Action Websites																					
38	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X							13
5	X		X	X	X			X					X	X	X		X					9
26	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X									9
23	X	X	X	X							X						X		X	X		8
24	X	X				X		X	X		X						X	X				8
%	100	60	80	80	60	60	40	80	20	0	80	20	60	40	40	0	60	20	20	20	
Environmental Websites																					
18	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X		X	X		14
22	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X	X		13
8	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X					X		X	X		13
30	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X	X		13
32	X	X						X				X							X	X		6
%	100	100	60	80	60	80	60	100	60	80	80	60	20	0	0	0	40	0	100	100	

With respect to external links (see Table 3 on the next page), all of the political websites link to governmental, news, political party, and other organizational sites. All of the environmental websites link to other office, news, and other organizational sites. Four of five political websites link to legislative and research sites; four of five environmental sites link to governmental, research, and business sites, as well as wider issue networks.

Table 3. *Informational Features—External Links*

	External Links																	
Code	Agency / Ind / Org offices	Legislative	Governmental	Judicial	Research	Interest groups	News	Business	Additional resources	Affinity programs	Candidate	Endorsers of candidate	Political party	Community networks	Other activist orgs / Endorsers	Wider issue networks	Industry-related sites	Total # of Features
Political Action Websites																		
24	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X				X	X	X	X		12
23		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X	X		12
26	X		X		X		X		X		X	X	X		X			9
38		X	X	X	X	X	X				X		X		X			9
5		X	X				X	X					X		X			6
%	40	80	100	60	80	40	100	40	60	0	60	20	100	40	100	40	0	
Environmental Websites																		
30	X		X	X	X	X	X	X							X	X	X	10
22	X		X		X		X	X		X					X	X		8
32	X		X		X		X		X	X					X	X		8
18	X	X	X		X		X	X							X			7
8	X						X	X		X					X	X	X	7
%	100	20	80	20	80	20	100	80	20	60	0	0	0	0	100	80	40	

Interest-Invoking Features

The results from the Interest-Invoking Features section of our evaluation form are shown in Table 4 on the next page. With respect to multimedia, the feature found on all political and environmental websites is graphics. Interactive graphics are found on four of five environmental websites. And three political websites provide either interactive graphics or video. One type of interactive graphics provided by political websites is an interactive map that allows users to click on and access information specific to a state. This feature illustrates one example of localism.

With respect to media interaction, the most common feature provided is downloadable files: all of the political websites and four of the environmental websites allow users to download files. However, one surprising finding relates to the use of zip-code locators. A zip-code locator allows a user to identify and contact their local representatives and media personnel. In this manner, taking action is made more convenient. We found that only two of the political sites and one of the environmental sites offer some method of zip-code identification. (One reason for the low percentage of environmental sites providing this feature may be that many of these sites are international.) This finding is surprising given that several organizations provide zip-code locator capabilities to nonprofits. (Capitol Advantage and Votenet are two examples; see appendix D for

a list of resources.) In particular, zip-code locators allow users to access local information, a capability deemed to be critical for not only engaging but also mobilizing users.

In the category of emotional appeal, environmental websites in particular provide many other features for engaging the user. Four out of five of the environmental websites provide both narratives and personalized content, as compared to only two of the political sites. As discussed in our chapter on the effectiveness of e-commerce (see chapter three), personalized content enhances a user's positive response to a site.

However, no political and only a few environmental sites provide either postcards or screensavers. Furthermore, only one political and two environmental sites provide interactive quizzes; only one environmental and two political sites provide interactive games. These results are surprising, given the importance assigned to interactivity by scholars studying online education (see chapter two). The former feature in particular deserves to be implemented more extensively on political and environmental websites, as it serves not only to entertain but also to educate.

Table 4. *Interest-Invoking Features*

	Engagement													
Code	Audio	Graphics	Interactive graphics	Video	Downloadable files	GIS	Zip-code locator	Interactive games	Interactive quizzes	Narratives	Personalized content	Postcards / Posters	Screensavers	Total # of Features
Political Action Websites														
24	X	X	X	X	X			X			X			7
5		X	X	X	X		X			X	X			7
38		X	X		X	X	X	X	X					7
26	X	X		X	X					X				5
23		X			X									2
%	40	100	60	60	100	20	40	40	20	40	40	0	0	
Environmental Websites														
8	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		10
18	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X			9
30		X	X		X					X	X	X	X	7
22		X	X		X	X				X	X			6
32		X												1
%	40	100	80	40	80	20	20	20	40	80	80	40	20	

Motivational Features

The results from the Motivational Features section of our evaluation form are shown in Tables 5, 6, and 7. Table 5 includes the results from the Email Links and Human Interaction categories, Table 6 presents results from the Solicitation category, and Table 7 presents results from the Mobilization category. We discuss each in turn.

With respect to email links, all of the environmental websites and four out of five of the political sites provide links to the site owner and/or the webmaster. Surprisingly, however, only two of the political websites provide email links to candidates and only one provides links to party officials. Furthermore, only two political sites provide email links to public officials and none provide links to the media. These results are surprising, as email links for public officials and media personnel are included in most zip-code locators. Lastly, none of the political websites provide email links for activists, business people, or policy experts.

None of the environmental websites provide email links to candidates, endorsers, party officials, or the media. However, three provide email links to public officials, two provide links to business people, and one provides links to other activists. These numbers seem low, considering that environmental websites focus on specific issues that should be raised in the media and with public officials, as well as pursued in conjunction with other activists.

With respect to human interaction, however, all of the environmental websites and three of the political websites support listservs. Bulletin boards are provided less consistently: two environmental sites and one political site provides a bulletin board. And only one political site supports a newsgroup. However, in general, these sites offer several features supporting human interaction. In contrast, few websites, regardless of type, support chat rooms. This finding is not unexpected, given that real-time, online conversations are difficult both to coordinate and to moderate unless restricted in number of participants and governed by rules of discourse.

Table 5. *Motivational Features—Email Links & Human Interaction*

| Code | Email Links | | | | | | | | | | Human Interaction | | | | Total # of Features |
	Agency / Ind / Org contact	Webmaster	Candidate	Endorsers of candidate	Party officials	Media	Public officials	Activists / Advocates	Business	Policy experts	Listserv	Bulletin board / Message board	Newsgroup	Chat room	
Political Action Websites															
38	X	X	X		X		X								5
23	X	X	X								X	X			5
24	X	X									X		X		4
5	X						X								2
26		X									X				2
%	80	80	40	0	20	0	40	0	0	0	60	20	20	0	
Environmental Websites															
30	X	X					X	X	X		X	X			7
8	X	X					X		X		X				5
18	X	X					X				X				4
32	X	X									X	X			4
22	X	X									X				3
%	100	100	0	0	0	0	60	20	40	0	100	40	0	0	

The category of solicitation is interesting with respect to the types of features provided by political versus environmental websites (see Table 6 on the next page). All of the political websites provide online forms for comments or responses; three of the environmental websites do so as well. But interestingly, three of the political websites also post online surveys, as opposed to none of the environmental sites. Regarding solicitation of other user feedback, two political websites allow users to submit political issues for consideration. In addition, four of five political websites and two of five environmental websites solicit content, such as other site URLs, events, or stories.

Table 6. *Motivational Features—Solicitation*

Solicitation									
Code	**Guest books**	**Job and resume bank**	**Online forms**	**Online surveys**	**Political issues**	**Problems**	**User-provided data**	**User-provided content**	**Total # of Features**
Political Action Websites									
24		X	X	X				X	4
5			X	X	X			X	4
26			X	X	X			X	4
23			X					X	2
38			X						1
%	0	20	100	60	40	0	0	80	
Environmental Websites									
32		X	X					X	3
18			X					X	2
22			X						1
8									0
30									0
%	0	20	60	0	0	0	0	40	

Table 7. *Motivational Features—Mobilization*

Code	Volunteer forms	Contribution forms	Online auctions	Order forms	Electronic events w/candidates	Electronic lobby registration forms	Online voting	Community networks	Electronic events w/public officials	Virtual town meetings	Action Alerts	Electronic petitions	Flyers and pamphlets	Online event-based activism	Template emails/ Template letters	Total # of Features
Political Action Websites																
23		X			X			X						X		4
24	X			X				X								3
26					X								X			2
38		X														1
5					X											1
%	20	40	0	20	60	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	20	20	0	
Environmental Websites																
8		X		X							X		X		X	5
18		X		X							X				X	4
30		X									X		X		X	4
32		X		X											X	3
22		X									X				X	3
%	0	100	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	0	40	0	100	

With respect to mobilization features (see Table 7 above), only one political site provides an online form for users to volunteer. However, two political sites and all of the environmental sites allow users to contribute online. There are many organizations that provide this capability to nonprofits (see appendix D for a list of resources). In addition, one political and three environmental websites allow users to order products or services online. With respect to electronic events, three political websites support online events with candidates, while no environmental websites support online events with either candidates or public officials.

However, environmental websites excel at providing online advocacy features such as action alerts and template emails. Four environmental websites provide action alerts, and all of them provide template emails or letters for users to send to their public officials.

Conclusion

Using our evaluation frameworks, we constructed a form for evaluating websites. Table 8 shows the best political and environmental sites by section, as well as the number of features each provided out of the total number possible.

Table 8. *Top Sites by Section*

Section	Site	# of features
Political Websites		
Basic Features	Minnesota E-Democracy	14 / 16
Informational Features—Information	Project Vote Smart	13 / 20
Informational Features—External Links	Blacksburg Electronic Village	12 / 17
Interest-Invoking Features	Blacksburg Electronic Village	7 / 13
Motivational Features—Email & Human Interaction	Project Vote Smart	5 / 14
Motivational Features—Solicitation	Blacksburg Electronic Village	4 / 8
Motivational Features—Mobilization	Minnesota E-Democracy	4 / 15
Environmental Websites		
Basic Features	Greenpeace International	15 / 16
Informational Features—Information	Sierra Club	14 / 20
Informational Features—External Links	Greenpeace International	10 / 17
Interest-Invoking Features	Rainforest Action Network	10 / 13
Motivational Features—Email & Human Interaction	Greenpeace International	7 / 14
Motivational Features—Solicitation	EnviroLink Network	3 / 8
Motivational Features—Mobilization	Rainforest Action Network	5 / 15

Appendix C : Descriptions of Websites

I n the Identification section on our evaluation form, we included a field for a subjective description of the website. This appendix provides the descriptions categorized by type of website (advocacy, environmental, or political) and type of information (international, national, regional, state, county, or city).

Advocacy Websites

International

Amnesty International Children's Human Rights Network [29]
http://www.amnesty-usa.org/children/

The website of Amnesty International (USA) is extensive and consists of many issue areas, one of which is the Children's Human Rights Network. Because of this, we evaluated the entire website rather than just the area having to do with children's rights. The main focus of the website is the abuse of human rights, and therefore the site provides extensive information on rights abuse cases throughout the world. The site requests little feedback from users except in its Events section, which lists events by region, state, and city in the U.S. and allows AIUSA members to submit additional events.

However, AIUSA provides extensive online motivational features. The site provides email action alerts as well as email updates; allows visitors to join, donate, and renew memberships online; sells publications online; provides template emails and international email addresses of decision makers as well as a zip-code locator facility for U.S. representatives; provides electronic petitions; and hosts electronic events along with chat. Also, there are several Urgent Action Networks that a visitor can join, such as the Children's Human Rights Network or the Legal Support Network. These networks are organized locally and hold meetings once or twice a month.

Children's House in Cyberspace (Childwatch International) [27]
http://childhouse.uio.no

The Children's House in Cyberspace website, a cooperative initiative by AIFS, Child Abuse Prevention Network, Children's Rights Centre, Childwatch International, Child's Rights Information Network, Family Life Development Center, IIN, ISCA, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, and WHO, serves mainly as a source of information and links to other resources. It provides on-site research reports and links to international, governmental, legal, research, and other activist organizations. Although it does solicit user-provided content such as additional sites and conferences, it appears to remain under construction (several of its features are not yet implemented). The most useful aspect of this website are the links it provides to in-depth information and guidelines on early childhood, NGOs, child health, children's rights, and child research. In terms of design, the site uses a nice metaphor: each aspect of children's rights is represented by a "floor" in a child's house.

Child's Rights Information Network (CRIN) [35]
http://www.crin.org/

Child's Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a global network that provides information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As such, it provides a database of information grouped into the following areas: Organizations—organizational details of, contact information for, and resources from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), educational institutions, and child's rights experts; Resources—such as email lists focusing on children's issues, publications, news, events, and international treaties; Regional information—by continent and nation; and Themes. Most of this information consists of links to the responsible or publishing organization. Online forms allow organizations to join and subsequently submit news, resources, events, and publications to the database.

National Center for Children in Poverty [14]
http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/

The National Center for Children in Poverty's (NCCP) website reflects the focus of the center on identifying and promoting strategies for alleviating child poverty. The site provides policy papers, research reports, and newsletters addressing poverty issues online. The site also provides statistics on a state-by-state basis and allows visitors to order publications online (although payment must be made by mail). Finally, the NCCP provides a newsletter electronically to those visitors who subscribe. However, no mechanisms for contacting policymakers or decision makers electronically are available.

Oxfam America [2]
http://www.oxfamamerica.org/

Oxfam America's website serves to promote its international campaign against poverty. The site provides information on legislation, governmental developments, and lawsuits related to the issue of global poverty, such as the suit brought by pharmaceutical companies in South America or the Clean Diamonds Trade Act in Congress, as well as press releases on current issues. It also provides facts, activities, and tips for its campaigns, such as the Fast for a World Harvest campaign. With respect to feedback, the Oxfam site provides an email discussion list and online forms for ordering free campaign materials. With respect to motivational features, Oxfam accepts online donations, emails and posts action alerts, and provides electronic petitions. However, although it provides contact information for policymakers or decision makers with respect to specific issues, it does not provide links to email addresses or websites.

