<NetAction>

The Virtual Activist 2.0

A Training Course
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This guide is also available to be downloaded in the following formats: [ASCII (text only)](#), and [the entire guide as one file](#) (about 160k). This document last modified .

NetAction's Quick Reference Checklists

Download and print these checklists for quick reference or distribution as workshop handouts.

- [Is Your Action Alert Ready to Circulate in Cyberspace?](#) (also in [Word](#) and [PDF](#))
- [How To Create A "Bcc" Email List](#) (also in [Word](#) and [PDF](#))
- [Tips for Effective Online Media](#) (also in [Word](#) and [PDF](#))

A Note About Using This Site

This training course includes links to many other sites, which we are using to provide you with examples of how the Internet is being used for activism. We recommend that you BOOKMARK THIS PAGE now so that you can return to it easily as you make your way through the curriculum. Or, if you prefer, you can use the BACK button to return to the site after leaving it to view one of the examples we have linked to it.

We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. Feel free to contact us at info@netaction.org .

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Many thanks go to [Michael Stein](), Judi Clark, Theresa Chen, Jasmine Li, Josh Dimon, Jennifer Kanouse, and Jill Herschman for their help compiling this information.

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The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

Part 1: Introduction

The Internet is a powerful tool that allows us to expand our networks by identifying and communicating with like-minded people anywhere in the world. It enables us to disseminate information widely, cheaply, and instantaneously. Although you'll need some special skills to build and maintain a Web site, email is easily mastered even if you have little or no technical expertise. If you can read and write and your computer has a modem, you can be a Virtual Activist!

With its blinking graphics, streaming video, and interactive capabilities, the Web gets a lot more attention than plain old text-based email. But don't let email's simplicity fool you. For activists and nonprofit organizations engaged in advocacy, email is the tool of choice.

In this virtual classroom, NetAction will teach you how to use email and the Web as effective, inexpensive, and efficient tools for organizing, outreach, and advocacy.

The Big Picture

There are currently more than 100 million Americans using the Internet, and that number is expected to continue to grow. A recent study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 35 percent of U.S. citizens currently use the Internet to inform themselves on politics, and this number is also increasing. Advocacy organizations working to influence public policy will increasingly need to incorporate the Internet into their outreach and organizing efforts.

The Pew report is on the Web at: http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=22.

Technology is a tool that can be used strategically to enhance grassroots organizing and outreach efforts related to political campaigns and public policy issues. It is most effective as a supplement to -- not a substitute for -- traditional organizing and outreach techniques. So don't stop organizing rallies, house parties and press conferences, keep making those phone calls, and continue building your membership through direct mail and/or telemarketing.

What do you need to get started with Internet advocacy? Surprisingly little. You'll need a computer, of course, but don't worry if it doesn't have all the latest bells and whistles. Internet access and email software are all you really need. Even a Web site isn't absolutely necessary, although having one is certainly a good idea.

Suppose your organization wants to publicize a recent legislative breakthrough that drastically affects a current campaign on which your organization is working. Choosing from traditional organizing and outreach techniques, you may choose to hold a press conference or issue a press release to alert the media. You may also want to write an article for your organization's quarterly newsletter and prepare a list of talking points to distribute to staff members and volunteers who will be contacting the media.

But you can also use the Internet, your Web site, email lists and news groups in your advocacy campaign. For example, email would be a faster and cheaper way to mobilize volunteers. And posting information to your Web site will allow you to reach more potential supporters at no additional cost. Before we discuss the use of email and Web-based tools in detail, let's look at these tools in perspective.

Active and passive tools

It is important to understand the difference between active and passive techniques for communicating electronically. The Internet is a global network of computers that communicate with each other over another network -- the telecommunications system. Computers use the Internet to "talk" to each other in much the same way people use the telephone network to talk to each other.

Although many people think of the Web as the Internet, the Web is actually just one part of it. Web sites are simply documents that are

housed on a specific computer. When you visit a particular Web site -- such as [NetAction's](#) -- your computer is using the telephone network to communicate electronically with the computer where the document named [www.netaction.org](#) is located.

Email is more like a telephone call. When you send an email message to your sister, the network of computers that make up the Internet carries your electronic "words" from your computer to your sister's computer in much the same way that the network of telephone wires carries your voice from your telephone to your sister's telephone.

Email is much more widely used than the Web, and is a far more effective tool for outreach. When you send email, whether it is a private message to one individual or an electronic newsletter to a list with hundreds of subscribers, you are "pushing" information to other Internet users. Your message gets delivered to the in-boxes of everyone you send it to. You can't be certain that everyone who receives it will read it, of course, but in a later lesson we will discuss strategies to increase the likelihood that your message will be read and acted upon.

In contrast, when you create a Web site, you are placing a document on one computer and giving it a unique "address." People who know the address can visit it, but the actual document stays on that one computer.

So email is an "active" way to communicate your message. Web pages, on the other hand, are passive. People who visit your Web site will only see information that you post on your Web site. If you think of the Internet as an "information superhighway," email is the package that gets transported by truck to the recipient's home, while Web sites are the billboards you pass when you're driving down the highway (as depicted in this graphic used with the permission of [CARAL](#)).

Now that it's clearer how active and passive tools work differently, can you name some of the active tools that an advocacy group could use on a particular campaign? And how might the more passive Web tools be used?

Maxiumum impact

Email is by far the most effective online advocacy tool because it is active, immediate, and widely used. But the effectiveness of email outreach can often be enhanced when email and Web-based tools are used together. For example, the Program Committee for the annual Computers, Freedom and Privacy conference (CPF 2001) distributed an email Call for Proposals that stated:

```
Proposals should be submitted no later than January 5, 2001, via the CFP2001
website at http://www.cfp2001.org.
```

Note that the alert includes a hyperlink to the CFP 2001 Web site. A **hyperlink** is text that contains a link to another document that is displayed when the reader clicks on it. This is a technique that is used frequently by activists and advocacy organizations to integrate email and Web- based advocacy tools. To see how it works, click on the hyperlink in the above action alert. (When you've done that, use the "Back" button in your Web browser to return to this page.)

You can even embed hyperlinks into your email. Just type in the full web address (URL), including the `http://`. Most common email programs, such as Eudora Mail, Microsoft Outlook, and even Hotmail, recognize text starting with `http://` as hyperlinks, and will automatically encode them for you. If you wanted to send an email with a hyperlink to NetAction, just type into your email,

```
Subject: Visit this great website!

Dear friends,

Please visit NetAction, at http://www.netaction.org/.
```

After typing in the above text, programs such as Eudora, Outlook, and Netscape Messenger will automatically underline and change the color of the web address to blue. These changes to the text notifies you that the text will be "clickable" for the recipients.

Can you think of some ways that your organization could make use of "clickable" email, and link email messages and Web-based tools? You'll find plenty of examples in Part 2A.

Suggested reading: "How the Internet is Reshaping the Rules for Policy Campaigns" at: http://www.delaneypolicy.com/publications/html/campaigns.htm.

Next: Part 2A: Using Email for Outreach, Organizing, and Advocacy -- The Fundamentals

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Part 2A: Using Email for Outreach, Organizing, and Advocacy -- The Fundamentals

When should you use the Internet as part of your organizing and advocacy work? When you need an immediate response, want to contact a lot of people as quickly as possible, and don't have a lot of money to spend on printing and postage. Virtually all of the written materials that your organization produces can be adapted for electronic distribution via email, the Web, or both. If you're not already using email as part of your advocacy work, here are some tips to help you get started.

- Collect email addresses from your members, supporters and volunteers, the media, your contacts in legislative offices, your funders and anyone else you communicate with regularly. Include a space for email addresses in your membership sign-up forms, newsletter subscription forms, and fundraising reply cards.
- If your organization publishes a newsletter, offer your members the option of receiving it electronically. Encourage them to switch by reminding them that your organization will save money.
- Train your staff, board and volunteers to regularly collect email addresses from colleagues, friends and supporters and feed those into the email newsletter list. Nominate one month as "Email Collection Month" and do an all-out push to increase your lists.
- If your organization has a Web site where visitors can sign up to volunteer, to subscribe to a newsletter or action alert, or to donate money, be sure to ask for an email address as well as other contact information.
- If your organization has a table at a conference, rally, or other event, include space for an email address on your sign-up sheet.
- If you distribute press releases to the media, start sending them by email instead of fax. (Also, be sure to add online media outlets to your distribution list.)
- Use email to communicate with staff consultants in legislative offices. (But not with lawmakers, for reasons we'll explain later.)
- Establish and promote an email action alert list, using the tools we discuss in this Virtual Activist training.

Although our focus in this lesson is on email activism, once you get started you'll discover that there are many other ways in which technology can enhance your organization's communications. Many people prefer to receive information electronically because it reduces the amount of paper they accumulate. (See Tips for Effective Online Media for more on using email for public relations and media advocacy.)

Suppose you wanted to design an Internet outreach effort to supplement your traditional techniques. To get the word out, your organization has planned a press conference and written a press release. You have plans to write an article for your newsletter, and you are actively preparing a list of talking points for staff and volunteers to use in communicating with the media. What Internet tools can you use to enhance the effectiveness of your effort? You can publish a copy of your press release on your Web site, distribute an email version of your newsletter, and/or post an electronic copy of the newsletter on your Web site.

Elements of email advocacy

Think of email advocacy as an extension of your grassroots organizing efforts. Email action alerts are typically used for strategic purposes in conjunction with issue campaigns that have clearly defined goals. Let's take a look at a real action alert that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a national nonprofit constitutional liberties advocacy organization, sent out:

```
Subject: ACLU Action List: Defend the Rights of People with Disabilities!

Defend the Rights of People with Disabilities: Ironically enough, on the ten-
year anniversary of the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the
House of Representatives is considering legislation proposed by Rep. Mark Foley
(R-FL) that would circumvent the goal and meaning of the ADA.

Entitled the "ADA Notification Act" (HR 3590), this legislation would sanction
individuals who did not first notify a business of an ADA violation and then
```

wait three months before filing a lawsuit. Supporters of this bill claim that it would ensure that businesses are given adequate notice, ignoring the fact that the ADA has been in effect for ten years.

The U.S. Justice department provides ample information and training for businesses to make sure that they are in compliance, including a toll-free ADA information line that handles more than 100,000 calls a year. There is no need for to provide businesses more time to discriminate against people with disabilities.

Take Action! You can read more about this legislation and send a FREE FAX to your Representative from our action alert at: http://www.aclu.org/action/ada106.html

```
-----------------------------------------------------------------
ONLINE RESOURCES FROM THE ACLU NATIONAL OFFICE
-----------------------------------------------------------------
ACLU Freedom Network Web Page: http://www.aclu.org
America Online: keyword ACLU
-----------------------------------------------------------------
ACLU Newsfeed
American Civil Liberties Union National Office
125 Broad Street
New York, New York 10004
-----------------------------------------------------------------
```

In sending out this message, the ACLU achieved its goal of reaching out to gear up opposition to the ADA Notification Act. The action alert also served the secondary purpose of publicizing the ACLU's website and contact information.

Let's see how another organization uses email action alerts. This alert comes from CARAL (California Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League):

Subject: CARAL email action list

Dear Friends,

As the November election quickly approaches, it becomes more and more urgent for CARAL to reach as many pro-choice individuals as possible with information about key reproductive rights information.

We need your help!

Please COPY the message below, paste it into an email message, and send it to all your pro-choice friends, family and colleagues. Feel free to add or change anything to the message to personalize it. (Please be sure to list them in the "bcc" field when you are addressing your email message!)

And if you are not on the CARAL action alert list yourself, please use the handy link below to sign up today.

Thank you for your help protecting reproductive rights.