The Fast for a World Harvest is one of the largest and oldest anti-poverty campaigns in the U.S. The Oxfam Hunger Banquet is one of the most popular Fast for a World Harvest activities, so a kit is provided for planning a banquet. A link for kids and teachers entitled All About Afghanistan provides facts about the country, maps, and Oxfam's humanitarian efforts there; it also suggests activities for students including drawing a map of the country, writing letters, and sending a care package.

Save the Children [37]
http://www.savethechildren.org/

Save the Children is an international advocacy organization focusing on children's issues. Its website provides extensive information and fact sheets on children in crisis, such as those in Afghanistan, and focuses on specific areas such as education, maternal and child health, and economic opportunities. Press releases and summaries of current developments are also available on the site. With respect to feedback, the site provides email discussion lists. With respect to motivational features, the site accepts online donations and online purchases from its gift shop, as well as allows visitors to email their representatives (identified using a zip-code locator) using sample letters on specific issues. The site also lists action alerts. In addition, the site presumably allows visitors to sponsor a child; however, the link to this feature was broken.

A novel feature on this website is called Save the Children Art Contest. Each year thousands of designs created by children are submitted and dozens of these designs are selected. Winners receive a five-hundred dollar U.S. savings bond plus the chance to have their designs featured on licensed merchandise including ties, scarves, jewelry, paper goods, and so on, and sold in stores such as Macy's, TJMax, and Lord & Taylor. A portion of the sales goes to Save the Children programs. Tell a Friend is a feature available on the Legislative Alerts and Updates page. Interviews are conducted under Meet the Expert but are not on audio. Save the Children works in nineteen states and forty-five developing countries around the world but posts only its national contact information and provides no links to other offices.

Unfortunately, this site had a surprising number of broken links, which included About Save the Children and Our Mission and History, so authorship could not be verified. The site's mission is stated in many other places, however.

UNICEF [3]
http://www.unicef.org/

Beautifully designed, comprehensive, and highly interactive, UNICEF's website provides an abundance of information on protecting children and their rights. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, supports two websites (www.unicef.org and www.supportunicef.org) in addition to its regional and country sites. The unicef.org site provides extensive information on issues such as the United Nations Special Session on Children, the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), and UNICEF's programs on child protection, education, health, HIV/AIDS, and so on; the supportunicef.org site provides many of the online motivational features for UNICEF.

UNICEF's informational website provides detailed information on the upcoming special session, including downloadable copies of the CRC, reports on end-decade reviews from member countries, and the report of the secretary-general. This site also provides a press center with press releases, statistics, speeches, a calendar, and special resources for broadcasters (videos and a news alert listserv). Also available on this site are overviews,

focus areas, informational sources, and events for each program. UNICEF provides detailed updates on its emergency operations and publications from its research, which includes an online newsletter and various reports.

The motivational site allows visitors to subscribe to UNICEF ALERT, UNICEF's news alert listserv; sign an online guest book; complete an online survey; make online donations; and sign a global electronic petition, Say Yes to Children.

UNICEF also supports several bulletin boards for children and teachers on various topics, and has held an electronic debate with children as participants. Furthermore, children can attend the Special Session on Children. Other features provided by UNICEF's sites include screensavers, quizzes, puzzles, profiles and stories, virtual exhibits, and TV webcasts. UNICEF provides by far the most interactive website in our study.

On this website, under Voices of Youth, there are three interesting links: At The Meeting Place, At The Learning Place, and At The Teacher's Place. At The Meeting Place users can select from the following headings: Children and Work, Children's Rights, Children and War, The Girl Child, and Cities and Children. They can then explore (view images and stories, take an interactive quiz, and read other web sources); discuss (give their opinion and read what others have said); and take action (tell about their organization or project and read about other organizations or projects). At The Learning Place users can find activities to do and problems to solve. At The Teacher's Place teachers and others can discuss rights education and global issues. The site uses RealAudio to tell stories; animations and actual videos about kids in other countries are shown.

Unfortunately, it took three clicks on the privacy statement to find these important features: 1) Make a Donation link; 2) select a country page; and 3) donation page (the privacy statement was at the bottom of the page).

United Nations Cyberschoolbus [31]
http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/

The UN's CyberSchoolbus is a wonderful example of an educational website (its quality is reflected in the ten or more awards it has won, the latest a Best of Web pick as one of the five-hundred best sites for summer 2001). The site consists of four main areas: Resources, Curriculum, Quizzes and Games, and Community. The Resources area provides briefing papers on nineteen major global issues; summaries of the UN's core treaties; global trends represented in charts and graphs; statistical information either by country or by comparison with other countries (unfortunately, the database was not working when we evaluated the site); profiles on twenty cities from around the world; a virtual tour of the UN; and basic information on the UN.

The Curriculum area includes units on peace education; the briefing papers with student activities and resources; a unit on demining; a unit on UN treaties and principles on outer space; a health curriculum; a poverty curriculum; a cities curriculum; school kits on the UN; and units on the environment. The CyberSchoolbus website has an educational bookstore that offers products for sale to teachers. (Ordering must be done by phone, fax, or mail.)

The Quizzes and Games area includes an animated learning adventure and several online quizzes. The Community area provides discussion boards focusing on Model UN and racism; email addresses for Model UN volunteer experts; a photo and art gallery; and descriptions of UN events, including webcasts.

CyberSchoolbus sends an electronic newsletter and solicits teachers online as reviewers of site content. The site also posts Global Bytes, or news summaries of current developments, with suggestions for their use in the classroom. And the site is offered in six languages.

An exemplary educational site, this website is filled with wonderful learning tools for teachers and students relating to international issues and the United Nations. One such program is called The Model UN Discussion Area (MUNDA). MUNDA is a place where MUNers from anywhere in the world can exchange ideas, discuss topics, and request information from each other.

We did not consider the site to have security because it posted this unfortunate warning when we tried to register for the newsletter: "You must enter a privacy password. This provides only mild security, but should prevent others from messing with your subscription. Do not use a valuable password as it will occasionally be emailed back to you in clear text. Once a month, your password will be emailed to you as a reminder."

YouthNOISE [4]
http://www.youthnoise.com/

A truly remarkable website for young people, YouthNOISE (Save the Children is the sponsor organization) offers two main areas: Explore and Take Action. The Explore area provides the following sections: celebrity watch; debates on issues by two YouthNOISE members; stories from young people around the world; factoids; in-depth articles on current issues, one of which is global; quizzes; and top tens. The articles and factoids list references and provide links to related sites. The Take Action area provides three main sections: emailing elected officials, volunteering online, and donating online. The site also provides a listserv, several bulletin boards, online polls, and solicits content online, such as articles and causes worthy of support. Some of the more innovative features include: Just 1 Click, by which YouthNOISE donates five cents to a specific charity every time a visitor clicks a button; the Memory Chain Memorial, for which visitors are solicited for messages concerning the September 11 attack that will be sent to those whom lost loved ones; and the YouthNOISE Unity Map, comprised of submitted quotes, lyrics, pictures, or messages about the September 11 attack that can be added to a Flash animation.

An interesting feature on this site is called the Sound Off Poll where users can respond to the following question: "Do we live in a tolerant or intolerant society?" There are three choices (tolerent, intolerent, both). Unfortunately, we could not access three links because the site crashed every time.

National

Child Welfare League of America [39]
http://www.cwla.org/

The website for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is an exemplary source of information focusing on ensuring the well-being of children. The site provides information on legislation, governmental resources, court cases, research, and interest groups as well as statements on current developments related to child welfare. The site also provides links to legislative, governmental, judicial, educational, interest group, news-related, business, and other activist organizations' sites. Lastly, the Dorothy L. Bernhard Library provides additional resources and information on multiple aspects of child advocacy.

The CWLA supports multiple programs, for each of which the website provides specific resources, links, data, statistics, email addresses, and motivational features. The site also provides data on a state-by-state basis.

Feedback features provided by the site include email discussion lists and online forms and surveys. Motivational features offered by the CWLA website include an online contribution form, an online order form for CWLA publications (unfortunately, we were unable to access this section of the site correctly), and a section called CWLA Kids Advocate Online. Kids Advocate Online allows visitors to send emails to their representatives (identified using a zip-code locator) using sample letters addressing specific issues. The section also allows visitors to access the executive and judicial branches and the House and Senate legislative schedules.

Children's Defense Fund [21]
http://www.childrensdefensefund.org/

The Children's Defense Fund website supports the organization's mission to ensure that every child receives what it calls a healthy start, head start, fair start, safe start, and moral start. Correspondingly, its site provides five major areas in which each of these issues are addressed. The section on children's health discusses CHIP and medicaid in detail; the section on children's care discusses child care, Head Start, and after-school programs; the section on fairness discusses child poverty, family income, TANF, and child support; the section on safety addresses child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, children and gun violence, and juvenile justice; and the section on morality discusses three programs addressing morality. Each section provides information, links, facts and figures, and research.

With respect to feedback, the site provides several email distribution lists and online forms. With respect to motivational features, the site offers online volunteer forms for various initiatives, an online contribution form, and online order forms for publications and other items in its giftshop. In addition, the website provides the CDF Action Council, which links to the Legislative Action Center. The Legislative Action Center allows visitors to email template letters on various issues to their representatives and local media (identified using a zip-code locator) as well as to check the status of legislation and their representatives vote on

the issue. The site also provides state-specific information, as well as links to state and local offices.

Connect for Kids [19]
http://www.connectforkids.org/

Benton's Connect for Kids website serves as an impressive clearinghouse of information. Consisting predominantly of links, it points to legislative, governmental, educational, and news resources, as well as provides extensive references to other activist organizations and additional research.

Connect for Kids offers both weekly and monthly newsletters via email; accepts online donations; requests user-provided events and nominations for Kids Champs; and supports a bulletin board. Most useful, however, is the State-by-State section, which provides the following information at the state level: announcements, news links, reports and data, directories, and volunteer opportunities (most of these resources are links to organizations local to the specified state). Connect for Kids also allows visitors to search for organizations by name, topic, or state and provides an online calendar of events.

Kids Count [20]
http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/index.htm

One of the initiatives pursued by the Anne E. Casey Foundation is Kids Count, a project in which the foundation tracks the status of children in the U.S. on a national and state level. The website thus focuses primarily on providing information, research data, and free publications on the well-being of children. In addition, the foundation supports a listserv and allows visitors to order publications online. Most impressive is the 2001 Kids Count Data Book Online, which contains extensive statistical information, as well as state rankings, graphs, interactive maps, and profiles.

National Children's Alliance [15]
http://www.nncac.org/

The National Children's Alliance (NCA) is the new manifestation of the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, originally started as the National Children's Advocacy Center. The mission is to provide training and assistance to communities establishing Children's Advocacy Centers. As such, the site provides little information but rather focuses on training programs, contact information, and publications purchaseable online.

National PTA [34]
http://www.pta.org/

The National PTA's website is a well-designed and informative site providing information on the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the U.S. The site provides three main sections: Parent Involvement, PTA Community, and PTA and Washington. The Parent Involvement section provides research, standards, and guidelines for parent involvement. Most impressive is the Common Sense center, which offers quizzes, games, and activities for parents to do with their children, as well as bulletin boards and advice from experts. The

center also provides two online surveys: a monthly opinion poll and a survey rating the site. Common Sense also provides guidelines and programs for PTA leaders.

The PTA Community section offers an interactive map for locating local PTAs, providing contact information and website links. This section also has testimonials from PTA members and several bulletin boards focused on the following issues: PTA Idea Sharing, Funds for PTAs, Hot PTA Topics, and PTA Membership Ideas. Lastly, this section includes press releases from the PTA.

The PTA and Washington section focuses on current legislative issues, the PTA's position on those issues, and taking action. This section allows visitors to email sample letters to their representatives and local media (identified using a zip-code locator) as well as link to representatives sites and current legislation. The section offers an e-newsletter on developments in Washington as well as posts action alerts. The website also allows visitors to volunteer, donate, join, and purchase publications online. There is a members-only section that provides more extensive information; however, we were unable to access this section.

The site's Tell a Friend feature allows you to forward any link to a friend including news from Washington or other programs of interest; for example, Wreaths of Remembrance is a program started on Nov. 7, 2001 in remembrance of those lost on September 11. The program allows PTAs, schools, parents, children, and communities to express their feelings and show their concern and empathy to others. In conjunction with Readers Digest, the PTA provides instructions for children to make seven different styles of wreaths. Virtual wreaths can also be designed, personalized, and posted in their Wreaths of Remembrance Gallery.

Prevent Child Abuse America [13]
http://www.preventchildabuse.org/

Prevent Child Abuse America pursues its campaign against child abuse online by posting press releases and research reports. PCA provides all of its reports in downloadable format. PCA also provides contact information for its state chapters online. In its Family & Community section, PCA has downloadable tip sheets for parents and community members, as well as hotline numbers and links to other activist organizations. With respect to motivational features, PCA accepts online donations and membership payments and allows visitors to purchase greeting cards. The site also allows visitors to contact their representatives and local media (identified using a zip-code locator), as well as view action alerts and current legislation and subscribe to an email discussion list. Most useful is PCA's lists of links to federal government resources, state information, and other advocacy organizations focusing on issues such as adoption, children's legal rights and advocacy, family resources, and missing children.

This website provides resources for kids including a list of hotline numbers, tips on conflict resolution, and downloadable documents containing activities. The Get Involved link has a Tell a Friend feature for action alerts.

Stand for Children [25]
http://www.stand.org/

The Stand for Children website is well-designed and appears to offer many motivational features, such as online memberships, online donations, an email discussion list, and emails to Congress; however, there were numerous broken links and script errors that prevented us from accessing the site fully. Because there are two parallel sites, we surmise that Stand for Children is in the process of redesigning its site.

An interesting marketing/fundraising tool implemented on this site is the user's opporunity to purchase Stand for Children personal checks. Royalties from every order go to Stand for Children to support their efforts on behalf of children.