Yours for Choice

****
Dear Friends,

As you know, protecting women's reproductive rights is very important to me. And with the upcoming elections, I believe that it's more important than ever

```
        for pro-choice individuals like us to be informed and able to take action.


        I am a member of the CARAL email action alert list, and I want to ask you to
        join this list too. You will get email updates with essential information and
        quick, easy action items that you can take to protect and promote Choice.


        All you have to do is click on this link: mailto:samplenonprofit.org?
        Subject=PutMeOnYourMailingList


        Please do this today!

        Thank you.
```

This is an excellent example of how email can be used strategically to build your organization's base of support. The message is short and simple: CARAL needs to reach more pro-choice voters before the election. The requested action is easy to accomplish: copy the message, paste it into an email message form, and send it to everyone you know who shares your pro-choice sentiments. CARAL also makes it as easy as possible for your friends and colleagues to subscribe to the action alert list by including a "mailto" hyperlink. We'll discuss "mailto" hyperlinks in more detail later.

Preparing an email action alert

Before the Internet was widely used, activists and advocacy organizations distributed action alerts by mail and fax. Preparing an email action alert is similar. But since email has the potential to reach a significantly larger audience, there are some special considerations. NetAction has prepared a simple checklist to help you determine if your action alert is ready to circulate in cyberspace:

- **Will readers know who sent the action alert?** It's important to clearly identify your organization as the source of the action alert. (If you're sending out an alert as an individual, you'll need to identify yourself.)
- **Will readers know how to contact your organization?** Always include your organization's email address, postal address, Web site address, phone number and fax number in action alerts. (Or your personal contact information if you're distributing an alert as an individual.) Although not essential, it is helpful to include the name, title and phone number of someone in your organization who can be contacted if readers have questions.
- **Will readers want to open the message?** The subject line can determine whether someone opens and reads your message, or deletes it unread. Make the subject line compelling or provocative -- and never send an action alert with a blank subject line.
- **Will readers know if the action alert is timely?** Always include the date that your action alert is distributed and the date by which action is requested. (And don't forget the year!) Outdated action alerts can circulate online for years, and many do because the preparer failed to include a date.
- **Will readers understand why action is important?** Include clear, concise background information and the key point(s) to communicate. Keep layout simple, use ascii text, avoid jargon, use short paragraphs, section headings, bullets and simple formatting to mark the start and end of the alert. Don't assume the reader will be familiar with the issue. Include hyperlink pointers to Web sites where additional background information can be found.
- **Will readers know what action to take?** Be specific about how the reader can help. Include the postal address or phone number if you are asking readers to write letters or make phone calls. Include a hyperlink pointer to online information to help readers locate their elected representatives.

  NOTE: There are many online resources to locate elected officials. Project Vote Smart is one of the most comprehensive. In addition to elected representatives at the local, state and national level, the site tracks the candidates in thousands of races.
- **Are you sure of the facts?** Electronic action alerts can literally go around the world in minutes. Since you won't know exactly who sees your alert, factual errors aren't easily corrected. Make sure the information is correct before you hit the "send" key. If you're drafting an alert in response to information provided to your organization, make sure it's from a trusted source, or can be verified by a trusted source, before sending it out. If you're forwarding information from another organization, contact the organization to verify that they sent it before forwarding it to others.

  NOTE: Almost everyone has received an outdated or fake alert at one time or another, often from a well-meaning friend or colleague. Unless you are absolutely sure it's accurate, don't forward an alert. If you suspect an alert isn't real, check one of the sites that monitors Internet hoaxes, http://www.nonprofit.net/hoax/default.htm, or http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org/HBUrbanMyths. shtml.

- **Are you building your base of support?** Always include information on how readers can subscribe to or unsubscribe from your action alert list. It's also a good idea to include information on how to join your organization.

There are some excellent online resources that provide more detailed information about how to prepare an action alert. See "Writing Effective Action Alerts by OneNorthWest for a brief, 10-step guide, and "Designing Effective Action Alerts for the Internet" by Phil Agre of UCLA's Department of Information Sciences.

Prof. Agre is also the author of "Against Chain-Letter Petitions on the Internet," which discusses the problems with email petitions and sign-on letters circulated by email. Email petitions and sign-on letters have proven to be problematic, and should be avoided.

Distributing an email action alert

When your action alert is ready, you'll be distributing it to the people who subscribed to your alert list. (We will review the tools that you can use to set up your action alert list later.) But your organization's subscriber list isn't your only option. There are thousands of email discussion lists and news groups on the Internet.

When you post the same action alert to several discussion lists or news groups, it's called cross-posting. This can be a very effective way to expand the universe of Internet users who receive your alert. But be careful to target only appropriate lists. If you plan to cross-post your action alerts, you'll have to identify and subscribe to the lists and news groups ahead of time to become familiar with the topics they address.

See What is Usenet, The USENET FAQ, and Another View for a more detailed discussion of newsgroups.

How do you identify the news groups and discussion lists that might be appropriate places to cross-post your action alert? One way is to ask your own subscribers, as well as your friends and colleagues, for suggestions. Or you can locate appropriate lists by surfing other organizations' Web sites to see if they have lists focused on similar issues. For example, if your organization is concerned with welfare issues, you might try posting your alert to news groups that deal with poverty and homelessness. There are also search tools available for a more systematic approach. For email discussion lists try the Liszt directory of mailing lists at http://www.liszt.com. For news groups try http://www.dejanews.com/. It's also possible to search the commercial list service Web sites, like Topica http://www.topica.com.

CAUTION: Take care to understand fully the topic and the "environment" of a news group. It's a bad idea under any circumstances to post your alert to a news group you haven't been reading, or an email list you aren't already subscribed to. You need to be familiar with the news group or list to make sure that your action alert is appropriate to post. Otherwise, it could be considered spam (an Internet term for unsolicited junk email) and result in complaints from other subscribers to the list owner, or to your ISP.

There may also be complaints if you post your email action alert to several lists with overlapping subscribers, since people might wind up with three or four copies of the same action alert. If you get a lot of complaints from people who receive multiple copies, reduce the number of lists and news groups that you cross-post to.

There is no hard and fast rule about how often an organization should distribute action alerts. Send them out when there is a specific action you want people to take, such as writing to Congress or attending a rally. Try not to send them more frequently than once a week, but don't feel obligated to send them every week if there isn't anything you want people to do, and don't avoid sending more than one per week if the requested action is timely. If the need for action is infrequent, consider sending an update on the issue once a month just to keep the list active.

Forwarding an email action alert

Along with distributing your own action alerts, you may want to forward alerts written and circulated by other activists or organizations. When you do, delete any unnecessary information, such as address lists in the header, and eliminate the quote marks that indicate the message has been forwarded. To avoid inserting new quote marks when you forward the message, copy and paste the text into a new email message form, or create a copy with the "Send Again" options rather than using the "Forward" option in your software.

Do's and Don'ts

The key to success in distributing email action alerts is as much in knowing what NOT to do as in knowing what to do. Here is NetAction's quick reference list of Do's and Don'ts for email action alerts:

DO:

- Keep the text short and focused.

- Make the subject line compelling or provocative.
- Include all your contact information: phone, address, fax, email, URL.
- Include phone, fax and/or postal addresses of targeted decision-makers.
- Post only to relevant discussion lists and news groups.
- Use ascii-friendly symbols to break up text (i.e. # or ^ or =).
- Test your alert before distributing it by sending it to yourself.

DON'TS:

- Ask people to send email to elected officials.
- Spam individuals or lists.
- Use wide margins.
- Post to discussion lists or news groups on unrelated issues.
- Leave the subject line blank.

NOTE: NetAction is frequently asked why we recommend not sending email to decision makers. At this time, email is not an effective way to communicate with most decision makers because few of them read it and they have no way of knowing whether the messages they receive are from constituents. It's more effective to phone or write a letter and either mail it or fax it.

Cyberspace Networking

Because of the borderless nature of the Internet, it can be a powerful tool for networking. Organizations with similar concerns can form coalitions and alliances that literally span the globe. The following sites are sponsored by coalitions that developed as a result of cyberspace networking.

Forming Cyberspace coalitions:

Example: Coalition for Networked Information http://www.cni.org/

Example: Global Internet Liberty Campaign http://www.gilc.org/

Example: People's Global Action http://www.agp.org/agp/index.html

Example: Internet Free Expression Alliance http://www.ifea.net/

Example: Internet Democracy Project http://www.internetdemocracyproject.org/

Intranets and electronic networks

Intranets and electronic networks are common in workplaces. They enable a specific group of computer users to communicate online, but they are not part of the larger Internet. America Online is an example of a commercial intranet. If you subscribe to AOL, you have access to a variety of forums, discussion groups, and online services that are not accessible to the general public. Non-profit organizations and grassroots groups can also set up these types of networks.

Example: Institute for Global Communications Internet http://www.igc.org/igc/gateway/index.html

See IDM Intranet FAQ

Collaborative Discussion Tools

The hotword of the day is "community" -- everyone wants to build or be part of an online "community." Non-profits are their own community with common interests: fundraising, advocacy, membership, and others. Your membership is another community, and your organization is representing and addressing their interests. We have seen many ways (above) to reach out to your members. However, some organizations want to be a little more interactive.

There are two forms of interactivity: immediate, no archives, often referred to as chat or chat rooms, and nearly-immediate, sometimes archived for later reference and participation, often called Web forums, bulletin boards, or online conferences.

Example: E-groups (a commercial service--check their privacy policy!) http://www.egroups.com/

Chat and IRC

Chat is a form of communication which allows immediate interaction on the Internet. The earliest form was Internet Relay Chat (IRC), a text-based communications network. Now, there are newer Internet technologies which make it possible for a group of people to meet and converse online. With chat technology, all conversations take place in *real time.* That's why IRC has been used extensively for live coverage of world events, news, sports commentary, etc. For activists, it can be a useful tool for convening online meetings, debates, conferences, and town halls.

As a communication tool, chat is somewhere between a personal phone call and an announcement over the radio. Yahoo's Chat Help file has some useful tips for using chat appropriately.

> *Example:* TalkCity (also commercial, uses java software) http://www.talkcity.com/

Instant Messaging

Another collaborative tool, which is growing in popularity, is instant messaging. Instant messaging applications require users to select their friends, so activists can use them to identify colleagues they might want to be in contact with when both are online at the same time. In addition to sending instant text messages, some services make it possible for activists to send files and pictures instantly, and to conduct audio and/or video conferences. Users should be aware that not all instant messanging services are inter-operable. For example, if you are using Yahoo's messenger, you will not be able to send instant messages to someone using AOL's instant messanger. Hopefully, this won't always be the case.

Examples of instant messaging services include Yahoo's Messenger, AOL's Instant Messenger, and ICQ (I Seek You). See how ICQ works at: http://www.icq.com/icqtour/quicktour.html

> *Example:* Yahoo's Messanger http://messenger.yahoo.com/

Next: Part 2B: Using Email for Outreach, Organizing, and Advocacy -- Mailing Lists

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The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

Part 2B: Using Email for Outreach, Organizing, and Advocacy -- Mailing Lists

Creating your email list

Email is a simple yet powerful tool that your organization can use to communicate with your supporters. It is fast, effective and highly affordable. You may already be in the habit of sending individual, personally composed email messages as part of the normal course of daily business. This discussion is about email lists, the practice of collecting large numbers of email addresses and storing them in a software program so that you can send electronic "mass mailings" to your supporters.

We're going to begin by reviewing the features available in the email software you are already using to send and receive individual messages, the email list services that are available through commercial Web sites, and the mailing list software that you can install and use in-house if your organization maintains its own "server." (A "server" is a computer that is connected to the Internet and used to host one or more Web sites.) We will also be reviewing the different ways you can set up and use **email lists** to communicate with your members, supporters, volunteers, and the media.
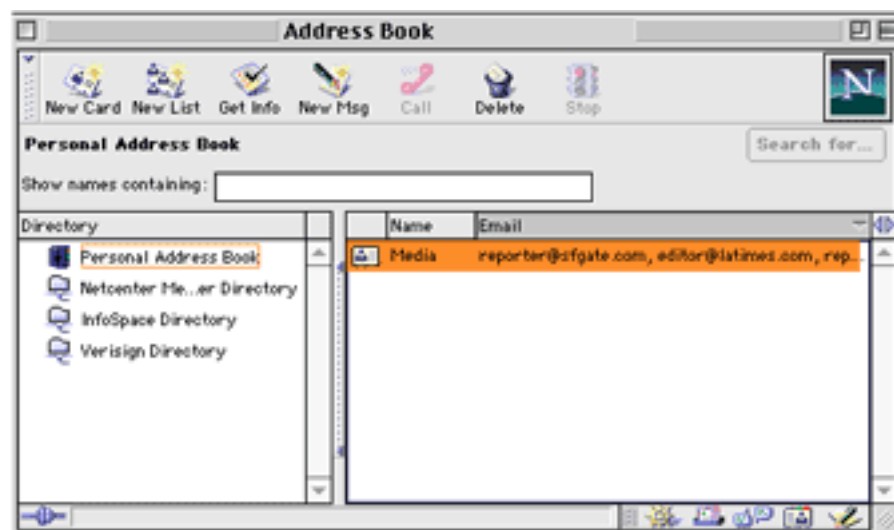
Using your regular email software

The simplest way to create and use email lists is to do it in-house using your regular email software. The most common products you might use are Qualcomm's Eudora, Microsoft Outlook, or Netscape Mail. This option is a good choice if your list has no more than a couple of hundred subscribers at most.

There are two common ways you send email with Eudora, Outlook, and other consumer software products. One is a personal note, addressed to an individual or to a small group of people. When you send an individual message, you type the recipient's email address in the "To" field, and you might also type a second recipient's address in the "Cc" field.

The other way -- which is useful for email activism -- is to use the address book feature in your email software program. This is a very useful tool for individual activists and for organizations in which the staff has little technical expertise. All email software programs have a feature that lets you set up an address book, and most will let you store hundreds or even thousands of names in the address book. Many people use this function to store the individual email address of friends and acquaintances. But it is also possible to use this function to create a simple announcement-only mailing list, which you can then use to distribute messages to a large number of people.

For example, if your organization periodically sends out press releases, you can set up a personalized address book, labeled "Media," that includes a list of the email addresses of all the reporters you know who are interested in the issues your organization is working on. Using the address book feature makes it possible to send the press release to all of the reporters at once, rather than emailing the message individually to each reporter. (See the example below.)

If you plan to use your address book to create an email list, you will need to know how to send email without disclosing the recipients' addresses. So if you haven't already been introduced to the "Bcc" field, it's time to get acquainted. ("Bcc" is an acronym for "blind carbon copy." Along with "Cc" for "carbon copy" the term has its origins in the days when typists made copies of documents by placing carbon-coated paper between sheets of regular paper before typing.)

At the top of every email message, you'll (usually) see a header with these fields:

```
======================================================================
To:
From:
Subject:
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachment
======================================================================
```

NOTE: In some email software, "Bcc" is not included in the default setting of the header display. In some versions of AOL's software, for example, you will have to open the address book and select "Blind Copy." If you don't see it, check the "Help" file or the User Manual that came with the software, or contact the company's support service by phone or email.

To send a press release to your "Media" address book, type "Media" in the "Bcc" field of the message header and put your own email address in the "To" field. That way, all of the reporters will receive the message, but only your email address will be disclosed. (And you'll get a copy of whatever you send, since your address will be in the "To" field.)

CAUTION: ALWAYS use the "Bcc" field if you are creating an email list in your address book. If you type the address book's name in the "To" or "Cc" field, all of the addresses will appear in the "To" field when the message is sent! There are two problems with this. First, some people prefer not to disclose their email address, and if the list has a lot of addresses the header will be long. This is annoying to some people because they have to scroll through screens full of addresses before they see the message.

Do you like seeing something like the following when you open an email message?

```
======================================================================
From: "Jane Doe" <janedoe@hotmail.com >
To: James King <JKing@msn.com >, Alan Williams <awilliams@sirius.com >,
Dave Garrison <DG@aol.com >, "Jennifer Reilly" <Reilly@Reilly.com >,
"George Kelly" <Gkelly@pacbell.net >, "Thomas Jones" <tj54@aol.com >,
Gina Rogers <GinaR@uswest.com >, Dan Stevens <dans@yahoo.com >,
Vincent Davis <vince@att.net >, Ron Butler <ronbutler@dnai.com >,
"Marc Smith" <marc_smith@earthlink.net >, Tony Altura
<tonya@food.org >, "Jeffrey Carr" <carr867@aol.com >,
"Michael Milton" <mmilton@ucla.edu >,
Peter Boyd <pboyd@mindspring.com >, "Susan Smith" <ss@home.com >
======================================================================
```

In contrast, here's what you'll see when you use the "Bcc" field to distribute a long list of names:

```
======================================================================
Date: Mon, 11 Sep 2000 09:07:38 -0700
To: audrie@netaction.org
From: Audrie Krause akrause@netaction.org
Subject: NetAction Urges Consumer Protection For Software Buyers
======================================================================
```

Most Web email services, like YahooMail and HotMail, also offer address books as part of their free service. These can also be used to store large numbers of email addresses. If you use a Web email service, be sure to check if there is a limit to the number of email addresses that can be stored in the address book.

NOTE: NetAction uses and recommends Eudora. It's easy to use, less vulnerable to virus attacks than Microsoft Outlook, and can be downloaded for free from Eudora's Web site.

Another important issue to deal with is backing up the email addresses that you have stored in your address book. A fatal crash of your computer's hard drive could wipe out months or years of collected addresses, so be sure to back up these names. If your organization has a network administrator, make arrangements to have this information backed up regularly. If not, copy the address book onto a floppy or zip disk regularly, or buy and use a commercial backup software product, such as Retrospect Express by Dantz. If you are using a Web email service, learn how to back up your data, also.

Other email list software options

There are also some email list software products and services specifically for managing mailing lists. The two main types that you might use are Web-based Application Service Provider (ASP) services, and commercial list software for mail servers. These options are useful for lists with hundreds or thousands of names. Another alternative is eBase software, which we discuss in Part 4.

Application Service Providers (ASP)

ASPs are commercial Internet companies that offer email list services over the Web, usually at no cost to the user. Application Service Providers that you might be familiar with are Topica, eGroups. _____

These services let you to set up an email list without having to install special list software, which we will discuss in the next section. The advantage of ASPs is that they automatically handle all the subscribing and unsubscribing for you. That means people will be able to join and leave the list without extra work on your part. This is particularly useful if you aren't going to individually review and approve every new subscriber.

ASPs may be a good choice for individual activists who want to set up email discussion lists, and for organizations in which a staff with limited technical expertise needs to manage multiple or large lists. You don't need much technical experience to manage lists that are set up through these services, you have more choices about how the list works, and you have access to technical support if you need it.

Another advantage of these services is that they automatically store all the messages on a Web site. (This is called an archive.) An archive is useful if you want to have a record of everything that has ever been posted to the list. You might want such a record so that new subscribers can read messages posted before they joined the list, or so that people can read the messages without having to subscribe to the list.

But there are also some important disadvantages to consider. Under the user agreements, if you use their services the ASPs will own your lists, any of your work that's posted to your lists, and the content of your list archive. This gives the ASP the right to do anything it wants with this information.

Also, because these services are free, the companies that offer them add a small advertisement header or footer to each message, similar to the ones you see if you get email from someone who uses YahooMail or HotMail for Internet service. While some people would rather not use a service with advertising, others consider it a reasonable price to pay for a free service. Here is an example of the type of advertisement you would see if you subscribed to an email list operated by Topica:

```
======================================================================
_____
T O P I C A The Email You Want. http://www.topica.com/t/16
Newsletters, Tips and Discussions on Your Favorite Topics
======================================================================
```

Another downside of using one of these services is that you can't customize the list with your organization's domain name to indicate that the message was sent by your organization. (A domain name is what appears after the "www" on a Web site address. For example, "sierra.org" is the domain name of The Sierra Club.) Messages sent through an ASP list might have a header that looks like this:

```
======================================================================
From: johndoe@yahoo.com
Subject: Support H.R. 2502!
Date: Wed, 5 Jul 2000 20:09:32 EDT
BestServHost: lists.best.com
Sender: actionalert-errors@lists.best.com
Reply-To: johndoe@yahoo.com
To: actionalert@lists.best.com
```

```
================================================================
```

When you customize the list name to match your organization's domain name, the message will have a header that identifies your organization by its domain name. So it might look something like this:

```
================================================================
Date: Wed, 5 Jul 2000 01:06:27 -0600 (MDT)
From: Audrie Krause akrause@nataction.org
Subject: NetAction Notes No. 58
Sender: netaction-owner@netaction.org
Reply-To: audrie@netaction.org
================================================================
```

If you are thinking of using a service like Topica, eGroups or ListBot, you'll need to weigh the advantages against the disadvantages. If you decide to go ahead, be sure to ask how you can keep a backup of your email subscriber list. Like the database of your members' addresses and phone numbers, your email subscriber list is a valuable asset.

Commercial in-house email list software

Another way to set up a list is to install commercial list software on your organization's "server" computer. Some of these commercial products are free, and others have to be purchased. Commercial list software is not very user-friendly. So this is only a good option if your organization runs its own in-house mail server, has a dedicated high bandwidth Internet connection, and employs a network administrator.

Three common software packages for handling email lists are:

- Listserv
- Majordomo
- Lyris

All three offer free versions of their software package, though more advanced features require purchasing a license.

NOTE: NetAction uses and recommends Majordomo list software if your organization has the hardware and technical expertise to operate it. Once the software has been installed and configured the way you want it -- which is the part that requires technical expertise -- anyone with basic computer skills can easily manage the list. Also, the process by which people subscribe or unsubscribe is simple enough that most people don't need help from the list manager.

Techniques for using email lists

If you use a Web-based list service or a commercial list software product, you'll have some decisions to make about how the list will operate. In the following section, we will be reviewing several techniques to set up and use email lists so they serve your organization's needs.

Annoucement-only email lists

This configuration provides one-way communication from the list owner to the list subscribers. This configuration is good for distributing electronic newsletters, action alerts, and other information quickly, cheaply and easily to a large number of people. When you configure a list for announcements only, you need a password in order to post messages. Since you determine who knows the password, you determine who can post messages to the list. You can limit posting privileges to one individual, or several people in your organization.

If you set up your own list using the address book and "Bcc" features in your regular email software, you are in effect creating an announcement-only list. That's because you will be the only person with access to the list and the ability to post to it, and your address is the only address that recipients can reply to since the others won't be visible.

The main advantage of an announcement-only list is that the owner has complete control of the content and the frequency of postings. This makes it a good choice if you want to distribute electronic action alerts, press releases, or newsletters. The main disadvantage is that subscribers cannot just hit "reply" to comment to the whole list about something that was posted.

If you're using commercial list software, you can configure the list so that readers can't reply at all, or so that replies go back to the list's owner. One way to be certain that any replies get back to you is to include a "mailto" hyperlink in the text so that readers who want to

comment can do so without having to open a message form. A "mailto" hyperlink automatically opens a message form. Double click on the link below to see how it works, then delete the form to return to this lesson.

```
=================================================================
mailto:somebody@yourorganization.org
=================================================================
```

Creating a "mailto" hyperlink is very easy. All you have to do is type: mailto: followed (without any spaces) by the email address you want to link to. For practice, type a "mailto" using your own email address, then click on it to open a message form addressed to yourself. Type "testing" in the subject line, and "hello" in the message field, and send it off. The next time you check your email, you'll find a message from yourself with "testing" as the subject line.