Unfortunately, there are no privacy or security statements despite opportunities on every page (as part of the fixed menu bar) to join Stand for Children, to register via email for their quarterly newsletter, or to donate.

The Children's Partnership [16]
http://www.childrenspartnership.org/

The Children's Partnership (TCP) website highlights three programs: Children and Technology, Children and Healthcare Reform, and Building a Constituency for Children. For each of these programs, the site provides an overview, related publications (research and reports produced by TCP), and Resources (links to other advocacy organizations). One of the most useful features provided is a comprehensive parent's guide to the information superhighway, which can be viewed online or downloaded. With respect to feedback, the site offers an online guest book, an online survey, and an electronic discussion list. One of the links, the Young Americans Toolkit, opens a new website (http://www.techpolicybank.org/actionindex.html), still under construction, that describes TCP's Young Americans and the Digital Future Campaign. This site provides action ideas for cities and states, along with multiple examples, as well as an electronic discussion list. The examples of successful advocacy on technology issues are accessible by category, city, and state.

Although The Children's Partnership is an award-winning website, it is difficult to navigate; not all links at the bottom of the page match the menu links, and information is not always organized intuitively.

Youth in Action [6]
http://www.youthlink.org/

The Youth in Action Campaign serves to encourage and recognize youth-initiated activities. Correspondingly, its website focuses on providing guidance and recognition by posting a Youth Action Guide online as well as by accepting online nominations for its one-thousand dollar Youth In Action Awards. The site also provides press releases on current issues and posts stories of successful youth-led initiatives. The organization supports two National Youth Conventions concurrent with the Democratic and Republican conventions, and the website solicits concerns and solutions online for inclusion in the National Youth Platform presented at the conventions. The site also allows young people to apply online for membership on the National Youth Action Council, which decides the Youth In Action Award recipients. The site accepts online donations and also supports a listserv (through its parent organization, Global Youth Action Network).

Unfortunately, while this website offers a program called Add Your Voice, it does not provide any privacy information to the user. Here is the solicitation for participation: "Add your voice to the National Youth Platform, by identifying your top concerns and solutions for the country. Join tens of thousands of young people to make sure that collectively our voice will be heard. Check out past platforms, add your voice, or print a flyer and pass the word. If you want to be heard, you have to speak up!" In addition, problematic links caused the site to crash several times—including attempts to access the Join Us link, where privacy information might be kept.

Regional

The New England Network for Child, Youth, and Family Services [33]
http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/ElecAdvo/index.html

The New England Network for Child, Youth, and Family Services provides training and networking for social agencies in the New England area. Its website provides extensive information on its training programs, as well as public policy information and tips for advocacy. The site also provides extensive links, including links to governmental and congressional sites and a link to various functions of Thomas, the Library of Congress' database. In addition, the site provides a calendar of events on a state-by-state basis. Feedback mechanisms include bulletin boards, an electronic newsletter, a job bank, and an online membership form (the check must be mailed in). Motivational features include template letters and email addresses for public officials for New England states accessed using an interactive map. Additional features include three sections entitled What's Hot, Library, and Funding, all of which are member-only areas inaccessible to us.

A clever feature on this site is called Donate Your Old Car: "Want to get rid of unwanted cars, boats, trucks, motorcycles, RV's, snowmobiles, jet-skies, or anything else? Give it to NEN. You get a tax deduction, and it's a good cause. 'When I tried to sell my 1992 Taurus Wagon with 172,000 miles on it, I was told I could only get $500-$750. Instead, I avoided the hassle, donated it to New England Network and got a Blue Book value tax write-off of

$2,500! My net was $825 in cash, NEN got a direct $650 cash donation, and everyone was happy.'" Unfortunately, no privacy or security information was provided on the site.

Clearly, the site wants to encourage membership, but links accessible to members only function like broken links. Pages might be redesigned to reflect that access is only possible when one is a member. While some links had a password window, this was not the case on all membership-related links. In addition, the Annual Report had a different window and therefore appeared as a broken link.

State

100% Campaign [12]
http://www.100percentcampaign.org/

The 100% Campaign is a regional campaign for the state of California. This campaign is attempting to increase the health coverage of the state's children. The campaign's website serves mostly to provide information, links, and contact information relevant to the issue of health coverage for children. Although one online form is provided, most of the forms must be printed out and faxed or mailed to the organization. The online form allows visitors to endorse the campaign, specify what action the visitor is willing to take, and receive action alerts either by fax or email. Unfortunately, there are no provisions for online community interaction (other than submitting a form endorsing the issue) or donations, although 100% Campaign does provide updates of its community feedback loops (conducted via phone). In addition, the only email addresses provided are for members of the 100% Campaign; no email addresses for representatives or policy experts are given.

One of the nicest features on this website is a page providing materials and instructions (many in downloadable format) for community outreach activities. Although none of these activities are conducted online, the page would be extremely useful for those individuals or organizations wishing to get involved.

Action Alliance for Children [10]
http://www.4children.org/

The Action Alliance for Children (AAC) is an advocacy group that works on behalf of children in the state of California. It serves as a resource for various communities and facilitates dialogue between these communities. The AAC also produces an award-winning, bi-monthly newsletter (available online) called Children's Advocate, which provides information on issues and policies.

The website of the Action Alliance for Children is impressive with respect to its solicitation of visitor feedback; however, this solicitation is predominantly one-way rather than many-to-many. AAC requests comments about current issues and suggestions for new issues; provides an online survey; and sells subscriptions and ads and solicits donations (forms must be printed out and mailed with the money to AAC). Notably, although AAC provides few facilities for community-building online, it notes future plans to implement a listserv and a bulletin board. AAC does provide a summary of candidates' positions on children's issues

for the 2000 elections. And lastly, it posts a master calendar to which visitors can submit activities at the regional, state, or national level (specifically not at the local level).

Children's Advocacy Institute's Clearinghouse on Children [9]
www.acusd.edu/childrensissues

The website for the Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI) posts the following types of information online: issue alerts, commentaries, news releases, legislation, regulations, and reports having to do with representing the interests of children in the California state legislature, courts, and administrative agencies. The site also includes a page with links to other child advocacy organizations. Most useful, however, is the legislative report card CAI releases each year, which discusses legislation affecting children and rates legislators on their voting records.

The National Children's Advocacy Center [11]
http://www.ncac-hsv.org/

The National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC) focuses on the needs of abused children and was originally established in Huntsville, AL. The site mainly reports on information and events occuring in Alabama. The site provides information on abuse prevention and intervention, as well as information on the NCAC's training programs. It also provides online membership forms and online order forms for publications. However, the site serves mainly as a resource for information and training on the prevention of child abuse.

City

Kids 4 Kids [41]
http://www.andrewsoft.net/kids4kids/index.html

The Kids 4 Kids website reports on a neighborhood project by one elementary school in Florida to fill backpacks with school supplies for homeless children. According to this website: "The FILL-A-BACKPACK CAMPAIGN is the signature program for Kids 4 Kids. Students and community volunteers spend two weeks each summer filling 4,000 backpacks, assembly line style, with school supplies. They then spend three weekends visiting 60 shelters serving homeless, abused, hospital homebound, and migrant children...each donated backpack includes a postcard with postage paid so the the recipents can correspond with members of Kids 4 Kids. Club members then sent birthday cards and notes to their pen pals."

Activities and projects are described online and postcards, letters, and articles on the project are posted. The site has a virtual scrapbook with photos of the project, as well as a newsletter and parent communications for the school. The site also has forms for becoming a sponsor and for ordering a starter kit that must be printed out. In addition, the site lists other agencies in South Florida needing help. A unqiue fundraising feature on this website is the opportunity to shop online and have a percentage of your purchase donated to Kids 4 Kids; they get a ten-dollar bonus if you try this feature. A link to register for this program is provided, and sites for shopping include Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Toys R Us.

Unfortunately, the website has a primitive design (that is, it is only one to two layers deep throughout). A Powerpoint presentation link was inactive and the "no powerpoint" option did not work either, but other project pages' automatic slide shows worked.

YO! Youth Outlook [40]
http://pacificnews.org/yo/

YO! Youth Outlook is a monthly publication by and for young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five in the San Francisco Bay area. The publication is posted online as well as distributed in print, and YO! has a daily column in the *San Francisco Examiner* and runs stories nationally and internationally using the Pacific News Service wire (the sponsor). This site provides a good example of both localism, or a connection between the online and offline worlds, and the use of multimedia. Content includes stories and poetry, audio and video clips, Flash animation, artwork and photos, and comic strips. YO! solicits stories and artwork from visitors (submitted using email) and allows visitors to subscribe to the publication online. The site also provides both a message board and a chat room. Most interesting is the collection of stories, art, poetry, and videos submitted in response to the September 11 attack, particularly the essays written by high school students and displayed in the site's Outreach section.

Since the primary function of this website is to collect stories from youth (as well as to disseminate stories), it is very surprising that no privacy statement or security information is available.

Issue-Based

Afterschool Alliance [7]
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/

The Afterschool Alliance is a coalition of public, private, and nonprofit organizations advocating for afterschool programs. The website provides news releases on legislation regarding afterschool programs as well as updates on various activist events such as the What Is a Hero? ad campaign, the Lights On! program (accessible by an interactive map), activist events by state, and the Afterschool Action Hero Network. The site provides sample letters to both representatives and the media that can be emailed using the Legislative Action Center. The Action Center uses a zip-code locator for identifying their representatives and local media, providing email address and URL information for both representatives and media personnel as well as detailed background information on representatives. Furthermore, the Center provides information on current legislation, including summaries, status information, and key votes. The site also provides several online forms, including an online survey.

The Afterschool Alliance is implementing a new section on its website called Afterschool Interactive, which will consist of live discussions, chat forums, and message boards.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids [1]
http://tobaccofreekids.org/

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids focuses on protecting children from the dangers of smoking. Correspondingly, its website provides extensive information and links—legislative, governmental, judicial, educational, research results, news-related, industry-related, international—regarding smoking. In addition, it has a section geared toward young people, the Youth Action section, that provides facts, links, and interactive games and quizzes about smoking. The site also allows visitors to view U.S. state facts about smoking.

With respect to feedback and mobilization, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids offers several options. For example, the Youth Action section lists actions that young people can take in support of the issue. Furthermore, the site has an Action Center that allows visitors to receive email updates, email decision makers, pledge donations to the campaign (which then must be mailed in), and download and print ads for posting. The site has an online survey for visitors. The site does not, however, seem to provide message boards or chat.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children [42]
http://www.missing.org/

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's (NCMEC) award-winning website (NCMEC is one of Worth magazine's Best Charities) provides extensive information on missing and exploited children. The site posts pictures and descriptions of missing children. The site's Exploited Child Unit provides detailed information on child sexual exploitation, child pornography, child prostitution, and sex tourism. Each section contains statistics, safety tips and guidelines, related laws and legislation, and resources. The site also provides descriptions of NCMEC's programs, including Code Adam, a program in which retailers broadcast "Code Adam" when a child is reported missing, alerting employees to search for the child; Project Alert, a program in which retired law-enforcement professionals help with missing children cases; and the Know the Rules public awareness campaign for teenage girls. Finally, the site posts press releases, a pdf version of NCMEC's news bulletin online, and contact information for its international branches.

Feedback features include an e-newsletter and a guest book. Motivational features include the Poster Partner Program, in which visitors can sign up to receive Missing Child Poster Alerts via email; online contributions; online purchases of memberships; and an affinity program by which NCMEC receives a percentage of online purchases. One of the most impressive features of this website is the CyberTipline, which allows visitors to report a sighting of a missing child or sexual exploitation of a child. The site posts some of the success stories resulting from cybertips. Another impressive feature is the site's online database of missing children, which visitors can search by region, description, or specific information (name or case type).

Other features of the site include downloadable posters and a SafeKids song, interactive quizzes, web banners, a demo of CyberTipline, a library of resource materials (all pdfs), and an Internet-based phone hotline (the user's computer must have a microphone and speakers).

In addition, the site is registered with the ICRA (Internet Content Rating Association), has two URLs, and provides information in both Spanish and English.

National SAFE Kids Campaign [36]
http://www.safekids.org/

The website for the National SAFE Kids Campaign is a good example of an issue-based site. Focusing on unintentional injuries, it provides fact sheets and safety tips for a wide range of accidents including fire, bicycling, and poison. SAFE Kids also provides summaries of both federal and state laws addressing each of the issue areas. And it has a media center where it posts press releases on safety issues. In addition, it discusses its international reach and provides descriptions of and links to other countries now implementing the program.

With respect to feedback, the SAFE Kids' website provides online forms to enter comments as well as to join its listserv. With respect to motivational features, the site allows visitors to look up local coalitions and events by state as well as accepts online donations.

Under the Teacher's Desk link, SafeKids offers sample lesson ideas to promote safety, including the International Teaching Safety Contest. In ten monthly drawings, the winning teacher receives free Bell bike helmets for the whole class. In addition, the winning teacher's school and/or class is awarded a Safety Day Celebration where firefighters, police officers, nurses, and other members of a local SAFE KIDS coalition will lead interactive activities to help students learn lifesaving safety skills. Under the Kids' Corner link, games and quizzes can be found but they are downloadable only and not interactive. Narratives/stories in the form of testimonials are available upon request by contacting the Media Center. These testimonials are from parents and children who have been personally affected by an unintentional injury.

Texas Industrial Areas Foundation [28]
http://www.tresser.com/IAF.htm

This site is an example of a single individual using the Internet to forward the cause of civic action. The site mostly provides links to other activist organizations, to CapWiz (the zip-code locator used by many advocacy organizations to contact Congress and the President), and to resources for community organizing. Interestingly, the website is classic first-generation web design; therefore, it lacks many of the features for basic functionality. But the site provides good resources for activism.

Zero to Three [17]
http://www.zerotothree.org/index.htm

Zero to Three's website is a great resource for parents (awards include mentions in Offspring magazine's Best Sites for Parents and in Worth magazine's 100 Best Charities). The site provides the following information: a site on how the brain develops (Brain Wonders); a description of the Magic of Everyday Moments Campaign, including what to expect and what a caregiver can do; a rebuttal of recent discussions on the significance of the early years; a newsroom with press releases; and a list of resources by subject, including brain development, breastfeeding, and legal assistance.

The site also provides in-depth information geared specifically toward either parents or professionals, much of it in downloadable format. For parents, the site provides information on issues such as adoptive parents, beginnings of literacy, dynamic play therapy, and infant massage (much of this information comes from the organization's bulletin); a guide to understanding developmental assessment; a tip of the week; a guide to choosing child care; descriptions of developmental milestones; and parent polls on early childhood development. For professionals, the site provides information on professional resources, including training (the Center for Program Excellence, Learning & Growing Together Initiative); leadership development (Leaders for the 21st Century, State Early Childhood Policy Leadership Forum); programs and services; and conferences and events (National Training Institute).

With respect to feedback features, the site solicits comments on the site as well as input for the Tip of the Week. With respect to motivational features, the site provides several bulletin boards for professionals, allows visitors to contribute online, and has an online bookstore from which visitors can purchase both subscriptions to Zero to Three's bulletin and publications. The site also provides news alerts.

Regarding security, the site suggests other methods for making payments to purchase books from their bookstore (submitting checks or money orders via mail or fax, by calling and using a credit card, or by filling out the online form). The site notes that they do not have a secure network. Privacy and secuity statements can be found when clicking on the General Donations, which links to Helping.org where donations are accepted online. For this reason, we considered the site to have security; however, there is no disclaimer or disclosure information.

Environmental Websites

International

EnviroLink Network [32]
http://www.envirolink.org/

The EnviroLink Network is part of a larger project called Network for Change, a comprehensive "community engine" tailored for groups and individuals who want to make the world a better place. According to the website: "Users select from more than 45 environmental and social change topics to customize their communications and information resources such as in-depth news, articles, events, and links. By issue or by region (or both), users can connect with others, raise funds, get a job, find events and even spot potential polluters. With free web hosting, Josh Knauer, founder of the EnviroLink Network and GreenMarketplace.com, calls Network for Change a 'one-stop shop for those who want to make a difference, online and in the real world.'"

Network for Change consists of two other activist networks in addition to EnviroLink: the Animal Concerns Community and the Sustainable Business Network. These networks are provided free Internet services by Network for Change, including website and domain name hosting, electronic discussion lists, bulletin boards, and email accounts. The networks mainly serve as information clearinghouses for their respective issues by linking to educational resources, actions, articles, events, general information, governmental resources, jobs, maps, organizations, and publications submitted by visitors.

EnviroLink links to articles in the media, conferences worldwide, governmental and educational resources, other activist organizations, and current activist campaigns. Feedback features provided by the site include approximately ten active bulletin boards and an electronic mailing list on bioremediation, as well as a job bank. Visitors also can submit suggestions concerning new resources (and new products) online. These suggestions are reviewed and approved by Network for Change prior to posting. In additon to links to current campaigns, motivational features on the site include online donation forms and an online store containing environmentally friendly and socially conscious products chosen by another partner in Network for Change, GreenMarketplace.com. Every time a visitor purchases a product from their online store, EnviroLink earns a commission.

Unfortunately, links under menu headings change after you click on a particular link and return, which is disorienting.

Greenpeace International [30]
http://www.greenpeace.org/

Greenpeace International's website is extensive and provides information and action on several main areas: climate, toxics, nuclear, oceans, genetic engineering, ocean dumping, and forests. Each section includes information on the issue, reports and press releases, related links, and a section entitled What You Can Do. Current campaigns include the U.S. Corporate 100 Campaign, directed toward the corporations opposing the Kyoto Protocol; the Greenpeace Toxics Campaign, focused on pressuring Dow chemicals to clean up Bhopal; and a campaign to stop Japanese whaling. Feedback features on the site include the Greenpeace Interactive Community, which supports multiple issue-based listservs and bulletin boards as well as an e-newsletter. This community also provides motivational features that allow visitors to email edited sample letters to public officials and businesses targeted for specific campaigns. Greenpeace International also allows visitors to donate online. The site provides interactive maps allowing visitors to locate specific campaigns or identify other Greenpeace offices; audio and video clips as well as reports from Greenpeace members in the field; streaming video; e-cards; banners; and downloadable files.

The website has made active use of videos to tell stories about the many issues they are addressing. A unique feature on Greenpeace's website can be found under their Genetic Engineering pages. They provide a shopping list to check which food products do not contain genetically engineered ingrediants (green dot) and those that do (red dot).

Unfortunately, under the About Greenpeace page is a link to "Read about our achievements" where none of the links work. In addition, the background on the main page changes periodically, which is disconcerting; the site map does not reflect the latest changes (that is, politics is not included as a major link); and the other major links (climate, toxics, nuclear, oceans, genetic engineering, ocean dumping, and forests) display different web designs under the consistent Greenpeace navigation bar, but require the user to reorient to a new design.

National

Environmental Defense [22]
http://www.edf.org/

The Environmental Defense website provides information on four main areas: biodiversity, climate change, health, and oceans. Each section includes success stories, testimonials, and staff, as well as references to other related topics and Washington Watch. This latter section includes features and updates on issues plus links to articles in the media. The website provides information on legislation, government, court cases, research, interest groups, and related business endearvors and partnerships. There is also an online library that provides reports, newsletters, fact sheets, testimonies, letters, and organizational and educational materials, including links to educational and governmental sites. Environmental Defense's pressroom lists press releases and allows journalists to join a listserv. The site also provides links to other sites in the Environmental Defense Network.

Interactive features include a toolkit that allows visitors to determine levels of vehicle emissions or ozone levels and to select environmentally sound seafood. Other features include an e-newsletter, a listserv for receiving action alerts, and online comment forms. Motivational features include online donations and the Action Center, which allows visitors to edit sample letters that are then automatically faxed or emailed to relevant decision makers, both national and international.

Sierra Club [18]
http://www.sierraclub.org/

The Sierra Club's website provides legislative, governmental, and research information on protecting the earth's resources. It summarizes Congressional bills as well as provides a link to Thomas, the Library of Congress' database; posts press releases; and links to stories in the media. The site also provides extensive information on John Muir, the founder of the Sierra Club, such as educational resources and writings by and tributes to John Muir. Feedback features include hundreds of listservs, including one for press releases and action alerts; an e-newsletter; and online forms for comments on various issues. Motivational features include online membership and donation forms as well as an online store that provides secure e-commerce. In its Take Action section, the Sierra Club provides alerts and background information on specific issues, as well as sample letters which can be emailed or faxed to public officials. The website also allows visitors to sign up for trips online.

Issue-Based

Rainforest Action Network [8]
http://www.ran.org/

Rainforest Action Network's website is a streamlined, easy-to-use, issue-based example of activism. The site focuses on three main campaigns: Stop Boise Cascade, a campaign to preserve old growth forests; Campaign for a Sane Economy, a campaign focused on Citigroup's business practices; and Support the U'wa, a campaign focused on the threat posed by Occidental Petroleum to the U'wa culture. Each campaign includes press releases, links to stories in the media, and fact sheets. Possible alternatives in each case are provided, as well as timelines, related links, and suggestions for action. The site posts current news and events, as well as victories in the campaigns. Feedback features include several listservs, including one specifically for kids and one for teachers. There is a Kids' Corner that offers issue information, fact sheets, artwork, crafts and recipes, and actions that can be taken by children. Motivational features include online contribution forms and publication order forms, as well as action alerts with sample letters that can be mailed to the relevant public officials or CEOs. The website also provides an activist toolbox containing guidelines on media and fundraising skills. Lastly, the site offers videos, downloadable files, and several innovative suggestions for activism. These suggestions include guerilla theatre, songbooks, and mock billing statements directed toward Citigroup.

Political Websites

National

DNet [5]
http://www.dnet.org/

DNet is an interactive website supported by the League of Women Voters that focuses on providing non-partisan voter information. To that end, DNet solicits participation from candidates, who submit their own position statements on the issues. DNet covers elections from the federal to the city level, all of which are accessed on a state-by-state basis using an interactive map. For each state, DNet provides information on the candidates including their biography, voting record, positions, and endorsers as well as descriptions of the office. This information is presented in a two-dimensional grid listing candidates and issues. Checkmarks in the grid indicate whether the candidate has submitted a statement on a particular issue. In addition, the candidate who most recently accessed the grid is placed on the top row. DNet also provides information on ballot measures; links to news stories; an events calendar; voting information, including absentee ballots, polling places, and voter registration; and links to the websites of current officeholders at all levels of government. DNet maintains an archive of election information back to 2000, the year in which it went national. Feedback features include online registration and position forms for candidates, online polls, and online forms allowing visitors to submit issues for possible inclusion on the issue grids. In addition, DNet supports e-debates between candidates. Finally, DNet posts press releases online.

Markle Foundation's Web White & Blue [26]
http://www.webwhiteblue.org/

The Markle Foundation's website Web White & Blue is a consortium of Internet sites and news organizations attempting to use the Internet to expand citizen participation. The site provides limited information in the form of press releases and fact sheets. Rather, the site is built around the month-long debate it hosted among the major candidates in the 2000 presidential election. This Rolling Cyber Debate consisted of two parts: a message of the day and a question of the day. Questions were solicited from visitors and then posed to the major candidates. Responses took the form of statements, videos, and rebuttals. Candidates were allowed to post resources, such as links to their websites or those of endorsers. In addition to online submission of questions, feedback features include a listserv; an online participation form for organizations; an online comment form; and an online survey. The site also conducts a Best of the Best feature, in which visitors can submit online resources for recognition. Lastly, the site includes a state directory with links to governmental sites, political sites, and voting guides, as well as a ballot round-up, or number of races and ballot measures in the election.

Project Vote Smart [38]
    http://www.vote-smart.org/

Project Vote Smart's (PVS) website is by far the most comprehensive political website in our evaluation. The site has five major sections: Categories, Offices, Congress Track, Government & Issues, and Project Vote Smart. The first, Categories, provides extensive information on candidates including biographies, campaign financing, issue positions based on the National Political Awareness Test, performance evaluations from special interest groups, and voting records. This same information can be accessed using the Offices section, which allows visitors to select type of office: president, congress, governors, state offices, local offices, or city candidates. Both of these sections identify the relevant candidates using either a zip-code locator or an interactive state map.

The Congress Track section allows visitors to access legislative information including the status of specific legislation and appropriation bills by issue, weekly schedules for both the House and the Senate, and general information. The latter area links to various resources that allow visitors to access the status of major legislation, the text of legislation and the Congressional record, voting records, Congressional committees, and contacting Congress. For example, links are provided to Thomas, the Library of Congress' Congressional database; media outlets such as C-SPAN, the *Washington Post*, and *Time* magazine; and watchdog organizations such as Congressional Quarterly's VoteWatch and Voter Information Services.

The Government & Issues section allows visitors to download issue briefs and a list of sources by issue; state information accessible by an interactive map, including ballot measures, historical elections, voter registration, election offices, state contacts, other state links, and state facts; ballot measures accessible by state; voter registration accessible by state; links to other resources categorized by issue; historical and educational information on the government; and extensive information and links for both the executive and judicial branches of government.

The section Project Vote Smart provides information about the organization; press releases; jobs and internships; online forms for donations, candidate participation in the project, and library partnerships; and the PVS classroom material. With respect to feedback features, the site has online forms for memberships, teacher suggestions, registration information, and library partnernerships. With respect to motivational features, the site allows visitors to donate online.

The cornerstone of the Project Vite Smart website is the National Political Awareness Test (NPAT), which allows candidates to voluntarily show where they stand on some thirty issues. As the site suggests: "NPAT is the key component of Project Vote Smart's Voter's Self-Defense System. It is designed to evaluate a candidate's willingness to do the right and honorable thing by providing voters information that is essential if they are to self-govern successfully."

Other features include the Register to Vote link, which allows for instant voter registration; and the Youth Inclusion link, which provides publications, videos, internships, banners, political games, and voter registration for youth.

State

Minnesota E-Democracy [23]
http://www.e-democracy.org/

Minnesota E-Democracy, established in 1994, was the first election-oriented website. The site provides archives of elections from 1994 until the present, providing links to candidate websites and candidate email addresses. The site also provides an extensive list of links to governmental sites, legal sites, legislative sites, media sites, political party sites, and interest group sites. For those interested in the concept of online democracy, Minnesota E-Democracy also provides resources, guidelines, and links related to online civic participation in its Democracies Online section. Feedback features include online forms and user-suggested election websites.

Motivational features include online contribution forms and e-debates between candidates. However, the centerpieces of Minnesota E-Democracy are its numerous email discussion lists. Minnesota E-Democracy supports MN-POLITICS, a state-level political forum system; four Capitol Topics lists addressing education policy, tax reform, redistricting and elections, and privacy respectively; and four local community lists for Minneapolis, St. Paul, the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and Winona; as well as a list for Democracies Online and a Minnesota political announcements list. Little community information is posted on the site; rather, it is within the discussion lists that information is exchanged.

County

Blacksburg Electronic Village [24]
http://www.bev.net/

The Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) is a community network and a joint project of Virginia Tech and the Town of Blacksburg. Established in 1993, the site serves the local community by providing training and Internet services and by facilitating community building. The site consists of seven main areas: Community, Education, People, Government, Health, Village Mall, and Visitor's Center. The Community area provides a list of links to local organizations, sorted by category; categories include arts, religion, and sports. The Education area provides lists of links to local public schools, universities, libraries, and museums. The People area hosts the Seniors Information Page, an extensive resource with upcoming events, a newsletter, a listserv, and links to senior-related websites, government resources for seniors, news sites, and financial, time, weather, and temperature information. Visitors can also access local Usenet newsgroups and BEV mailing lists from the People section. The government section provides links to governmental resources at the local, regional, state, and federal levels. The Health area provides email addresses for health professionals; links to facilities, organizations, and health resources; as well as news, FAQs, and wellness information. The Village Mall provides a list of links to local businesses, sorted

by category. And the Visitor's Center provides travel information, a town guide, business and industry information, and suggests things to do. Finally, the site provides an online eve nts calendar.