Whether or not you use a "mailto" hyperlink, it is always a good idea to include the email address that readers can write to when you send out an action alert, press release, or other information to an email list.

Moderated email lists

A moderated email list allows for controlled two-way communication. Anyone who subscribes to a moderated list can post a message to the list, but the message is routed to the list owner, who gets to decide whether or not to post it. This gives the list owner nearly as much control over the content as the owner of an announcement-only list.

You can also set up a moderated discussion list by using the address book and "Bcc" features in your regular email software. You set it up exactly as you would an announcement-only list (using the "bcc" field). But when you send something out you include a brief note informing readers that their comments are welcome. Any replies are automatically directed to you since you sent the message. To distribute replies that you approve, simply copy and paste the reply text into a new email form and send out another email to the list you created with your address book and "Bcc" field.

The main advantage of a moderated list is that the moderator can make sure that comments from readers are relevant to the purpose of the list. The main disadvantage is that you'll have to read every reply you get from list subscribers in order to decide whether or not to post them. This can be time-consuming if the list is very active. Also, if you decide not to post someone's comment you may take some heat from the subscriber whose post is rejected. You can minimize such criticism by having a clearly articulated statement describing the purpose of the list.

Unmoderated email lists

An unmoderated list allows for open communication among all subscribers. Anyone who subscribes to an unmoderated list can post a message to the list for everyone else to see. This configuration gives your subscribers the most freedom to communicate. But it also gives you as the list owner the least amount of control over the content.

The main advantage of an unmoderated list is low maintenance for the list owner. If subscription is automatic, rather than by approval, you will be able to manage the list with minimal effort. The main disadvantage, of course, is that you'll have almost no control over the content. This list configuration is the most likely to be abused by subscribers -- and also by spammers -- since there is no way to stop someone from posting anything they want to the list.

You can exercise some control over an unmoderated list by requiring that all subscriptions be approved by the owner. This will allow you to screen out spammers, and also to remove a subscriber who becomes disruptive or impolite. With the exception of spammers, however, you should be cautious about removing subscribers because of concerns about the content of their posts. If the removal of a subscriber is perceived as censorship, it may generate more complaints than it resolves.

Open subscription process (anyone can participate)

An open subscription list allows anyone who is interested to subscribe. You won't have to approve any new subscribers. If you are configuring an "announcement only" list or a "moderated" list, as described above, you may want an open subscription process to avoid having to approve each new subscriber. Since you will control everything that gets posted, you won't have to worry about spammers sending junk email to your list. If you are configuring an "unmoderated" list, and have an open subscription, you are very likely to get spammers subscribing and then spamming the list with junk email.

Membership-only lists (subscription approval, password-protected Web sites)

When you set up a list to require subscription approval, all subscription requests are forwarded to you, or whoever you've designated as the list owner. If you want to allow the subscription, you'll reply to the message with the list password. If you don't want to allow it, you won't need to do anything.

If you set up a list with your own email software, you are in fact setting up a list that requires approval since you're the only one who can add new email addresses to your address book.

How should your organization operate its mailing list? Should it be announcement-only? Is a moderator necessary? What subscription process would be better? Consider your organization's needs and goals before deciding.

Signature files

A signature file (also known as sig or dot-sig file) at the end of an email message is an excellent way to provide contact information. If you include a complete URL, the signature file will also serve as a hyperlink to your Web site. Here is an example of a very basic signature file:

```
================================================================
<<NetAction>>
Audrie Krause, Executive Director
E-MAIL: audrie@netaction.org
P.O. Box 6739
Santa Barbara, CA 93160
TELEPHONE: (415) 215-9392 FAX: (805) 681-0941
* * * WEB: http://www.netaction.org * * *

*******************************
================================================================
```

It's also possible to include a sentence or two in the signature file that promotes an event or action that your organization is involved in. Here is an example of a signature file that contains a message:

```
================================================================
THE SUITCASE CLINIC
A student-run non-profit organization providing free services
for the homeless and low-income communities.

570 University Hall, Berkeley, CA 94704
(510) 643-6786

website: http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~suitcase/
e-mail: suitcase@socrates.berkeley.edu
================================================================
```

Most email browsers allow the user to set up a signature file that will automatically be tacked onto the end of every email message. If the signature file is the default, your browser should have a menu choice that lets you send a message without the signature in the event you don't want to include the identifying information. Some browsers also allow the user to set up an alternate signature so that you can include organizational contact information for your activist messages, and personal information for your personal correspondence.

If you plan to use a signature file, you should be aware that many Internet users consider it bad manners if your signature file is larger than your message. So if you frequently send short notes, remember to suppress the signature file.

TRY A PRACTICE ALERT: Get permission from two or three friends to temporarily subscribe their addresses, then create an address book email alert list. Draft a short action alert, and send it to your list.

Next: Part 2C: Tips for Effective Online Media

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The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

Part 2C: Tips for Effective Online Media

A NetAction Mini-Trainer

Email is an excellent tool for communicating with media. It is a cost-effective way to quickly distribute press releases and newsletters, and is also useful for submitting letters to the editor or opinion articles. Electronic press releases and newsletters can also be posted to your Web site. NetAction offers the following suggestions for communicating online.

Tips for Effective Online Media:

Distribute email press releases in plain ascii text.
Draft your press release as you would any other email message, using an email software program such as Eudora or Microsoft Outlook. Never send press releases as attachments to email, or attach other documents to email press releases. If you need to prepare a paper copy of the press release, copy and paste the ascii text into a word processing document (such as Microsoft Word) after the release is written in the email browser.

Keep the text brief and focused.
An electronic press release should follow the same "pyramid" format as any other press release. Start with the most important information (and remember the five "W's" - who, what, where, when and why). Use short paragraphs and keep it brief.

Write a subject line that's compelling or provocative.
Keep in mind that the subject line is the first thing reporters will see when they download your release. Never email a press release (or any other message) with a blank subject line.

Include your electronic contact information.
Remember to include your email address and Web site URL in addition to your phone and fax number, and address. Put all your contact information at the top of the press release.

Use hyper-links where appropriate.
If there is additional information available on your Web site -- such as a white paper or an event announcement -- include a hyper-link so reporters can click right to it. Online publications will often include these links in their stories, making this an effective way to direct visitors to your Web site.

Send a test message before distributing your press release.
Always send a copy of the press release to yourself or to a colleague before distributing it. Check the format to make sure there are no broken lines of text, and check for any mistyped Web URLs by testing them to make sure they work.

Avoid disclosing the recipients' email addresses.
Always type the recipients' addresses in the "Bcc" field of your email message header, rather than in the "To" or "Cc" field. (See NetAction's "How to Create An Email Media List.")

Post your organization's media contact information on the home page of your Web site.
Be sure to keep the contact information up-to-date, and include information on how reporters can be added to your mailing list.

Treat email media inquiries the same as phone inquiries.
Always respond just as promptly to email media inquiries as you would to phone calls. Reporters who work for online publications are much more likely to contact you by email than by phone. If you're responsible for answering media inquiries, check your email frequently

throughout the day.

Set up an online archive for your media communications.
Set aside an area of your Web site where reporters can locate past press releases. (If you publish a newsletter in electronic form, maintain an online archive of past issues, as well.)

Post press releases only to appropriate lists, news groups, and publications.
If you plan to post your press release to any email discussion lists, news groups or online publications, make sure the topic of your release is appropriate content for the list or Web site. If your press release announces a new report on air pollution, it would not be appropriate content for a forum for race car enthusiasts, for example.

Collect email addresses from your media contacts.
If you've been distributing your press releases by fax or postal mail, ask your media contacts if you can switch to email distribution. Commercial media directors (such as Bacon's Metro California Media) routinely include email contact information. Major newspapers frequently have separate staffs for their online versions, so you'll need to include those contacts on your list, too. There are also media directories and news services specifically for online publications that may be appropriate to add to your media list.

Limit the size of your email message window.
In many email browsers, text that is longer than the width of the message window will "wrap" to the next line. (When text is set to "wrap," you don't need to hit the "return" key at the end of every line.) If the size of your message window is set for more than about 75, the automatic "wrap" may result in broken lines of text.
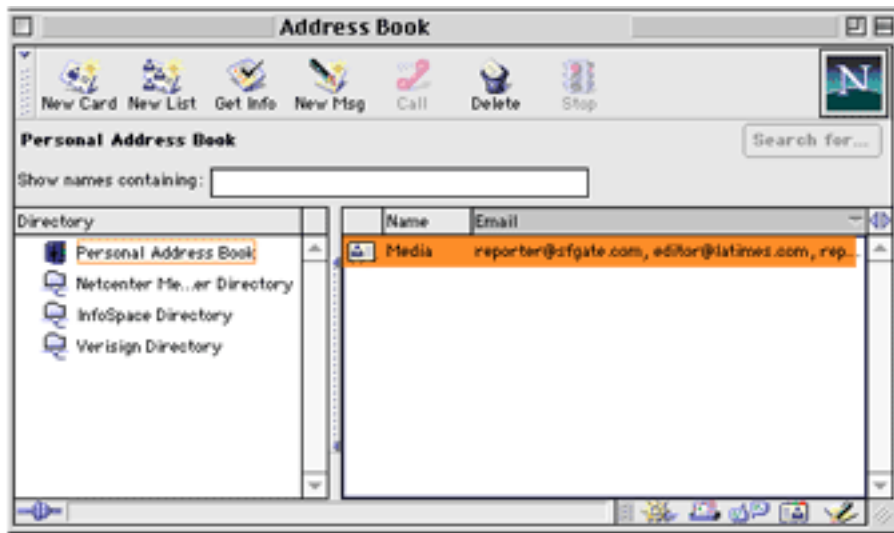
How to Create An Email Media List

The simplest way to create an email media list is to use your regular email software. The most common products you might use are Qualcomm's Eudora, Microsoft Outlook, or Netscape Mail. To create your own email activism list, you will need to be familiar with two features of your email software: the address book and the "Bcc" field.

Using Your Email Address Book

Most email software programs have a feature that lets you set up an address book where you can store the email addresses of friends, relatives, and business associates. Most email address books will let you store hundreds or even thousands of names, making it a useful tool for creating a simple announcement-only email list that you can use to send out press releases or email newsletters.

For example, if your organization distributes press releases, you can set up an address book entry labeled "Media" to store the email addresses of reporters and editors so you won't have to send individual messages to each of them. In the example below, we created an address book entry labeled "Media" in Netscape Messenger. The first two email addresses in this "Media" entry are `reporter@sfgate.com` and `editor@latimes.com` . (The other addresses aren't visible in the screen shot of the address book.)

Using the "Bcc" Field

When the email addresses have been entered in the address book, your list is ready to use. But you'll want to send messages to the list without disclosing any of the recipients' addresses. So if you haven't already been introduced to the "Bcc" field, it's time to get acquainted.

When you open a "New Message" window in your email software, the message form will usually include a header that looks something like this:

```
========================================================================
      To:
      From:
      Subject:
      Cc:
      Bcc:
      X-Attachments
========================================================================
```

(Note: In some email software, "Bcc" is not included in the default setting of the header display. If you don't see it, check the "Help" file or the User Manual that came with the software, or contact the software company's support service by phone or email.)

Using the Media list in the example above, here is how you can send a message without revealing the reporters' email addresses: Type "Media" in the "Bcc" field of the message header (instead of in the "To" field) and type your own email address in the "To" field, like this:

```
========================================================================
      To: janedoe@nonprofit.org

      From: janedoe@caral.org

      Subject: PRESS RELEASE: CARAL lauds FDA approval of mifepristone
      Cc:
      Bcc: Media
      X-Attachments
========================================================================
```

Always use the "Bcc" field if you send email to a list you've created in your address book!

If you type "Media" in the "To" field instead of the "Bcc" field, all of the reporters' addresses will be displayed when the recipients open the message. There are two problems with this. First, some people prefer not to disclose their email address. Also, if the address list is long, the header will be long. This is annoying to some people because they have to scroll through screens full of addresses before they see the message. If your list contains several hundred addresses, just imagine how annoying it will be to scroll through all those screens! Here is an example of an email message from someone who neglected to use the "Bcc" field:

```
========================================================================
     From: "Jane Doe" <janedoe@hotmail.com
>
     To: James King <JKing@msn.com
>, Alan Williams <awilliams@sirius.com>,
        Dave Garrison  <DG@aol.com>, "Jennifer Reilly" <Reilly@Reilly.com>,
        "George Kelly" <Gkelly@pacbell.net>, "Thomas Jones" <tj54@aol.com>,
        Gina Rogers <GinaR@uswest.com>, Dan Stevens <dans@yahoo.com>,
        Vincent Davis <vince@att.net>, Ron Butler <ronbutler@dnai.com>,
        "Marc Smith" <marc_smith@earthlink.net>, Tony Altura
        <tonya@food.org>, "Jeffrey Carr" <carr867@aol.com>,
        "Michael Milton" <mmilton@ucla.edu>,
        Peter Boyd <pboyd@mindspring.com>, "Susan Smith" <ss@home.com>
========================================================================
```

Online Media Advocacy Resources

Media Advocacy Guides and Tool Kits

Managing the Media, A Guide for Activists
        http://tenant.net/Organize/media.html

"Raising Our Voices," A Tool Kit for Activists
        http://www.media-alliance.org/voices/index.html

ConsumerNet's "How To Work With the Press" Guide
> http://www.consumernet.org/library/pr_writing.shtml

ConsumerNet's "Nonprofit Publicity" Guide
> http://www.consumernet.org/library/publicity.shtml

Benton Foundation's Best Practices Toolkit
> http://www.benton.org/Practice/Toolkit/publicize.html

NetAction Notes 20 on Media Activism
> http://www.netaction.org/notes/notes20.html

NetAction Notes 47 on Media Activism
> http://www.netaction.org/notes/notes47.html

Online Media and News Services

Media Alliance Links to Media Organizations
> http://www.media-alliance.org/medialinks.html

Thousands of General Media Links
> http://ajr.newslink.org/

Ascribe Public Interest News Wire
> http://www.ascribe.org/

Links for Progressives and Media Activists
> http://www.nlightning.com/bookmarks.html

Salon Magazine
> http://www.salon.com/

Institute for Global Communication (IGC)
> http://www.igc.org/

AlterNet
> http://www.alternet.org/

Common Dreams Newswire
> http://www.commondreams.org/community.htm

The Village Voice
> http://www.villagevoice.com/

NewcityNet
> http://www.newcitynet.com/

Weekly Wire
> http://weeklywire.com/ww/current/ww_news.html

NewsBytes News Service
> http://www.newsbytes.com/

Directories

Mailing List Directory
> http://www.liszt.com/

Deja News Search locates news groups
>   http://www.dejanews.com/

Publicly accessible mailing lists
>   http://www.paml.net/

Bay Area Progressive Directory and Events Calendar
>   http://www.emf.net/~cheetham/index.html

Craigslist announcement mailing lists for Bay Area events, jobs, etc.
>   http://www.craigslist.org/

Newstrawler searches for news on the Internet
>   http://www.newstrawler.com/nt/nt_home.html

Online Public Relations

Bibliography

Bacon's Internet Media Directory
>   1782 pages, $195.00
>   Primedia Information Inc.
>   101 Lake Drive, highstown, NJ 08520-5397
>   Phone: 800-621-0561
>   Web: http://www.baconsinfo.com

Poor Richard's Internet Marketing and Promotions
>   By Peter Kent and Tara Calishain
>   404 pages, $29.95, ISBN 0-9661032-7-0
>   Published by Top Floor Publishing
>   P.O. Box 260072, Lakewood, CO 80226
>   Web: http://www.PoorRichard.com/promo

Public Relations on the Net
>   By Shel Holtz
>   332 pages, $24.95, ISBN 0-8144-7987-1
>   Published by AMACOM, American Management Association
>   1601 Broadway, New York, NY 10019
>   Web: http://www.amanet.org

Publicity on the Internet
>   By Steve O'Keefe
>   401 pages, $29.99 ISBN 0-471-16175-6
>   Published by Wiley Computer Publishing, Wiley & Sons, Inc.
>   Professional, Reference and Trade Group
>   605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012
>   Web: http://www.wiley.com/compbooks/

Spin Works!
>   By Robert Bray
>   128 pages, $23.95 ISBN 0-9633687-9-6
>   Published by the Strategic Press Information Network (SPIN),
>   a project of the Independent Media Institute
>   77 Federal Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
>   Web: http://www.spinproject.org/

Next: Part 3A: Web-based Advocacy and Outreach Tools -- Basic Strategies

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The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

Part 3A: Web-based Advocacy and Outreach Tools -- Basic Strategies

The length of time it takes to download a Web site to your browser depends on the amount of information placed in the page. The more information the page holds, the longer it takes to view it. For this reason, when it comes to Web sites, "less is more" is often the best strategy. Beware of large graphics and software plug-ins, such as Macromedia Shockwave and Java applets, that allow flashy animation and sound. While they may help brighten your Web site, they will also drastically lengthen the amount of time needed to download it. Although there is much hoopla about DSL and cable broadband, the vast majority of Internet users are still using dial-up Internet service providers. Extensive use of graphics could make your Web site difficult to reach.

The key to building a useful Web site is to identify your organization's core competency and build your Web site around that core so visitors will have fewer things to choose from and fewer choices. Do less, but do it better. The less you do on your Web page, the easier it will be to keep it updated and fresh.

Think about how interactive tools are going to work on the Web site. Will you use a "mailto:" form, a fax server or a CGI script (a small programming application)? How will you manage the communications that will result from your Web prescence? Will someone on staff be responsible for answering email? Who will keep the content up-to-date?

You'll need to make a decision about how you will build and maintain your Web site. Will a staff member or volunteer be responsible, or will you hire a consultant? (See our mini-trainer on Web design for more on this topic.)

Avoid Web centrism, the tendency to focus on your Web site and ignore text-only technologies like email, mailing lists and news groups. Text is still far more popular, and has the advantage of being an active "push" technology. Keep in mind that most people check their email first. Bring people to your Web site with targeted, content-rich email announcements and reminders.

Monitor your email box on a regular basis. People will contact you from your Web site and will expect a quick reply. Create standard reply files for easy email management. Compile a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page to reduce the need to respond to common questions. (As people email you with repeat questions, add them to the FAQ.) Periodically revise your Web site so that it addresses the concerns and questions of your audience.

Integration of email and Web tools

An important aspect of conducting successful activism using the Internet is to integrate email and Web tools to create a comprehensive online campaign. Your organization's Web site should be fully operational to conduct the online activism campaign of your choice. In addition, you should use email outreach and publicity through other Web sites to drive traffic to your Web site activism tools.

Work with other Web sites and portals to publicize your online activism campaign. Web sites such as eActivist, Idealist, HandsNet, and IGC's Internet Progressive Gateway will be supportive of your efforts and will list you free of charge. Surf the Web periodically to find sites likely to assist you in your campaign.

Newsletter sign-up

As we discussed in Part Two, collecting email addresses from your supporters and signing them up to receive your email newsletter is an essential component of your online activism efforts. Your Web site is an important part of this effort. Include your newsletter sign-up form on as many pages of your Web site as possible to make it easy for people to sign up. Keep in mind that some people will find your Web site through search engines and may not even see your Home Page. Make sure that each page has a newsletter sign-up form or a link to the sign-up form.

Publicizing your URL and email list

Think "cross medium" in your effort to publicize your Web site address and any email addresses that are important to your online activism campaign. Your print newsletters, reports, press releases, brochures and business cards should include all of this information. Consider printing up a small flyer or bookmark that you drop into all outgoing mail from your office. We've already mentioned adding this type of information to your email signature files. Add your URL to your voice mail message, particularly on phone numbers used for incoming calls from the general public.

Consider adding a "tell-a-friend" script on your Web site. Visitors can type in the email addresses of friends to email them a brief message recommending that they visit your site. See the American Association of Retired Person (AARP)'s "Tell a Friend!" page at http://legislators.com/cgi-bin/friend.pl?dir=aarp.

Whenever possible, make your Web site and email references specific to the content. Saying: "Visit our Web site at www.childrensdefense.org" is good. Saying "Sign the online petition to protect access to child care at www.childrensdefense.org" is even better. Get creative!

If you're using email outreach to announce an upcoming campaign and keep supporters informed as the campaign progresses, include a hyperlink to the campaign page on your Web site. This hyperlink is a vital component of your effort to get people involved quickly and with a minimal time commitment. If your goal is to send 250 faxes to a targeted decision maker, or to collect 5,000 names on a Web site petition, keep your supporters informed, and appeal for their support, with a notice on your Web site. Finally, when an online campaign is complete, report back to your supporters on how you made use of their signature or their faxes. Close the activism loop through this feedback.

Here are some examples to show you how much variety there is in the tools activists are using on Web sites.

Fax server sites:

- Corporate Watch. Last year they campaigned to "Tell Salomon Smith Barney to Stop Underwriting World Bank Bonds!" Although this service is no longer active, you can see it at http://www.corpwatch.org/trac/action/2000/18.html.
- American Civil Liberties Union Fax to Tell Your US Representative and Senator to Support "Driving While Black" Legislation. Visit http://aclu.org/action/dwb106.html.
- Global Exchange Fax To Support Democracy in Haiti. Visit: http://globalexchange.org/getInvolved/haitifax.html.

Online petitions:

(We discussed the problems with email petitions in Lesson 2A. Web-based petitions are less problematic, so we've included some examples here.)

- The Jane Goodall Institute Petition to End Illegal Hunting of Threatened & Endangered Species (including chimpanzees and other primates) in the Congo Basin in Africa, http://www.janegoodall.org/chimps/bushmeat.htm.
- National Center on Institutions and Alternatives Petition to Support the Coalition for Federal Sentencing Reform. Visit: http://www.sentencing.org/sign.html.
- International Rivers Network Petition in Support of the Struggle to Stop Dams on India's Narmada River. Visit: http://www.irn.org/programs/india/petition.000823.html (No longer active, but a good technique in explaining that the campaign is complete and where to go for further information.)
- SFmusician.com Petition to Save the Local Music Scene. Visit: http://www.sfmusician.com/petition/.

Letter sign-ons:
- Planned Parenthood Letter to Support Contraceptive Equity Legislation & Choice. Visit: http://www.plannedparenthood.org/rchoices/lac/.
- Center for Food Safety Letter to Take Genetically Engineered Bovine Growth Hormone Off the Market. Visit: http://www.foodsafetynow.org/send.asp?cam_id=57.
- Council for A Livable World Letter to Tell the President to delay a decision on deploying a national missile defense. Visit: http://congress.nw.dc.us/cgi-bin/alertpr_oracle.pl?dir=clw&alert=14
. **Postcards:**

- GEFoodAlert.org ePostcard to Tell Campbell's and Kellogg's to Test and Label Genetically Engineered Foods. Visit: http://

gefoodalert.org/.

- NARAL's Choice for America Campaign. Visit: http://www.naral.org/choice/forms/postcards/postcard.html.

Let's think a moment for how your organization could use these Web tools. Which Web tools would be useful for an advocacy campaign supporting a particular bill? How should your organization keep its supporters up-to-date on the campaign's progress and finish?

Web Outreach

Relatively new services on the Web are allowing organizations to find and communicate with other organizations and interested people that may be concerned with similar issues. These outreach services are provided through online forums, web-portals, or other outreach services.