BEV provides extensive resources, guides, and research on implementing community networks. The BEV Digital Library contains downloadable research reports, much of which has been funded research conducted by researchers from Virginia Tech. BEV also hosts training sessions on community networking, most of it local to the Blacksburg area. Feedback features offered by BEV include a job bank, online forms for registering as a "Villager" and ordering publications, and online surveys. The site also allows Villagers to submit links to other community networks, business listings, events for the online calendar, jobs, and organization listings. Lastly, the site allows visitors to volunteer online as well as register for classes.

BEV has been covered in numerous news stories as well as researched extensively as a highly successful example of online community networking. As BEV states on its site, by the summer of 1999, 87% of the residents in Blacksburg used the Internet regularly and 75% of the local businesses advertised online.

Appendix D : Tools and Resources for Nonprofits

T his appendix lists tools and resources that can help nonprofits build their capacity to go online, implement some of the features discussed in our recommendations (see chapter ten), and explore example websites for ideas.

Capacity Building

The resources listed in this section assist nonprofits with building their capacity for going online.

Technology and Policy Capacity of Nonprofits

These nonprofit organizations provide technology assessment and assistance to nonprofits.

OMB Watch's Nonprofits' Policy and Technology Project (NPT)	http://www.ombwatch.org/nptandctc.html
ONE/Northwest (Online Networking for the Environment)	http://www.onenw.org/
The Benton Foundation	http://www.benton.org/

Nonprofit Technology Resource Centers

These centers provide training and technical assistance to nonprofits.

Community Technology Centers' Network (CTCNet)	http://www.ctcnet.org/
CompuMentor	http://www.compumentor.org/
Information Technology Resource Center	http://www.npo.net/
Rockefeller Technology Project	http://www.techproject.org/

Conferences

These conferences host training sessions on technology for nonprofits.

Council on Foundations	http://www.cof.org/
Independent Sector	http://www.independentsector.org/
Philanthropy News Network	http://pnnonline.org/

Grants Programs

These grants programs address underserved populations' access to the Internet and telecommunications resources.

Children's Bureau	http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/
Managing Information with Rural America (MIRA)	http://www.onlinearc.com/mira/
Technology Opportunities Program (formerly Telecommunications Information Infrastructure Assistance Program)	http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top/

Tools

Databases

Ebase provides a template for helping nonprofits manage their databases.

Desktop Assistance's ebase   http://www.ebase.org/

Discussion Groups

These organizations provide resources for setting up discussion groups.

Deja News   http://www.dejanews.com/

Excite   http://www.excite.com/

L-Soft   http://www.lsoft.com/

Yahoo   http://www.yahoo.com/

Yahoo eGroups   http://www.egroups.com/

Email Accounts

These organizations provide free Web-based email options to nonprofits.

Deja News   http://www.dejanews.com/

Excite   http://www.excite.com/

GeoCities   http://www.geocities.com/

Hotmail   http://www.hotmail.com/

Juno   http://www.juno.com/

Lycos   http://www.lycos.com/

Yahoo   http://www.yahoo.com/

Internet-Based Fax

Faxaway is an Internet-based faxing service.

Faxaway   http://www.faxaway.com/index.html

Internet Service Provider

IGC is a nonprofit, unionized, full-service Internet service provider.

Institute for Global Communications   http://www.igc.org/

Online Advocacy

Issue Advocacy

These tools provide mechanisms for identifying and contacting elected officials and local media based on a zip-code locator, as well as listing current issues and legislation.

Capitol Advantage's CapWiz	http://capitoladvantage.com/h/
Congress.org	http://congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials/
Contacting the White House	http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/
Electronic Activist	http://www.ifas.org/activist/index.html
Legislative Democratic Services	http://lds2000.com/
Network for Good	http://www.networkforgood.org/
United States Senate	http://www.senate.gov/
Votenet's Legislative Message Center	http://cw2k.capweb.net/
Write Your Representative	http://www.house.gov/writerep/

Online Support

These organizations provide mechanisms for nonprofits to solicit online donations and/or volunteers.

Helping.org	https://www.helping.org/
iGive.com	http://www9.igive.com/html/intro.cfm
Network for Good	http://www.networkforgood.org/
Payments by PayPal	https://www.paypal.com/
VolunteerMatch	http://www.volunteermatch.org/

Nonprofit Listings

Nonprofit Organizations

These sites list nonprofit organizations.

GuideStar	http://www.guidestar.org/
Non-Profit Gateway	http://www.nonprofit.gov/

Contributions

Give to Charity lists nonprofit organizations that are soliciting contributions.

Give to Charity	http://www.givetocharity.com/

Volunteers

These sites list nonprofit organizations that are recruiting volunteers.

Action Without Borders	http://www.idealist.org/
Project America	http://www.project.org/
VolunteerMatch	http://www.impactonline.org/

Registration

Websites

Nonprofits should register their websites with these major search engines, as well as use informative and relevant keywords.

AltaVista	http://www.altavista.com/
Excite	http://www.excite.com/
Infoseek	http://infoseek.go.com/
Lycos	http://www.lycos.com/
Yahoo	http://www.yahoo.com/

Discussion Lists

Nonprofits should register their discussion lists at the following websites.

CataList	http://www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html
The Directory of Scholarly and Professional E-Conferences	http://www.kovacs.com/directory.html
List of Lists	http://www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html
Liszt	http://www.liszt.com/
NeoSoft	http://paml.net/
TileNet	http://www.tile.net/

Security and Trust

Secure E-Commerce

These organizations provide services for ensuring secure online transactions.

Giving Capital	http://www.givingcapital.com/
Infoquest Technologies Incorporated	http://www.fptoday.com/index.htm
VeriSign	http://www.verisign.com/

Site Evaluation

These organizations rate children's and family websites.

Child & Family WebGuide	http://www.cfw.tufts.edu/
The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences	http://www.webbyawards.com/main/

Trust Online

These organizations provide privacy seals indicating that the site abides by a privacy policy.

BBB*OnLine*	http://www.bbbonline.org/
TrustE	http://www.truste.com/
VeriSign	http://www.verisign.com/

Special Needs

These online resources provide tools for addressing Web accessibility issues.

Center for Applied Special Technology's BOBBY	http://www.cast.org/bobby/
Center for Information Technology Accommodation (CITA)	http://www.itpolicy.gsa.gov/cita/
Unified Website Accessibility Guidelines	http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/
Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)	http://www.w3.org/WAI/
WebABLE!	http://www.webable.com/index.html

Tips

Action Alerts

Phil Agre provides a twenty-point guide on designing effective action alerts.

Phil Agre, University of California Graduate School of Education and Information Studies	http://dlis.gseis.ucla.edu/people/pagre/alerts.html

Advocacy Tips

These resources provide tips and guidelines on effectively implementing information technologies.

A Guide to Social Activism	http://www.oxfamamerica.org/students/index.html
Advocacy and Policy Links	http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/advocacy.html
Benton Foundation's Best Practices Toolkit	http://www.benton.org/Practice/Toolkit
Boland (1998)	http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/ElecAdvo/general_tips.html
Checklist for an Advocacy Web Page	http://www2.widener.edu/Wolfgram-Memorial-Library/webevaluation/advoc.htm
Circuit Riders Saddlebag	http://www.rffund.org/techproj/circuit_riders/saddle.html
Coyote Communications' Tip Sheets	http://www.coyotecom.com/tips.html
CWLA's Advocacy Tips	http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/advocacyresourcetips.htm
Electronic Advocacy	http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/ElecAdvo/index.html
Institute for First Amendment Studies	http://www.ifas.org/activist/index.html
Non-Profit Gateway	http://www.nonprofit.gov
ONE/Northwest's Activist Toolkit	http://www.onenw.org/bin/page.cfm?secid=5
Online Advocacy Tips	http://www.igc.org/igc/gateway/tips.html
The Virtual Activist: A Training Course	http://www.netaction.org/training/
Top Tips for Cyber-Disobedience	http://www.wiredstrategies.com/toptips.html

Discussion Groups

These organizations provide tips for setting up discussion groups.

Charity Channel's directory	http://www.charitychannel.com/
Moderators Home Page Tips	http://www.emoderators.com/moderators.shtml

Lobbying

The following organizations provide information on lobbying.

E-Advocacy for Nonprofits	http://www.afj.org/eadvocacy/index.htm
Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI)	http://www.indepsec.org/clpi/index.html

Press Releases

The following resources provide tips on writing press releases.

How to Write a Press Release	http://www.cotu.com/infopage/business/R134.htm
Interactive Press Release Builder	http://www.canadaone.com/promote/pressrelease.html

Virtual Organizing

The following organization provides advice on cyber-activism.

Tech Tips for Activists   http://www.organizenow.net/

Resources

Civic Activism

These sites provide discussion about or resources for civic action.

Citizen Action Resources   http://www.tresser.com/citizen_action.htm

Civic Practices Network   http://www.cpn.org/

Cyberactivism revolutionises
Greenpeace campaigns   http://www.greenpeace.org/information.shtml

Participate America   http://www.participateamerica.org/partamer/index.html

Community Organizing

These sites provide discussion about or resources for community organizing.

Become a Community
Organizer (HUD)   http://www.hud.gov:80/community/orcomm.html

Blacksburg Electronic Village   http://www.bev.net/project/evupstart/index.html

Comm-Org (discussion group)   http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/

Do Something   http://www.dosomething.org/

The Online Conference on Community Organizing and
Development   http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/

Databases

These resources provide databases of information.

Library of Congress' THOMAS Searchable database of Congressional legislation and
historical documents   http://thomas.loc.gov/

Nonprofit Gateway   http://www.nonprofit.gov

Right-to-Know Network (OMB Watch and Unison Institute's
Toxics Release Inventory)   http://www.rtk.net/

Environmental Defense Fund's Chemical Scorecard   http://www.scorecard.org/

Forms

This resource provides sample forms for use in volunteerism, community services, and online
political action.

FormSite.com   http://www.formsite.com/

National Service Resource Center   http://www.etr.org/nsrc/forms/

Governmental Web Sites

These sites are the official sites for the White House, House of Representatives, and Senate.

United States House of Representatives	http://www.house.gov/
United States Senate	http://www.senate.gov/
White House	http://www.whitehouse.gov/

Information Services

These resources provide personalized information services.

HandsNet's WebClipper	http://www.handsnet.org/
My Yahoo	http://my.yahoo.com/
My Deja News	http://www.dejanews.com/

Links

These resources provide links to various decision makers or media.

Congress

Juno	http://www.juno.com/
Library of Congress' THOMAS	http://thomas.loc.gov/
National Education Association	http://www.nea.org/
OMB Watch	http://www.ombwatch.org/ombwatch.html

Government

FirstGov	http://www.first.gov/

State-Level Policy Makers

Institute for First Amendment Studies	http://www.ifas.org/activist/index.html

Key News Media

Institute for First Amendment Studies	http://www.ifas.org/activist/index.html

Resources for Child Advocacy

Capacity Building

The resources listed in this section assist nonprofits with building their capacity.

CWLA's National Center for Consultation and
Professional Development   http://www.cwla.org/consultation/

Databases

These resources provide databases of information.

2001 Kids Count Data Book Online   http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2001/

AgeLine Database   http://research.aarp.org/ageline/

American FactFinder   http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet

CANDIS (Child Abuse and Neglect
Database Instrument System)   http://www.musc.edu/cvc/candis.htm

Child Abuse Prevention
Packet   http://www.preventchildabuse.org/family_community/cap/index.html

Child's Rights Information Network (CRIN)   http://www.crin.org/

Complete List of Parent
Resources   http://www.preventchildabuse.org/family_community/parents/index.html

CWLA Dorothy L. Bernhard Library   http://www.cwla.org/whowhat/lis.htm

CWLA National Data Analysis System   http://ndas/cwla.org/

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)   http://www.epa.gov/children/whatyou.htm

Frequently Requested Resources   http://www.childrenspartnership.org/

Keeping Kids Safe Online:
Tips and Tools   http://www.childrenspartnership.org/bbar/safety.html

Library of Congress Online Catalog   http://catalog.loc.gov/

Maternal and Child Health   http://www.savethechildren.org/mothers/learn/weblinks.htm

MEDLINE/MEDLINEplus/PubMed   http://www4.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/

National Center for Children in Poverty's
Research Forum   http://www.researchforum.org/

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Abstracts
Database   http://abstractsdb.ncjrs.org/content/AbstractsDB_Search.asp

National Data Archive on Child Abuse and
Neglect (NDACAN)   http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/

National Institute of Justice (NIJ)   http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/search.htm

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)	http://etoh.niaaa.nih.gov/etohome.htm
New Social Worker Online	http://www.socialworker.com/
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)	http://search.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/content/OJJDP_Search.html
Parent Involvement Tools	http://www.pta.org/aboutpta/store/pi_tools.asp
Selected Child Abuse Information & Resource Directory	http://www.preventchildabuse.org/family_community/links/index.html
Social Work Access Network (SWAN)	http://www.sc.edu/swan/index.html
Social Work Search.Com	http://www.socialworksearch.com/
The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)	http://www.health.org/catalog/catalog.htm
The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information	http://www.calib.com/nccanch/
The Parents Guide to the Information Superhighway	http://www.childrenspartnership.org/bbar/pbpg.html
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	http://www.hhs.gov/search/
Web of Support Guidebook	http://www.savethechildren.org/wosokit/index.html
World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers	http://www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwwrsw/
Yahoo Guide to Social Work Resources	http://dir.yahoo.com/Social_Science/social_work/

Email Distribution Lists

These lists provide information on issues affecting children.