Web Forums

Web Forums are areas on the Web where you can post and respond to messages. It's likely that in the future, many businesses, government offices, schools and non-profit organizations will have forums on their Web sites.

Web forums are similar to "usenet" in that both forums and usenet allow users to post and respond to messages. The difference is that Web forums are based on the Web (rather than a separate Internet system like usenet), and are considerably more flexible than usenet (especially with respect to customization, security, and advertising). Web forums are also similar to "chat" in that both forums and chat allow users to gather and interact on the web. The main difference is that forums do not require all participates to be online at the same time.

Since conventional search services are not designed to efficiently index forum discussions, Forum One Communications Corporation has made its Forum One index available to the public at no charge.

Examples of non-profits using open source and shareware tools to create forums:

> *Example:* Environmental Defense Fund http://plaza.edf.org/discussion.nsf/
> *Example:* Multicultural Education Discussion Board http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/pavboard/pavboard.html

An example of a site using Web forums:
Alternet's message boards provide a number of Web forums on widely varying topics.

Other forms of online forums allow users to connect to discussions about any number of topics related to the site by connecting the user to a newsgroup,allowing them to sign up to listserves, or providing them with chat connections.

- Charity Channel provides discussion forums on many subjects concerning nonprofits. This service is provided through listserves that you can sign up for.
- Deja.com's Usenet Discussion Service allows users to search for topics in Usenet newsgroups.
- Liszt.com is a directory of mailing lists, newsgroups, and IRC chat channels.

Web Portals

Web Portals are services that connect people and organizations to many different networks and Internet resources through one site. They connect any number of organizations around the world through their sites and thus help promote coalitions between organizations that otherwise may have never contacted each other.

Some of these Portals only provide the network links for organizations to utilize. These portals facilitate in the organization and disbursement of information throughout the web.

- The Institute for Global Communications (IGC) is a site that provides links to several networks including Peace Net, Eco-net, Women's Net and the Anti-Racism Net. Each of these in turn provide information and links related to the respective subjects.
- The Common Dreams Center is another site that provides links to over 120 organizations in the United States.
- Union of International Associations website has links to over 12,000 NGO's and other organizations indexed by name, region and subject area.

Other portals are more actively involved in helping organizations make connections and link with others of similar goals an interests. These portals provide search mechanisms and other services that allow organizations to actively search out other groups with similar goals.

- Action Without Borders' site www.Idealist.org is one such portal that allows organizations to search a database of over 20,000 international non-profits by subject, dates, or names in order to facilitate in coalition building.
- www.guidestar.org also provides a searchable database of over 640,000 non-profit organizations throughout the United States indexed by name, subject, location and date.

Finding Volunteers

Nonprofit organizations can find volunteers online through web services that match volunteers with organizations. Nonprofits can find volunteers in their area or volunteers who want to work at home. **Virtual volunteering** is work that is done over the internet from a home or work computer. Virtual volunteers give nonprofit groups more freedom in finding help; they are no longer limited to volunteers in the area. See the Virtual Volunteering Project for more information.

Example: http://www.servenet.org
Example: Points of Light Foundation (List of Volunteer Centers by U.S. State)
Example: http://www.idealist.org (Allows prospective volunteers to find you through a search on organizations indexed by subject, date, location, skills, or language)

Also see Web Sites to Find Volunteer Opportunities.

Job Opportunities

In addition to volunteers, nonprofit organizations can also find paid employees on the internet. Many websites help users find jobs with nonprofit groups and let nonprofit organizations list their job opportunities.

- Idealist.com's Job Search lets users search for Nonprofit jobs by location, category, and description.
- ACCESS is a nonprofit organization that list jobs, offers career counseling, and has archives of articles concerning nonprofits.
- OpportunityNOCs.org helps users search for jobs and sign up for their mailing lists about nonprofit jobs.

Web-Based Services for Nonprofits

Many Web companies and organizations offer services, like management or research tools, specifically designed to assist nonprofit organizations.

Management

Many nonprofit organizations are interested in improving efficiency within their organization. There are online services that have information on how to manage organizations.

- Nonprofit Assessment Tool is a free tool to assess different parts of your organization's management.
- Free Management Library has links to many different management-related topics.
- Center for Nonprofit Management educational services, consultation, and information.
- CompassPoint Nonprofit Services management support services to nonprofits.

Research

The Internet makes it very easy to do research on almost any topic. Instead of spending hours at the library, people can do research from their home computers. Research about nonprofit organizations can be found online.

There are a number of media sites and online portals that allow organizations to access the information they have in their archives and databases. These include both free and paid sites.

Some sites will provide searchable databases of information that they have collected. Most of these sites are free.

- [National Center for Charitable Statistics](#) data on the nonprofit sector in the United States
- [The Literature of the Nonprofit Sector](#) a searchable database of the Foundation Center's libraries
- [Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly](#) articles and papers that report research on voluntarism, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations
- [The Right to Know Network](#) provides access to databases on industries, housing and environmental factors in the United States. If the server is down or you cannot find what you are looking for, RTK will do the research for you and email you the information they find.

Other sites may offer access to their databases for a fee.

- [www.alternet.org](#) is a news portal site that provides alternative news articles both written by them and collected from a large number of freelance writers and other organizations. They provide a syndication service that gives access to over 9,000 stories in their archives for an annual fee.
- [Lexis-Nexis](#) is one of the largest news and research portals on the web. They provide research memberships for organizations as well as individuals depending upon each's respective research needs.

Additional Resources

There are many other services available on the world wide Web for nonprofit organizations. Many other websites have information about different services for nonprofit groups. Some sites allow users to search for specific services.

- [Idealist's List of Services and Programs](#)
- [The Non-profit Zone](#) is a comprehensive resource base for non-profits that provides many of the resources discussed here for free.
- [INC: The Nonprofit FAQ](#) is a collection of information from many different e-mail lists and Usenet groups.
- [Helping.org's Resources for Nonprofits](#)
- [Yahoo's List of Nonprofit Resources](#)
- [Government Resources for Nonprofits](#)
- [The Internet Prospector](#)

Here are some additional information sources on the World Wide Web.

- [The World Wide Web Consortium](#)
- [WebReference.com](#)
- [Web Developer's Virtual Library](#)
- [Yahoo's World Wide Web links](#)

Next: [Part 3B: Web-based Advocacy and Outreach Tools -- Web Site Mini-Trainer](#)

Major Areas: < [Our Future](#) >< [Virtual Activist Training Guide](#) >< [Search](#)>
Our Writing: < [Broadband Briefings](#) >< [NetAction Notes](#) >< [Archives](#) >
[About NetAction](#) < [Privacy Policy](#) >< [Contact Us](#) >< [Home](#) >

<NetAction>

The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

Part 3B:Web-based Advocacy and Outreach Tools -- Web Site mini-trainer

How to Get Web Space for Your Organization

Before a webpage can be seen by the public, it needs a Web address. Some Internet companies offer a limited amount of **free webspace** and provide users with various tools to begin building their webpages.

> *Example:* http://www.geocities.com
> *Example:* http://www.tripod.com

Non-profit organizations might also consider buying their own **domain names**. ICANN has a list of accredited companies that help companies and individuals register domain names. Most of the companies charge a yearly fee to reserve a domain, but may also offer a variety of free services, such as free e-mail, technical support, and website forwarding. Compare a few different services to find the one that best suits your organization. See How to Find the Perfect Web Hosting Solution.

> *Example:* http://www.yournamefree.com
> *Example:* http://www.webhosting.com

HTML

The main language used on the World Wide Web is HTML. HTML stands for **HyperText Markup Language**.

HTML is used on the Web for three reasons:
- Software independence
- Hardware independence
- Standard formatting

The basics of HTML are relatively simple. The **structure of a Web page** is:

> <HTML>
> <HEAD>
> <TITLE> Title of Page </TITLE>
> </HEAD>
> <BODY>
> Put the body of the page here.
> </BODY>
> </HTML>

Most HTML commands use two tags, one at the beginning of the tagged text and another at the end:

> <TAG>TEXT</TAG>

See HTML 4.0 Elements for a list of all the HTML tags.

Tutorials that teach the basics of HTML are available on the web. See About.com's list of HTML Tutorials, Tips, and Tricks.

> *Example:* HTML: An Interactive Tutorial for Beginners
> *Example:* NCSA's Beginner's Guide to HTML

Additional HTML resources:

- HTML 4.01 Specification
- htmlgoodies.com
- MediaBuilder: free online tools including an image editor, HTML editor, and font mapper.
- MediaBuilder's List of HTML Editors

For a list of **common mistakes** made on the web, see Jakob Nielsen's Top Ten Mistakes in Web Design.

The HTML code on a website does not all have to be coded by hand. There are programs that will convert documents of non-HTML file types to HTML. See W3's HTML Converters Page for information and links to different **HTML converters**.

JavaScript

JavaScript is an **optional** object-oriented scripting programming language that can be used to change colors or pictures as your mouse moves over something on your Web page, or for interactive menus, or for other tasks. JavaScripts are short programs that allow users to interact with your Web page. Not all browsers are capable of or enabled to run these scripts. Some people turn off this capability for security reasons because malevolent Internet users have found ways to exploit security holes in browsers with JavaScript. The security risk, however, is usually minimal. **Do not create a web page with navigation based entirely on JavaScript.**

- IDM: JavaScript FAQ
- The Definitive JavaScript Resource
- JavaScript Code Examples
- Netscape's JavaScript Documentation

Web Content and Accessibility

Focusing on content is the easiest way to make a site compelling and accessible to the widest range of users. There are a couple of things to consider in assuring the accessibility of your page to people with varying technology and needs. These are **interoperability**, **internationalization**, and **accessibility to disabled persons**.

- **Interoperability** merely refers to the need to make the site compatible with different Web browsers and technology. Consider how different **web browsers** will view your page.

  - View your page(s) with different browsers, and even different versions of the same browser, such as Netscape Navigator, Microsoft's Internet Explorer, and AOL's older browser. For more info, see the Best Viewed With Any Browser Campaign.

    Example:
    > Web Page Backward Compatibility Viewer http://www.delorie.com/web/wpbcv.html

  - Validation of your page is very important to ensure that any mistakes that might be overlooked in one version of a browser will be caught. For more information, read http://www.wdvl.com/Authoring/HTML/Validation/Why.html.

    Examples:
    > Web Page Validator http://www.Htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/
    > Web Site Garage http://websitegarage.netscape.com/
    > Net Mechanic http://www.netmechanic.com

  - One method of achieving interoperability is by making **multiple pages** formatted for each browser, which can be very time and labor intensive.

❍ An easier method is to **limit the use of frames and high-end multimedia**, as they're not widely adopted yet. Using fancy, advanced features of web-sites, such as large graphical images, photos, frames, Shock-wave animations, or Java applets, will reduce the number of users who can view your website, and will cause long download times even for those who can view it.

Examples:
- Earth Vision: http://www.earthvision.net/ (lots of graphics, takes a while to load)
- The Role Model Project for Girls Bookstore http://www.womenswork.org/girls/books/ (gives choice of frames or not)
- Paragraph175.org http://www.paragraph175.org/frames.html (example of page using frames)

❍ Create good **"ALT" tags** on your Web site for visitors with images turned off or text-only browsers, or create "text-only" Web pages.

Example: Good Alt Tags at Corporate Watch http://www.corpwatch.org/

❍ If you can, **survey your membership** and watch your logs to understand their technological "level" so you can adapt the technology on your Web site to fit their needs, interests and abilities.

● **Internationalization** deals primarily with the incorporation of certain standards within the HTML encoding, but is important for translatability of Web sites to different languages. While this can get fairly complicated, there are a few things that you can do for starters. For more in depth reading on this check out:

RFC2070 ("Internationalization of the HyperText Markup Language", F. Yergeau, G. Nicol, G. Adams, and M. Drst, January 1997). http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2070.txt

Weaving the Multilingual Web, 15th international Unicode Conference, Aug 31st http://www.w3.org/Talks/1999/0830-tutorial-unicode-mjd/

❍ Mark up the **primary language** of the site. To do this you just insert a Lang attribute into the HTML tag at the begining of your page. Language tagging helps control classification, searching and sorting by search engines, control hyphenation, quotation marks and spacing and allows for accurate voice synthesis by non-visual browsers.

Example: <HTML LANG="en-US">

❍ Specify any changes in the language for a particular part of your document. This is also important to disabled accessibility as discussed later. To do this you just insert the Lang attribute into the part of the document which changes languages.

Example
<P Lang="ja">

For a full list of language codes see:
http://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/bibcodes.html

❍ There are online tools that can be used to translate the text of your site to other languages if you want. Some of these are paid services, others are provided free of charge. The free ones are mechanical translations and not entirely how we'd say thing if we were actually speaking the second language, so take them with a grain of salt.

Examples:
Weblations' Description of Translation services: http://www.weblations.com/eng/articles/art_1.htm
AltaVista World's Translation services: http://world.altavista.com/

● **Accessibility** requires that people with varying physical disabilities can utilize a site. This includes making the page compatible with Braille readers, non-visual browsers, and other forms of **non-graphical or visual technology**. The W3C's paper on accessibility outlines "checkpoints" that can used to make a site accessible to disabled peoples. These include:

❍ Providing **textual descriptions** of all non-textual content either within the alt tags of the images or separate, redundant textual descriptions. This includes tables that do not convert easily to linear text format.

❍ Using **style sheets** to define the format of a document for easier use by text or non-visual browsers. These are called Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and are described in more detail at : http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/css/

- ❍ Being aware of the **colors** used in the page, as high contrast is needed for some with color or seeing disorders. Don't use color alone to relay information.

- ❍ Clearly identifying any changes in the **language** of the page, as some non-visual readers can shift languages if they are instructed to. See previous Internationalization bullet on how to do this.

- ❍ Providing linear **text alternatives** to any tables that are necessary. Text only and non-visual browsers have a hard time rendering side by side text in tables.

- ❍ Avoiding Screen Flickering, Text Blinking, Scrolling, Auto Refreshing or other movement on the page unless you include a method to disable it in a script or applet. **Some people with photosensitive disorders may have seizures from screen flickering at rates between 4 and 59 flashes per second!!!**

- ❍ Providing **clear and consistent navigation**, with site maps, search abilities, navigation bars, content listings, and clear labels to all links.

- ❍ Periodically **checking for and fixing broken links**, to allow visitors access to the information that they need. The validating tools listed above will check a limited amount of broken links for free -- usually the first 50 links in about 5 Web pages. If your Web site is much larger, you can download a cool free program called Xenu's Link Sleuth, which will check up thousands of links throughout an entire website. Download the Link Sleuth at http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html.

A much more complete description of disabled accessibility can be obtained at W3C's technical accessibility guidelines at: http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/

An easier to follow, slide show based curriculum of the Web accessibility guidelines proposed by the W3C is available at: http://www.w3.org/WAI/wcag-curric/

Michael Stein wrote a great article called Focus on Content (reprinted with permission) that provides a brief methodology for creating content driven sites.

Web Promotion

Web site promotion and maintenance should be considered as you begin to design your site. In this section, we identify some of the things you need to consider.

- Design an outreach plan
  - ❍ what is your URL going to be?
  - ❍ find volunteers to help
  - ❍ what is your staffing commitment?
- Get listed with all search engines
  - ❍ Search Engine Comparisons
    - ■ The search-engine secrets of the pros (ZDNet)
    - ■ How to Search the Web: A Guide To Search Tools
    - ■ Introduction to Search Engines
  - ❍ Major Engines
    - ■ Alta Vista http://altavista.com/
    - ■ Excite http://www.excite.com/
    - ■ HotBot http://www.hotbot.com/
    - ■ Infoseek http://www.infoseek.com/
    - ■ Lycos http://www.lycos.com/
    - ■ WebCrawler http://www.webcrawler.com/
    - ■ Yahoo http://www.yahoo.com/
  - ❍ Search Agregators (may cost money)
    - ■ Submit-it http://www.submit-it.com/
    - ■ Yahoo's list on how to promote your Web site http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/World_Wide_Web/Site_Announcement_and_Promotion/
    - ■ Yahoo's list of companies that will do it for you http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/

Marketing_and_Advertising/Internet/Promotion/
- Postmaster http://www.netcreations.com/postmaster/

Michael Stein presented an excellent outline called Success on the Internet: Creating An Effective Online Presence at a conference in June, 1999 (reprinted with permission).

Additional Tips

Other Web Tools

Password protected Web sites let you limit access to an entire site, or to portions of a site. This configuration can be useful for membership organizations that wish to provide dues-paying members with services or information not available to the general public. It can also be a useful way for an organization's leadership (Board of Directors, steering committee, etc.) to exchange information or discuss strategy.

Set up a page on your site with links to other Web pages relevant to your message. Whenever you provide a link to another site, contact that site's webmaster and ask for a reciprocal link back to your site. Reciprocal links can help drive traffic to your site from other sites, as well as enrich the content that you offer readers since you are pointing them to other relevant information. But keep in mind that these links can also drive traffic away from your site. That it why it's important to ensure that the links are relevant to your message, and to ask for a reciprocal link back to your site.

Set up a good META Tag for Web crawlers

Key words, page descriptions, expiration dates and other information about your page and site can be "tagged" with html code in the header lines so that they can be located by search engines such as Alta Vista or Infoseek. This will increase the chance of your site being located in a search. See the example below for more information on how to use Meta tags.

Examples: Web Design Group's FAQ (question 26) http://htmlhelp.com/faq/wdgfaq.htm#26
Examples: HTML Meta Tag http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-html40/struct/global.html#h-7.4.4 (Note: this one best used by those familiar with HTML)

Do pro-active promotion to mailing lists and newsgroups

Example: NetAction Notes #32 http://www.netaction.org/notes/notes32.html
Example: Jakob Nielsen's Alert Box alert-box.txt

Enhance staff/board signature files to provide a friendly reminder for your correspondents

Examples: a few email signature (.sig, pronounced dot-sig) samples

Create campaign icons for linking with other sites.

Icons can be very effective in advocacy campaigns, and they may also help drive traffic to your site. The best icons are simple, small, and easily associated with the issue. They can also be integrated with other aspects of your advocacy. For example, the same graphic can be used on bumper stickers or buttons.

Examples: Any Browser Campaign http://www.anybrowser.org/campaign/
Examples: NetAction's Fish Campaign http://www.netaction.org/msoft/winfish.html

Be careful about the use of graphics.

Graphics can be used to enhance your webpage. However, the overuse of graphics will slow down your website and may distract users from the information on your website. Sites with low graphics are going to be more accessible than sites with high graphics or advanced features like video streaming. See NetAction Notes No. 33 for a discussion of the use of graphics on the web. Organizations can create

their own graphics or use graphics from websites that offer free graphics for use on other webpages. Webcom's Index of Icons and Graphics has a list of these sites.

Regularly review your Web site statistics to analyze how your site is doing. Obtain statistics not just on your main page, but for other main "section" pages as well.

Examples: NetAction Sample Log http://www.netaction.org/training/sample-log.html

As you see in reviewing the sample log from NetAction's Web site, there is a lot of information that can be collected and analyzed. The Internet Service Provider who hosts your Web site may have a uniform way of reporting the statistics on your site, in which case you will have less flexibility about what information you can obtain and analyze.

Monitoring your Web site statistics is useful for a number of reasons. First, it can help you gauge the effectiveness of your Internet outreach. If the statistics tell you that only 150 people have visited your Web site in the last six months, you will probably want to consider other strategies, or possibly reconsider whether maintaining a Web site is the best use of your organization's resources. You can also use the statistics to determine which aspects of your site are attracting interest, and which are not. This could be useful when you consider a redesign of your site, or the addition or deletion of specific information.

Non-profit organizations may also find the Web site statistics helpful in convincing potential funders that your efforts are worthy of their support. For example, you can document the number of signatures on an electronic petition, or the number of faxes sent to a member of Congress from your site's fax server.

Next: Part 4: Membership and Fundraising

Major Areas: < Our Future >< Virtual Activist Training Guide >< Search>
Our Writing: < Broadband Briefings >< NetAction Notes >< Archives >
About NetAction < Privacy Policy >< Contact Us >< Home >

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Part 4: Membership and Fundraising

The Internet provides activist organizations with new ways of communicating with members, recruiting new members, and soliciting contributions. With some exceptions, Internet membership building and fundraising activities will mostly have an incremental effect in the short run, and it is too early to predict what will occur in the long run. Organizations that start now to integrate an online presence into existing activities will be in the best position to capitalize on the technology as it evolves.

Your Membership

- Craft your online presence for your existing membership

  Know your organization's mission and understand your members before trying to identify online strategies that enhance your organization's work. Do your members need to know the latest information about AIDS treatment? A daily email newsletter that summarizes developments in AIDS treatment and provides pointers to more detailed reports on the Web might be a useful supplement to your other communications. Does your organization offer a support group for parents of children with diabetes? An email discussion list could supplement the group's weekly meeting.

- Publicise your online efforts across the mediums at your disposal:
    - Newsletter
    - Events
    - Voice mail
    - Phone
    - Add email addresses and Web URLs to business cards, bumper stickers, buttons, and other give-away items
- Train your staff, board and volunteers to understand how your online presence works, and how to explain it and promote it to members.
- Get as much feedback from your members as possible about your Internet presence. You are doing this for them, so let your efforts reflect their needs.
- Avoid Web-centrism, particularly with members.
- Don't just repackage your brochure or newsletters since your members already receive that. Look for ways to deliver new content or new methods of interaction that are not available through other mediums.
- The Internet is a "fast" medium -- can it play a role for "urgent action alerts" for your members?

Keeping Track

A free tool is available on the Web for non-profit organizations that need a membership database to track contributions and donor demographics. The tool is ebase, a database template that any nonprofit organization can adopt to its needs. In addition to its database functions, ebase can be used to print envelopes and mailing labels and generate customized merge letters, including personalized email messages to subsets of the organization's membership list. Manuals and online help are also available. The database was developed by Desktop Assistance with support from several foundations.

Copies can be downloaded from the Web at: http://www.ebase.org/

Fundraising

Many organizations are experimenting with cyberspace fundraising. Email solicitations are increasingly popular, especially as year-end appeals. And despite early concerns, these solicitations are not generating widespread complaints about spam. The key is to limit your online soliciting to those individuals who have already expressed an interest in your work, by becoming a member, joining a list service,

or participating in an action or event that your organization sponsored.

Many organizations have set up membership forms on their Web sites. These efforts range from "bare bones" efforts that provide a postal address and encourage readers to send in a check, or sophisticated secure servers that enable the donor to use a credit card.

Some groups raise money by online sales of buttons, bumper stickers, T-shirts, publications, or other items. Others offer donors a technology-oriented gift. Examples range from simple items such as mouse pads, to fairly sophisticated screen saver software that the donor can download in exchange for a contribution. Some of the issue-oriented organizations have set up links with Amazon.com, which donations a portion of the book sales to the organizations promoting the books. However, some groups now have concerns about Amazon. com's privacy policy. For more information, please visit the Electronic Information Privacy Center (EPIC)'s press release on the matter.