APHSA This Week in Washington	http://www.aphsa.org/
Child Defense Fund E-mail List	http://www.childrensdefense.org/listservs.htm
Connect For Kids	http://www.connectforkids.org/
HandsNet WebClipper Digest	http://www.handsnet.org/
JUVJUST	http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/about/juvjust.htm
OMB Watch Email Lists	http://www.ombwatch.org/forum.html
National PTA This Week in Washington Online Newsletter	http://www.pta.org/interact/dcnews.htm
Victim-Assistance Online E-mail Discussion Lists	http://www.vaonline.org/email.htm
WeR4Kdz@cwla.org	http://www.cwla.org/wer4kdz

Mentoring

This organization lists mentoring and volunteering opportunities by area.

Mentoring: National Mentoring Partnership   http://www.mentoring.org/

National Resource Centers

These links provides resources for various children's issues.

Family Resource Information, Education & Network Development Services
(FRIENDS)   http://www.chtop.com/friends/homepage.htm

Maternal and Child Health Information
Resource Center (MCHIRC)   http://www.mchirc.net/

National Abandoned Infants Assistance
Resource Center (NAIRC)   http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~aiarc/

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse   http://www.calib.com/naic/

National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC)   http://www.nccic.org/

National Child Welfare Resource Center for
Family-Centered Practice   http://www.cwresource.org/

National Resource Center for Foster Care and
Permanency Planning   http://guthrie.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/

National Resource Center for Information Technology in
Child Welfare   http://www.nrcitcw.org/

National Resource Center for Youth Development   http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd.htm

National Resource Center on
Child Maltreatment (NRCCM)   http://gocwi.org/nrccm/whoweare.html

The National Resource Center for
Special Needs Adoption   http://www.spaulding.org/adoption/NRC-adoption.html

Networks

This resource is a network dedicated to various children's issues.

The Child Abuse Prevention Network   http://child-abuse.com/

Statistics and Data

These resources provide statistics and data relevant to children's issues.

ACF Data and Statistics/
Child Care Research and Data   http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/stats/index.html

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System
(AFCARS)   http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/cwstats.html

America's Children: Key National Indicators of
Well-Being   http://www.childstats.gov/ac2000/ac00.asp

Annie E. Casey Foundation	http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/
Bureau of Justice Statistics	http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/
Bureau of Labor Statistics	http://stats.bls.gov/
ChildStats.Com	http://childstats.gov/
Community Services Block Grant Program Statistics and Data	http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ocs/csbg/html/3.htm
FedStats	http://www.fedstats.gov/
Head Start Bureau Research and Statistics	http://www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/index.htm
National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) Adoption Statistics	http://www.calib.com/naic/stats/index.htm
National Center for Education Statistics	http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/yi/
National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)	http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about.htm
National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)	http://www.calib.com/nccanch/stats/index.cfm
Statistics Netherland (International statistics)	http://www.cbs.nl/en/services/links/default.asp
Trends in the Well-being of America's Children and Youth	http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/00trends/index.htm

Example Websites

Effective Online Advocacy*

* Examples found on the Benton Foundation's website (http://www.benton.org/Practice/Best/advoc.html), accessed November 19, 2001.

Customized Action Networks

These websites allow users to customize their participation in online campaigns, thus allowing organizations to collect information about popular issues and to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

Conservation Action Network	http://takeaction.worldwildlife.org/
Human Rights Campaign	http://www.hrc.org/
Environmental Defense	http://www.edf.org/
Women's Voting Guide	http://www.womenvote.org/

Power of Online Databases

These websites use online databases to connect activists with region-specific information.

Chemical Scorecard	http://www.scorecard.org/
League of Conservation Voters	http://www.lcv.org/
Planned Parenthood Federation of America	http://www.plannedparenthood.org/

Building Community

These websites reflect the value of building online communities for enhancing advocacy efforts.

Wisconsin Stewardships Network	http://www.wsn.org/

Banding Together to Make a Difference

These websites illustrate the effectiveness of collaboration between multiple nonprofits on a related issue.

Corporate Watch	http://www.corpwatch.org/
Extinction Sucks	http://www.extinctionsucks.org/

Campaign-Specific URLs

These websites have creative domain names, illustrating the power of the URL.

Kickbutt.org	http://www.kickbutt.org/
Our Forests	http://www.ourforests.org/

Keep It Simple (but Effective)

These websites illustrate a good use of limited technology, providing tight and focused messages in terms of content and/or audience.

Co-Op America's Boycott Action News	http://www.boycotts.org/
Mothers & Others	http://www.mothers.org/

Activism Clearinghouses

These websites link activists with advocacy opportunities and aggregate information about advocacy organizations and events.

Protest.Net	http://www.protest.net/

Public Policy Activities*

Public Education

These sites support activities that disseminate perspectives on public issues.

Cato Institute	http://www.cato.org/
DevMedia	http://www.devmedia.org/
The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation	http://www.kff.org/
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits	http://www.mncn.org/
The Nation Institute	http://www.nationinstitute.org/
Town Hall (Conservative News and Information)	http://www.townhall.com/
Usenet newsgroups	soc.org.nonprofit; misc.activism.progressive

Research

These sites support research activities or activities geared toward the collection of data or use of analytical tools for public policy purposes.

Cook Inlet Keeper	http://www.inletkeeper.org/
Loka Institute	http://www.loka.org/
Utility Consumers Action Network (UCAN)	http://www.ucan.org/

Access to Research and Information

These sites support activities that are geared toward understanding and interceding in the rulemaking process at the federal, state, or local levels.

Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA)	http://www.arnova.org/
Environmental Defense Fund's Chemical Scorecard	http://www.scorecard.org/
GuideStar	http://www.guidestar.org/
National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute	http://nccs.urban.org/
HandsNet's WebClipper	http://www.handsnet.org/
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press' Freedom of Information (FOI) Letter Generator	http://www.rcfp.org/foi_lett.html
Right-to-Know Network (RTK.NET)	http://www.rtk.net/

Administrative Advocacy

These sites support activities geared toward understanding and interceding in the rulemaking process at the federal, state, or local levels.

Media Access Project	http://www.mediaaccess.org/
OMB Watch	http://ombwatch.org/
Phoenix Center for Advanced Legal and Economic Policy Studies	http://www.phoenix-center.org/
The Public Forum Institute (Americans Discuss Social Security)	http://www.publicforuminstitute.com/inits/retire/adss.htm
Regulatory Reform Discussion Group	REGREF-L
Taxpayers for Common Sense's TaxpayerNet	http://www.taxpayer.net/main.html

Judicial Advocacy

These sites support activities that promote more responsible and accountable judicial and correctional systems and law enforcement practices.

Derechos	http://www.derechos.org/
Forfeiture Endangers American Rights	http://www.fear.org/
Fully Informed Jury Association	http://www.fija.org/
Trial Lawyers for Public Justice	http://www.tlpj.org/

Legislative Advocacy and Lobbying

These sites support lobbying activities that attempt to influence local, state, and federal legislation.

American Civil Liberties Union's Action Alert Network	http://www.aclu.org/action/action.html
American Insurance Association	http://www.aiadc.org/
Bethphage	http://www.bethphage.org/
Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest	http://www.indepsec.org/clpi
Christian Coalition	http://www.christian-coalition.org/
National Partnership for Women and Families	http://www.nationalpartnership.org/

Organizing and Mobilizing

These sites support activities geared toward increasing awareness and mobilizing involvement around particular issues from a specific viewpoint.

ACT UP	http://www.actupny.org/
Protest Net	http://www.protest.net/
Voters Telecommunications Watch's Adopt Your Legislator program	http://www.vtw.org/adopt

Public-Private Collaboration

These sites support activities in which nonprofits partner with business, government, universities, or other public or social institutions to address local, state, and national problems.

Earth 911	http://www.earth911.org/
Our Front Porch	http://www.ourfrontporch.com/
Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center	http://www.pprc.org/
Washington State's Public Affairs Network (TVW)	http://www.tvw.org/

Voter Education and Participation

These sites support activities focusing on electoral politics, voter turnout or education, or issue advocacy, but not those focusing on support for specific candidates.

Democracy Network	http://www.dnet.org/
League of Women Voters	http://www.lwv.org/
Project VoteSmart	http://www.vote-smart.org/
Rock the Vote	http://www.rockthevote.org/
Web, White & Blue (WWB)	http://www.webwhiteblue.org/
Women Leaders Online Fund's Women's Voting Guide	http://www.womenvote.org/

REFERENCES

Agre, P. (1999). Designing Effective Action Alerts for the Internet, [Internet]. Available: http://dlis.gseis.ucla.edu/people/pagre/alerts.html [2001, November 21].

Amidei, N. (1987). The New Activism Picks up Steam. Public Welfare, 45(3), 21-26.

Angelides, M. C. (1997). Implementing the Internet for Business: A Global Marketing Opportunity. International Journal of Information Management, 16(2), 405-19.

Anonymous. (1999). America's Children in the 21st Century. Putting Ideas to Work: A Progress Report from the Children's Partnership. ERIC Digest, ED448254.

Aoki, K., Fasse, R., & Stowe, S. (1998). A Typology for Distance Education-Tool for Strategic Planning. ERIC Digest, ED 428 649.

Arnone, M. P., & Small, R. V. (1999 Apr). Evaluating the Motivational Effectiveness of Children's Websites. Educational Technology, 39(2), 51-55.

Austin, B. (2001). Mooers' Law: In and out of Context. Journal of the American Society of Information Science, 52(8), 607-09.

Aycock, A., & Buchignani, N. (1995). The E-mail Murders: Reflections on Dead Letters. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety . Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Bacheldor, B. (2000 Feb 14). The Art of e-Biz: The Good-and Not Good Enough-of Web-Site Design. Informationweek.com.

Barnes, H. (2000, Sept.). Content Management and E-commerce. HP Professional, 14(9), 38+.

Bauer, C., & Scharl, A. (2000). Quantitive Evaluation of Web Site Content and Structure. Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy, 10(1), 31-43.

Baumgartner, P., & Payr, S. (1998). Learning with the Internet: A Typology of Applications. ERIC Digest, ED 428 652.

Baym, N. (1995). The Emergence of Community in Computer-Mediated Communication. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety . Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Beatty, B. (2001). The Politics of Preschool Advocacy: Lessons from Three Pioneering Organizations. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Becker, T. L. (2001, April-May). The Comprehensive Electronic Town Meeting and Its Role in 21st Century Democracy. Futures, 33, 347-51.

Benton Foundation. (2001, October 9 2001). What's Working: Advocacy on the 'Net, [Internet]. Benton Foundation. Available: http://www.benton.org/Practice/Best/advoc.html [2001, November 19].

Bimber, B. (1998a). The Internet and Political Mobilization. Social Science Computer Review, 16(4), 391-401.

Bimber, B. (1998b). The Internet and Political Transformation: Populism, Community, and Accelerated Pluralism. Polity, 31(1), 133-61.

Bimber, B. (1999 Oct-Dec). The Internet and Citizen Communication with Government: Does the Medium Matter? Political Communication, 16(4), 409-28.

Bimber, B. (2000 Oct-Dec). The Study of Information Technology and Civic Engagement. Communication and Civic Engagement. Political Communication, 17(4), 329-33.

Bimber, B. (2001). Information and Political Engagement in America: The Search for Effects of Information Technology at the Individual Level. Political Research Quarterly, 54(1), 53-67.

Blickstein, S., & Hanson, S. (2001). Critical Mass: Forging a Politics of Sustainable Mobility in the Information Age. Transportation, 28(4), 347-62.

Blundon, B., & Bonde, A. (1998, Nov. 16). Beyond the Transaction. Informationweek.com.

Boland, K. M. (1998). Electronic Advocacy: An Introduction to the Use of Electronic Techniques for Social Change, [Internet]. New England Network for Child, Youth and Family Services. Available: http://www.nenetwork.org/info-policy/ElecAdvo/index.html.

Boling, N. C., & Robinson, D. H. (1999). Individual Study, Interactive Multimedia, or Cooperative Learning: Which Activity Best Supplements Lecture-Based Distance Education? Journal of Educational Psychology, 91(1), 169-74.

Bonchek, M. S. (1995, April 6 1995). Grassroots in Cyberspace: Recruiting Members on the Internet. Paper presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.

Boris, E. T., & Mosher-Williams, R. (1998). Nonprofit Advocacy Organizations: Assessing the Definitions, Classifications, and Data. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 27(4), 488-506.

Botsch, C. S., & Botsch, R. E. (2001 Mar). Audiences and Outcomes in Online and Traditional American Government Classes: A Comparative Two-Year Study. Political Science & Politics Online, 34(1).

Bullert, B. J. (2000 Oct-Dec). Progressive Public Relations, Sweatshops, and the Net. Communication and Civic Engagement. Political Communication, 17(4), 403-08.

Burnett, G., Besant, M., & Chatman, E. A. (2001). Small Worlds: Normative Behavior and Feminist Bookselling. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 52(7), 536-47.

Carson, E. (2001). Introduction. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Carter, M. (1999). Speaking Up in the Internet Age: Use and Value of Constituent E-Mail and Congressional Web-Sites. Parliamentary Affairs, 52(3), 464-79.

Chadwick, A., & May, C. (2001 Aug-Sept, August 30-September 2, 2001). Interaction between States and Citizens in the Age of the Internet: 'E-Government' in the United States, Britain and the European Union. Paper presented at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco.

Chapman, G., & Rhodes, L. (1997 Oct). Nurturing Neighborhood Nets. Technological Review.

Chroust, P. (2000 Spring). Neo-Nazis and Taliban On-Line: Anti-Modern Political Movements and Modern Media. Democratization, 7(1), 102-18.

Cisler, S. (1995). Can We Keep Community Networks Running? Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine, 2(1).

Cisler, S. (1999). Showdown in Seattle: Turtles, Teamsters, and Tear Gas. firstmonday, 4(12).

Clapperton, G. (2000, Oct. 24). Setting Up an Effective Commerce Website. Vnunet.com.

Clift, S. (2000). The E-Democracy E-Book: Democracy is Online 2.0, [Internet]. Available: http://www.publicus.net [2001, November 12].

Cockburn, C., & Wilson, T. D. (1996). Business Use of the WWW. International Journal of Information Management, 16(2), 83-102.

Coleman, S. (1999 Apr). The New Media and Democratic Politics. New Media & Society, 1(1), 67-74.

Constantinides, H. & Swenson, J. Credibility and medical web sites. [Internet]. Internet Studies Center, Dept. of Rhetoric, Univ. of Minnesota. Available: http://www.isc.umn.edu/research/papers/medcred.pdf [2000, November 17].

Cook, R. B., & Peter Ivan Armstrong, I. (1999). Point and Click: Should the Exercise of Democracy Go Online, and What Are the Implications?, [Internet]. Harvard Univ Lib Pol Research Online. Available: http://pro.harvard.edu/papers/040/040005CookRosali.pdf.

Covington, S. (2001). In the Midst of Plenty: Foundation Funding of Child Advocacy Organizations in the 1990s. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Cronin, B., Snyder, H. W., Rosenbaum, H., Martinson, A., & Callahan, E. (1998). Invoked on the Web. Journal of the American Society for Information Science, 49(14), 1319-28.

Crowston, K., & Williams, M. (2000). Reproduced and Emergent Genres of Communication on the World Wide Web. The Information Society, 16(3), 201-15.

Dahlberg, L. (2001 Mar 5). Extending the Public Sphere through Cyberspace: The Case of Minnesota E-Democracy. First Monday, 6(3).

Dahlgren, P. (2000 Oct-Dec). The Internet and the Democratization of Civic Culture. Communication and Civic Engagement. Political Communication, 17(4), 335-40.

Dalgleish, J. (2000 Dec). Create Customer-Effective E-services. E-Business Advisor, 18(12), 26+.

Danitz, T., & Strobel, W. P. (1999 July-Sept). The Internet's Impact on Activism: The Case of Burma. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 22(3), 257-69.

Dartnell, M. (1999 Winter). Insurgency Online: Elements for a Theory of Anti-Government Internet Communications. Small Wars and Insurgencies, 10(3), 116-35.

De Vita, C. J., & Mosher-Williams, R., eds. (2001). Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

De Vita, C. J., Mosher-Williams, R., & Stengel, N. J. (2001). Nonprofit Organizations Engaged in Child Advocacy. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

DeBard, R., & Guidera, S. (1999-2000). Adapting Asynchronous Communication to Meet the Seven Principles of Effective Teaching. Journal of Educational Technology, 28(3), 219-30.

Devitt, A. J. (1993). Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept. College Composition and Communication, 44(4), 557-86.

Dillon, A., & Gushrowski, B. A. (2000). Genres and the Web: Is the Personal Home Page the First Uniquely Digital Genre? Journal of the American Society for Information Science, 51(2), 202-05.

Dillon, A., & Vaughan, M. (1997). It's the Journey and the Destination: Shape and the Emergent Property of Genre in Evaluating Digital Documents. New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia, 3, 91-106.

Docter, S., Dutton, W. H., & Elberse, A. (1999 July). An American Democracy Network: Factors Shaping the Future of On-Line Political Campaigns. Parliamentary Affairs, 52(3), 535-52.

Dominguez, P. S., & Ridley, D. R. (2001 Mar). Assessing Distance Education Courses and Discipline Differences in their Effectiveness. Journal of Instructional Psychology, 28(1), 15-19.

Downing, J. D. H. (1989). Computers for Political Change: PeaceNet and Public Data Access. Journal of Communication, 39(3), 154-62.

Dulio, D. A., Goff, D. L., & Thurber, J. A. (1999). Untangled Web: Internet Use during the 1998 Election. PS: Political Science & Politics, 32(1), 53-59.

Elliott, B., Katsioloudes, M., & Weldon, R. (1998 Spring). Nonprofit Organizations and the Internet. Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 8(3), 297-303.

Epstein, I. (1981). Advocates on Advocacy: An Exploratory Study. Social Work Research and Abstracts, 17(1), 5-12.

Esrock, S. L., & Leichty, G. B. (2000). Organization of Corporate Web Pages: Publics and Functions. Public Relations Review, 26(3), 327-44.

Eveland, W. P., Jr., & Dunwoody, S. (2000). Examining Information Processing on the World Wide Web Using Think Aloud Protocols. Media Psychology, 2, 219-44.

Eveland, W. P., Jr., & Dunwoody, S. (2001). User Control and Structural Isomorphism or Disorientation and Cognitive Load? Learning from the Web versus Print. Communication Research, 28(1), 48-78.

Fernback, J. (1999). There is a There: Notes Toward a Definition of Cybercommunity. In S. Jones (Ed.), Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net (pp. 203-20). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Finn, J. (1998). Seeking Volunteers and Contributions: An Exploratory Study of Nonprofit Agencies on the Internet. Computers in Human Services, 15(4), 39-56.

Fitzgerald, E., & McNutt, J. (1999). Electronic Advocacy in Policy Practice: A Framework for Teaching Technologically Based Practice. Journal of Social Work Education, 35(3), 331-41.

Flottemesch, K. (2000 May-June). Building Effective Interaction in Distance Education: A Review of the Literature. Educational Technology, 40(3).

Friedman, T. (1995). Making Sense of Software: Computer Games and Interactive Textuality. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Fuller, M., & Jenkins, H. (1995). Nintendo® and New Word Travel Writing: A Dialogue. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Gibelman, M., & Kraft, S. (1996). Advocacy as a Core Agency Program: Planning Considerations for Voluntary Human Services Agencies. Administration in Social Work, 20(4), 43-59.

Glogoff, S. (2001). Virtual Connections: Community Bonding on the Net. firstmonday, 6(3).

Gretzel, U., Yuan, Y.-L., & Fesenmaier, D. (2000, Nov.). Preparing for the New Economy: Advertising Strategies and Change in Destination Marketing Organizations. Journal of Travel Research, 39, 146-56.

Gurak, L. (1997). Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace: The Online Protests over Lotus MarketPlace and Clipper Chip. New Haven, CT: Yale UP.

Gurak, L. J. (1997). Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Haas, S. W., & Grams, E. S. (1998). A Link Taxonomy for Web Pages. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 61st ASIS Annual Meeting.

Haas, S., & Grams, E. S. (2000). Readers, Authors, and Page Structure: A Discussion of Four Questions Arising from a Content Analysis of Web Pages. Journal of the American Society for Information Science, 51(2), 181-92.

Hansen, G. J., & Benoit, W. L. (2001 Aug). The Role of Significant Policy Issues in the 2000 Presidential Primaries. American Behavioral Scientist, 44(12), 2082-100.

Harbeck, J. D., & Sherman, T. M. (1999 Jul-Aug). Seven Principles for Designing Developmentally Appropriate Web Sites for Young Children. Educational Technology.

Hearit, K. M. (1999 Fall). Newsgroups, Activist Publics, and Corporate Apologia: The Case of Intel and Its Pentium Chip. Public Relations Review, 25(3), 291-308.

Helander, M., & Khalid, H. (2000). Modeling the Customer in Electronic Commerce. Applied Ergonomics, 31, 609-19.

Hester, J. B. (1999, Spring). Using a Web-Based Interactive Test as a Learning Tool. Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, 35-42.

Hick, S., & Halpin, E. (2001 May). Children's Rights and the Internet. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 575, 56-70.

Hilton, C. B., & Kameda, N. (1999 Jan/Feb). E-mail and the Internet as International Business Communication Teaching and Research Tools-A Case Study. Journal of Education for Business, 74(3), 181-85.

Hoefer, R. (1999). Protection, Prizes or Patrons? Explaining the Origins and Maintenance of Human Services Interest Groups. Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 26(4), 115-36.

Hoffman, D. L., Novak, T. P., & Chatterjee, P. (1995). Commercial Scenarios for the Web: Opportunities and Challenges. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 1(3).

Hoger, E. A., Cappel, J. J., & Myerscough, M. A. (1998). Navigating the Web with a Typology of Corporate Uses. Business Communication Quarterly, 61(2), 39-47.

Immig, D. (2001). Mobilizing Parents and Communities for Children. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Johnson, C., & Codron, A. (1998). Toward a Cyberdemocracy: Political Promotions on the Internet. Journal of Non-Profit and Public Sector Marketing, 6(1), 105-18.

Johnson, S. D., Aragon, S. R., Shaik, N., & Palma-Rivas, N. (1999). Comparative Analysis of Online vs. Face-to-Face Instruction. ERIC Digest, ED448722.

Jones, K., Alabaster, T., & Walton, J. (1998). Virtual Environments for Environmental Reporting. Greener Management International, 121+.

Jones, S. G. (1995). Understanding Community in the Information Age. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety . Thousand Oaks: Sage.

King, A. M. (1999, March 1999). What Is the Value of Your Website? Strategic Finance, 80, 48-51.

Klein, H. K. (1999). Tocqueville in Cyberspace: Using the Internet for Citizen Associations. The Information Society, 15, 213-20.

Klinenberg, E., & Perrin, A. (2000). Symbolic Politics in the Information Age: The 1996 Republican Presidential Campaigns in Cyberspace. Information, Communication & Society, 3(1), 17-38.

Koivumaki, T. (2001). Customer Satisfaction and Purchasing Behavior in a Web-based Shopping Environment. Electronic Markets, 11(3), 186-92.

Kollock, P., & Smith, M. (1996). Managing the Virtual Commons: Cooperation and Conflict in Computer Communities. In S. Herring (Ed.), Managing the Virtual Commons: Cooperation and Conflict in Computer Communities (pp. 109-28). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kramarae, C. (1995). A Backstage Critique of Virtual Reality. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety . Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kutner, L. A. (2000 Earth Day). Environmental Activism and the Internet. Electronic Green Journal(12).

Kwasnik, B. H., Crowston, K., Nilan, M., & Roussinov, D. (2000). Identifying Document Genre to Improve Web Search Effectiveness. Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science, 27(2), 23-26.

LaRose, R., & Whitten, P. (2000). Re-thinking Instructional Immediacy for Web Courses: A Social Cognitive Exploration. Communication Education, 49(4), 320-38.

Lee, T. E., Chen, J. Q., & Zhang, R. (2001 Spring). Utilizing the Internet as a Competitive Tool for Non-Profit Organizations. Journal of Computer Information Systems, 41(3), 26-31.

Leizerov, S. (2000). Privacy Advocacy Groups versus Intel: A Case Study of How Social Movements Are Tactically Using the Internet to Fight Organizations. Social Science Computer Review, 18(4), 461-83.

Lerouge, C. (2000, Dec.). From Bricks to Clicks: How to Lay the Foundation. Strategic Finance, 26-36.

Liebscher, P., Abels, E. G., & Denman, D. W. (1997). Factors that Influence the Use of Electronic Networks by Science and Engineering Faculty at Small Institutions. Part II. Preliminary Use Indicators. Journal of the American Society of Information Science, 48(6), 496-507.

Limayem, M., Khalifa, M., & Frini, A. (2000 July). What Makes Consumers Buy From Internet? A Longitudinal Study of Online Shopping. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics-Part A: Systems and Humans, 30(4), 421-32.

Löfgren, K., Andersen, K. V., & Sørensen, M. F. (1999, July). The Danish Parliament Going Virtual. Parliamentary Affairs, 52(3), 493-502.

London, S. (1997 Mar). Civic Networks: Building Community on the Net, [Internet]. Available: http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/networks.html [2001, December 6].

Losee, R. M. (1997). A Discipline Independent Definition of Information. Journal of the American Society of Information Science, 48(3), 254-69.

Lu, M.-t., & Yeung, W.-l. (1998). A Framework for Effective Commercial Web Application Development. Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy, 8(2), 166-73.

Lynch, P., Kent, R., & Srinivasan, S. (2001 May-June). The Global Internet Shopper: Evidence from Shopping Tasks in Twelve Countries. Journal of Advertising Research, 15-23.

MacKinnon, R. C. (1995). Searching for the Leviathan in Usenet. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Maier, E., & Hovy, E. (1993). Organizing Discourse Structure Relations Using Metafunctions. In H. Horacek & M. Zock (Eds.), New Concepts in Natural Language Generation (pp. 69-86). London: Pinter.

Margolis, M., Resnick, D., & Tu, C.-c. (1997). Campaigning on the Internet: Parties and Candidates on the World Wide Web in the 1996 Primary Season. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 2(1), 59-78.

Masters, S. (1998, July 15). Analysis: E-commerce Set to Snowball. Vnunet.com.

May, A. D. (1997). Automatic Classification of E-Mail Messages by Message Type. Journal of the American Society of Information Science, 48(1), 32-39.

McDonough, J. (1999). Designer Selves: Construction of Technologically Mediated Identity within Graphical, Multiuser Virtual Environments. Journal of the American Society for Information Science, 50(10), 855-69.

McLaughlin, M. L., Osborne, K. K., & Smith, C. B. (1995). Standards of Conduct on the Usenet. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

McNutt, J. G. (2000). Coming Perspectives in the Development of Electronic Advocacy for Social Policy Practice. Critical Social Work, 1(1).

McNutt, J. G., & Boland, K. M. (1999). Electronic Advocacy by Non-Profit Organizations in Social Welfare Policy. Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 28(4), 432-51.

McNutt, J., Keaney, W., Crawford, P., Schubert, L., & Sullivan, C. (2001, March 15-16, 2001). Going On-Line for Children: A National Study of Electronic Advocacy by Non-Profit Child Advocacy Agencies. Paper presented at the Independent Sector Spring Research Symposium, Washington, D.C.

Mehlenbacher, B., Miller, C. R., Covington, D., & Larsen, J. S. (2000, June). Active and Interactive Learning Online: A Comparison of Web-Based and Conventional Writing Classes. IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 43(2), 166-84.

Menon, G. M. (2000). The 79-Cent Campaign: The Use of On-Line Mailing Lists for Electronic Advocacy. Journal of Community Practice, 8(3), 73-81.

Mickelson, J. S. (1995). Advocacy, Encyclopedia of Social Work (19th ed. ed.,): NASW Press.

Miljeteig, P., & Bistrup, M. L. (1999). The Use of Multimedia in the Childwatch International Research Network. The Turkish Journal of Pediatrics, 41, 45-50.

Miller, C. R. (1984). Genre as Social Action. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 70, 154-67.

Mitretek. (1999). Health Summit Working Group Policy Paper. Criteria for assessing the quality of health information on the Internet. [Internet]. Available: http://hitiweb.mitretek.org/hswg/documents/default.asp [2000, 16 July].

Montgomery, K. C. (2000 Fall/Winter). Children's Media Culture in the New Millenium: Mapping the Digital Landscape. Children and Computer Technology, 10(2).

Morris-Lee, J. (2000, July). Assessing Web Site Effectiveness. Direct Marketing, 63(3), 30+.

Mottl, J. (2000, Oct.). The Trouble With Online Ads-Despite Technological Advances, the Effectiveness of Internet Ads is Difficult to Gauge. Informationweek.com.

Mulroy, E. A. (2000). Starting Small: Strategy and the Evolution of Structure in a Community-Based Collaboration. Journal of Community Practice, 8(4), 27-43.

Myers, D. J. (1994). Communication Technology and Social Movements: Contributions of Computer Networks to Activism. Social Science Computer Review, 12(2), 250-60.

Navarro, P., & Shoemaker, J. (1999 Fall). The Power of Cyberlearning: An Empirical Test. Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 11(1), 29-54.

Nel, D., Niekerk, R. v., Berthon, J.-P., & Davies, T. (1999). Going with the Flow: Web Site and Customer Involvement. Internet Research: Electronic Networking Application and Policy, 9(2), 109-16.

Nelson, J. A. (2000). The Media Role in Building the Disability Community. Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 15(3), 180-93.

Nelson, M. L., Maly, K., & Shen, S. N. T. (1998). A Multi-Discipline, Multi-Genre Digital Library for Research and Education. ERIC Digest, ED 428 703.

Ng, H.-I., Pan, Y. J., & Wilson, T. D. (1998). Business Use of the WWW: A Report on Further Investigations. International Journal of Information Management, 18(5), 291-314.

Noveck, B. S. (2000 Spring). Paradoxical Partners: Electronic Communication and Electronic Democracy. Democratization, 7(1), 18-35.

Olsina, L., & Rossi, G. (1999, 24-30 Oct 1999). Toward Web-site Quantitative Evaluation: Defining Quality Characteristics and Attributes. Paper presented at the Webnet 99 World Conference on the WWW and Internet Proceedings.

Online Privacy Alliance. (2000). Guidelines for online privacy policies. [Internet]. Available: http://www.privacyalliance.org/resources/ppguidelines.shtml [2000, 16 July].

Orlikowski, W. J., & Yates, J. (1994). Genre Repertoire: The Structuring of Communicative Practices in Organizations. Administrative Science Quarterly, 39, 541-74.

Owen, D., Davis, R., & Strickler, V. J. (1999 Spring). Congress and the Internet. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 4(2), 10-29.

Parker, K. (1999). Charitable Ventures: Nonprofits Look Online for the Next Generation of Donors. American Demographics, 21(12), 39-41.

Parlangeli, O., Marchigiani, E., & Bagnara, S. (1999). Multimedia Systems in Distance Education: Effects of Usability on Learning. Interacting with Computers, 12, 37-79.

Rees, S. (1998). Advocacy in Action, [Internet]. Aspen Institute/Nonprofit Sector Research Fund. Available: http://www.nonprofitresearch.org/newsletter1525/newsletter_show.htm?doc_id=16334.2001 December 1].

Reid, E. (1995). Virtual Worlds: Culture and Imagination. In S. Jones (Ed.), CyberSociety. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Reid, E. (1999). Hierarchy and Power: Social Control in Cyberspace. In P. Kollock & M. A. Smith (Eds.), Communities in Cyberspace. New York: Routledge.

Reid, E. (2001). Building a Policy Voice for Children through the Nonprofit Sector. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Reis, G. R. (2000a). Fund Raising on the Web: Why Having a Dot-Org Web Site Isn't Enough. Fund Raising Management, 30(11), 22+.

Reis, G. R. (2000b). New Report Says Online Charities Aren't Leveraging Power of the Web. Fund Raising Management, 30(12), 3.

Resnick, D. (1998). Politics on the Internet: The Normalization of Cyberspace. In C. Toulouse & T. W. Luke (Eds.), The Politics of Cyberspace: A New Political Science Reader (pp. 48-68). New York: Routledge.

Reveron, D. S. (1998, 3-6 Sept 1998). Virtual Teaching Assistant: Understanding Internet Technologies and the Classroom. Paper presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA.

Rosenbaum, S., & Sonosky, C. A. (2001). Medicaid Reforms and SCHIP: Health Care Coverage and the Changing Policy Environment. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Rosenkrans, G. (2001). Design Considerations for an Effective Online Environment. Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, 565(1), 43-61.

Rosoff, A. J. Informed consent in the electronic age. American Journal of Law & Medicine, 25(2-3), 367-386.

Roufa, M. (1999). Can Nonprofits really Raise Money on the Internet? Nonprofit world, 17(3), 10-12.

Rutherford, K. R. (2000). Internet Activism: NGOs and the Mine Ban Treaty. International Journal on Grey Literature, 1(3), 99-105.

Sankaran, S. R., Sankaran, D., & Bui, T. X. (2000). Effect of Student Attitude to Course Format on Learning Performance: An Empirical Study in Web vs. Lecture Instruction. Journal of Instructional Psychology, 27(1), 66-73.

Saracevic, T., & Kantor, P. B. (1997). Studying the Value of Library and Information Services. Part II. Methodology and Taxonomy. Journal of the American Society of Information Science, 48(6), 543-63.

Scheufele, D. A., & Nisbet, M. (2001, August 30-September 2, 2001). Being a Citizen Online: New Opportunities and Dead Ends. Paper presented at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA.

Schneider, R. L., & Lester, L. (2001). Advocacy: A New Definition, Social Work Advocacy: A New Framework for Action (pp. 56-85). United States: Brooks/Cole.

Scifres, E. L., Gundersen, D. E., & Behara, R. S. (1997 Sept/Oct). An Empirical Investigation of Electronic Groups in the Classroom. Journal of Education for Business, 73(1).

Scott, J. (2000 Mar 14). 'To What End?' A Brief Report on Principles and Best Practices in Online Organizing : Funded by Packard Foundation and Kids4Kids.org, a project of Save the Children.

Seguin, C., Pelletier, L. G., & Hunsley, J. (1998). Toward a Model of Environmental Activism. Environment and Behavior, 30(5), 628-52.

Selz, D., & Schubert, P. (1997). Web Assessment: A Model for the Evaluation and Assessment of Successful Electronic Commerce Applications. International Journal of Electronic Markets, 7(3), 46-68.

Shepherd, M., & Watters, C. (1998, 6-9 Jan 1998). The Evolution of Cybergenre. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Thirty-First Annual Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences, Big Island of Hawaii.

Shneiderman, B. (1997). Designing Information-Abundant Web Sites: Issues and Recommendations. International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 47(1), 5-29.

Silberg, W. M., Lundberg, G. D., & Musacchio, R. A. (1997). Assessing, controlling, and assuring the quality of medical information on the internet: caveant lector et viewor—let the reader and viewer beware. Journal of the American Medical Association, 277(15), 1244-1245.

Skocpol, T., & Dickert, J. (2001). Speaking for Families and Children in a Changing Civic America. In C. J. De Vita & R. Mosher-Williams (Eds.), Who Speaks for America's Children? The Role of Child Advocates in Public Policy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Smith, S. (2001 Feb). Surfing the Green Web: Communication and 'The Environment' in Online Australia. Media International Australia(98), 51-65.

Soon, M. H. B., Chan, H. C., Chua, B. C., & Loh, K. F. (2001). Critical Success Factors for On-line Course Resources. Computers and Education, 36, 101-20.

Sorg, J. J., & McElhinney, J. H. A. (2000). Case Study Describing Student Experiences of Leaning in a Context of Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication in a Distance Education Environment. ERIC Digest, ED447794.

Spielberg, A. R. (1998). On call and online: sociohistorical, legal, and ethical implications of e-mail for the patient-physician relationship. Journal of the American Medical Association, 280(15), 1353-1359.

Spiller, P., & Lohse, G. L. (1998). A Classification of Internet Retail Stores. International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 2(2), 29-56.

Sproull, L., & Faraj, S. (1997). Atheism, Sex, and Databases: The Net as Social Technology. In S. Kiesler (Ed.), Culture of the Internet (pp. 35-51). Mahwah: Erlbaum.

St.-Pierre, A. (1999 Fall). Using Web Media and Internet Resources to Enhance Teaching in a Military Training Institution - An Empirical Model. Journal of Interactive Instruction Development, 12(2), 15-22.

Stromer-Galley, J. (2000 Autumn). On-Line Interaction and Why Candidates Avoid It. Journal of Communication, 50(4), 111-32.

Sweeney, T. (2000, Oct.). Advertisers Seek More Bang for Their Web Bucks. Informationweek.com.

Swenson, J. (2001). Speech Act Theory, Hypertext Links, and Medical Web Site Credibility. Thesis, Univ. of Minnesota.

Taylor, J. A., & Burt, E. (1999 July). Parliaments on the Web: Learning through Innovation. Parliamentary Affairs, 52(3), 503-17.

Terry, N. P. (1999) cyber-malpractice: legal exposure for cybermedicine. American Journal of Law & Medicine, 25, 327-366.

Tobin, K. (1998). Qualitative Perceptions on Learning Environments on the World Wide Web. Learning Environments Research, 1(2), 139-62.

Tolmie, A., & Boyle, J. (2000). Factors Influencing the Success of CMC (computer-mediated communication) Environments in University Teaching: A Review and Case Study. Computers & Education, 34, 119-40.

Tonn, B. E., Zambrano, P., & Moore, S. (2001 Summer). Community Networks or Networked Communities? Social Science Computer Review, 19(2), 201-12.

TRUSTe. (2000). Model privacy statement. [MS Word]. Available: http://www.truste.org/webpublishers/pub_resourceguide.html [2000, July 17].

Turban, E., & Gehrke, D. (2000). Determinants of E-commerce Websites. Human Systems Management, 19, 111-20.

Turner, R. (1998). Democracy at Work: Non-Profit Use of Internet Technology for Public Policy Purposes. Washington, D.C.: OMB Watch.

Valauskas, E. (1996). Lex Networkia: Understanding the Internet Community. firstmonday, 4.

Vaughan, M. W., & Dillon, A. (1998). The Role of Genre in Shaping Our Understanding of Digital Documents. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 61st ASIS Annual Meeting.

Vaughan, M. W., & Schwartz, N. (1999). Jumpstarting the Information Design for a Community Network. Journal for the American Society of Information Science, 50(7), 588-97.

Virnoche, M. E. (1998). The Seamless Web and Communications Equity: The Shaping of a Community network. Science, Technology and Human Values, 23(2), 199-221.

Volery, T. (2001). Online Education: An Exploratory Study Into Success Factors. Journal of Educational Computing Research, 24(1), 77-92.

Warkentin, C., & Mingst, K. (2000 Apr-June). International Institutions, the State, and Global Civil Society in the Age of the World Wide Web. Global Governance, 6(2), 237-57.

Watters, C. R., & Shepherd, M. (1997). The Digital Broadsheet: An Evolving Genre. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.

Weare, C., Musso, J. A., & Hale, M. L. (1999). Electronic Democracy and the Diffusion of Municipal Webpages in California [USA]. Administration and Society, 31(1), 3-27.

Wellman, B. (1997). An Electronic Group is Virtually a Social Network. In S. Kiesler (Ed.), Culture of the Internet (pp. 179-205). Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Wellman, B., & Gulia, M. (1999). Virtual Communities as Communities. In P. Kollock & M. A. Smith (Eds.), Communities in Cyberspace . New York: Routledge.

Werry, C. (1999). Imagined Electronic Community: Representations of Virtual Community in Contemporary Business Discourse. firstmonday, 4(9).

Westen, T. (1998). Can Technology Save Democracy? National Civic Review, 87(1), 47-56.

Whillock, R. K. (1997 Aug). Cyber-Politics. The Online Strategies of '96. American Behavioral Scientist, 40(8), 1208-25.

Whine, M. (1999 Jul-Sept). Cyberspace: A New Medium for Communication, Command, and Control by Extremists. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 22(3), 231-45.

Winn, W., & Beck, K. (2002 Feb). The Persuasive Power of Design Elements on an E-commerce Web Site: A Case Study. Technical Communication.

Wittig, M. A., & Schmitz, J. (1996). Electronic Grassroots Organizing. <u>Journal of Social Issues,</u> <u>52</u>(1), 53-69.

Wyman, S. K., McClure, C. R., Beachboard, J. B., & Eschenfelder, K. R. (1997). Developing System-Based and User-Based Criteria for Assessing Federal Websites. <u>Proceedings of the</u> <u>ASIS Annual Meeting, 34</u>, 78-88.

Yates, J., & Orlikowski, W. J. (1992). Genres of Organizational Communication: A Structurational Approach to Studying Communication and Media. <u>Academy of Management</u> <u>Review, 17</u>(2), 299-326.

Zappen, J. P., Gurak, L. J., & Doheny-Farina, S. (1997). Rhetoric, Community, and Cyberspace. <u>Rhetoric Review, 15</u>(2), 400-19.

Zelwietro, J. (1998). The Politicization of Environmental Organizations through the Internet. <u>Information Society, 14</u>, 45-56.

Zhang, P., & Dran, G. M. v. (2000). Satisfiers and Dissatisfiers: A Two-Factor Model for Website Design and Evaluation. <u>Journal of the American Society of Information Science,</u> <u>51</u>(14), 1253-68.