General fundraising articles

Example: Using the Internet for Fundraising http://www.nonprofit-info.org/misc/981027em.html
Example: Taking the plunge into e-mail fundraising http://www.netaction.org/training/funding.html
Example: Fundraising Online http://www.fundraisingonline.com/index.html

Three different examples of fundraising approaches:

Example: EPIC http://www.epic.org/epic/support.html
Example: CARAL http://www.caral.org/form.membership.html
Example: WomensWork's secure server https://secure.manymedia.com/womenswork/form.html

Security should not be taken lightly on the net, especially when you are trusted with other people's financial information. It is not wise at this time to send your credit card information over the net without using some kind of secure methodology, be it encryption via PGP and/ or use of a secure server. Many non-profit organizations house their Web sites on external site hosting providers, while others are in full control of all resources related to their Internet connectivity. Similarly, you may have the capability of implementing electronic commerce software on your server or through your host service provider to offer the security needed for credit card transactions. Alternatively, you may choose an intermediate service such as a trusted third party (such as First Virtual), funds transfer (such as CyberCash), digital cash (as it is), or an outside credit card processing firm to handle your transactions.

Financial resources on the Web

There are many different ways that organizations can **fundraise on the Internet**. Read How Can We Use the Internet for Fundraising? and Netaction Notes Click and give online and Profiting from non-profits for starters

Some websites match people who want to donate money with charities that are trying to raise money. Nonprofit organizations can register with these sites to find potential donors.

example: http://www.helping.org
example: http://www.egrants.org
Fundsnet Services is a grants and fundraising portal.

There are also sites that will do the soliciting of donors for the organizations that are registered with it.

Example: www.charitableway.com solicits donors based on profiles of the organizations that register with them. They take 10% of the donations.

Other sites allow a certain portion of their profits to be donated to non-profit organizations.

Example: www.4charity.com provides an online "Charity Mall" where 5-40% of sales go to the non-profits signed up.

For further information on non-profits and e-commerce, read this article from www.Benton.org

Financial transactions on the Web can be handled in a couple of different ways.

CyberCash is a secure payment technology that facilitates financial transactions between banks, financial institutions, transaction processors, merchants, and consumers. Consumers must first establish an account with CyberCash. Once they have done so, they can make purchases from participating merchants, and CyberCash collects a fee for processing the transaction.

Credit card processing firms, such as creditnet.com, facilitate financial transactions by providing a secure server through which the transaction is processed. This prevents the consumer's financial information from being read by any of the computers it goes through as the data travels from the customer's computer to the credit card company.

A third alternative is to encrypt, or code, the data so that it cannot be read as it travels over the Internet. Here is some background on PGP, one popular encryption technology.

More resources:

- GuideStar donor's guide to nonprofits and charities: http://www.guidestar.org/
- Philanthropy Journal's Meta-Index of Nonprofits: http://www.pj.org/links_metaindex.cfm
- PhilanthropySearch search engines for nonprofits and philanthropy: http://www.philanthropysearch.com/
- Council on Foundations: http://www.cof.org/
- Foundation Center: http://www.fdncenter.org/
- Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers: http://www.rag.org/
- Free Database for Managing Donor, Member, and Supporter Information: http://www.ebase.org/
- Electronic Commerce FAQ: http://cism.bus.utexas.edu/resources/ecfaq.html

Next: Part 5: Privacy, Copyright, and Censorship

Major Areas: < Our Future >< Virtual Activist Training Guide >< Search>
Our Writing: < Broadband Briefings >< NetAction Notes >< Archives >
About NetAction < Privacy Policy >< Contact Us >< Home >

The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

Part 5: Privacy, Security, Copyright, and Censorship

Privacy

Mailing list privacy issues

All mailing lists (also known as listserves) are managed via email - a form of communication that is inherently insecure. Sending mail via the Internet is like sending a postcard through the post office - given the time and resources, anyone who wants to read your mail can do so. So the tips below will not completely ensure secure and private mailing lists.

One way that you can circumvent some security issues is by using Web-based commercial list services like those discussed in Part 2B. These services often provide all the capabilities of commercial mailing list software - mass emailing, easy subscription and unsubscription procedures - with easier management, better security, and extra options like archival abilities. As noted in Part 2B, however, while these services are usually free there are some drawbacks. The companies that provide them attach short advertisements to the top or bottom of all mailings, and most include terms of use that give the service ownership of the content of your lists. You can find a listing of "community groups" at http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/Chats_and_Forums/Mailing_Lists/.

Tips for operating your organization's list:

- Encourage people to use "disposable" email addresses when signing up for your mailing list. (See "Tips for Mailing List Members," #1, below, for information on "disposable" email addresses.) While this policy is impossible to strictly enforce, you can promote it by suggesting it on the mailing list sign-up page of your Web site and other written material that includes information about signing up for your organization's list.
- Hide the list membership when you configure the list. Unless the list administrator explicitly disables the ability for outsiders to view the list membership, anyone on the Internet can view the entire membership of a mailing list with a simple e-mail command.
- If your list is used for announcement purposes rather than open discussion among members, you'll want to configure your list to restrict posting privileges. Allow only staff members or trusted volunteers to post to the list, rather than allowing all subscribers to post. This will help prevent spammers or email harassers from attacking your members.
- If your list is used for open discussion among members, you'll want to configure your list to be moderated (see Part 2B.) Designate a staff member or trusted volunteer to serve as moderator and approve every post before it is sent. This will help prevent spammers or e-mail harassers from attacking your members.

Tips for mailing list members:

- Use a "disposable" e-mail address when signing up for mailing lists. "Disposable" e-mail addresses minimize the risk in the event an unauthorized person gains access to the list membership.

  A good "disposable" e-mail address has two characteristics: strangers cannot easily gain information about the sender merely by looking at the address, and the "disposable" address is separate from a personal or work e-mail address. The e-mail address "audrie@netaction.org ," for example, would not make a good "disposable" address, because strangers can easily decipher that the address belongs to someone at NetAction whose first name is Audrie.

  Good places to obtain "disposable" e-mail addresses are websites that offer free webmail, such as Yahoo! or Hotmail. You can find a listing of free e-mail sources at Yahoo's listing of free e-mail sources.

- Consider using a "screen name," rather than your real name or a combination of your initials and name, when subscribing to mailing lists or posting to newsgroups.

World Wide Web privacy issues

The Internet allows users separated by thousands of miles to communicate instantaneously, and the physical distance between users can lead to a false sense of security. In reality, the World Wide Web is highly insecure. If you want to see exactly how much information can be obtained about you and your computer when you visit a Web site, take the test at http://www.privacy.net/analyze/.

Cookies

Internet "cookies" are text files that Web sites place on the hard drive of your computer when you visit the site. Some people don't like having their online movements tracked, and view cookies as a threat to their privacy. Other people aren't troubled by cookies. Whether or not you like having your movements tracked on the Internet, cookies were created for legitimate business purposes. Online shopping sites, for example, use cookies to "remember" which items you have placed in your "shopping cart."

How dangerous are cookies? Cookies are simple text files, so they cannot transmit viruses or cause any other damage to your computer's hard drive or to your data. But there are good reasons to be concerned about your privacy. Both Netscape Communicator and Internet Explorer, the two most popular Web browsers, contain several potential major security holes related to cookies. For example, one privacy monitoring Web site (http://privacy.net/) discovered a bug in both Netscape and Internet Explorer that allows any Web site to download all cookies on a user's computer. Though the bug occurs in only one out of thousand computers, it allows Web sites to obtain e-mail addresses, passwords, and other sensitive information from affected browsers. (For more information on this bug, see http://privacy.net/cookiebug/.

Tips for using cookies:

- Give your Web browser a free upgrade to the latest version, which should include a patch that fixes cookie-related security bugs like the one described above. You can update Netscape at http://home.netscape.com/ and Internet Explorer at http://www.microsoft.com/ie/.
- If you want to know how often Web sites place cookies on your computer, set your Web browser's preferences to alert you when sites are about to place cookies on your computer, and then visit some of your favorite Web sites. Most browsers have three options for cookie notification:

  - You may choose to have your browser accept all cookies without first informing you.
  - You may have your browser ask you whether a cookie should be accepted every time a Web site tries to place one on your computer.
  - You may refuse all cookies.

  In Netscape, you will find these options under `Edit --> Preferences --> Advanced`. In Internet Explorer, go to `Tools --> Internet Options --> Security"`, click on the button that says `Custom Level` and scroll down to the section entitled `Cookies`.

Since many cookies are harmless, and popular websites such as Hotmail and Amazon.com utilize them in many transactions, you may not want to deny all cookies. The second option - asking your browser to inform you when a website presents you with a cookie - affords you the option to deny a cookie from websites that you may not trust.

Cookie information links

- Cookie Central - A nicely designed site that tells you everything you ever wanted to know about cookies, good and bad. Includes bug alerts, ways to disable cookies, and the friendly uses of cookies.
- Junkbuster's How Web Servers' Cookies Threaten Your Privacy - Clear-cut guide on why cookies are bad, and how you can disable cookies.
- EPIC's Cookies Page - Links to articles on problems with cookies, as well as the Internet Engineering Task Force's proposal to fix many of the problems with cookies.

Secure Sockets Layer (SSL)

SSL is an Internet standard that provides for the safe transfer of personal information, such as a credit card number, over the Internet. It does this through encryption, a process that scrambles the information you type on a Web page into a code that can only be read by someone with the specific key to unlock that code. When directed to a Web page using SSL, your browser will automatically encrypt all information that you submit to the Web site. Any time you are asked to provide sensitive personal information on a Web site - such as

your credit card numbers or home address - you should use a secure Web site, as explained below.

Tips for conducting safe online transactions using SSL:

- Your Web browser will automatically encrypt information for you, using its highest level of built-in protection. Older browsers, however, may not utilize 128-bit encryption, the highest level of protection currently available. You can upgrade your browser to use 128-bit encryption for free, by visiting http://home.netscape.com/ for Netscape, or http://www.microsoft.com/ie/ for Internet Explorer.
- Always ensure that your connection uses SSL before conducting business on the Internet. Look at the bottom left corner of your Web browser. If the Web site uses SSL, you will see a closed lock icon in Netscape, or a key icon in Internet Explorer. Also look at the Web address (URL) locator bar in your browser. Transactions using SSL will have addresses that begin with `https://` instead of the standard insecure `http://`.
- **Always** print a hard copy of online transactions after you fill out the Web page form - and do it before you hit the "Send" or "Submit" button. Keep a printed record of the company's contact information, including the email address, phone number, and URL, in a safe place.

Web site privacy policies

Any Web site that asks you for information should explain its privacy policy and tell you up front what it intends to do with that information. A good privacy policy will tell you exactly what information the Web site collects from visitors, as well as how that information will be used. For example, if the Web site includes a mailing list sign-up form, the policy should disclose whether your address will be shared with other Web site operators without your permission.

Examples of robust privacy policies include:

- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR)
- People for the American Way (PFAW)

Spam

When not referring to the canned pinkish meat, "spam" refers to the mass mailing of unsolicited e-mail. ("Spam" also refers to the unsolicited or junk e-mail itself.) Like traditional junk mail sent through the post office, spam is annoying and wasteful, and at times deceitful or offensive. Examples of spam include e-mail advertisements for consumer products, pornographic material, and get-rich-quick scams. Internet hoaxes, the virtual equivalent of urban legends, are another form of spam, as is unsolicited political e-mail.

Spam is wasteful for several reasons. E-mail users across the world waste time downloading, reading, and deleting unwanted e-mail. Furthermore, spammers (the people who send spam) usually target large groups of e-mail users, adding significant stress to mail servers, the computers operated by Internet service providers to send and deliver their customers' e-mail. In the worst cases, spam can completely overwhelm a mail server, causing it to shut down and preventing the ISP's customers from sending or receiving any e-mail.

Sometimes it can be hard to determine whether a particular email message is spam or is useful, wanted information posted to a mailing list for outreach purposes. If you manage a mailing list for your organization or your own personal activism, use the tips below to make sure that you don't alienate your subscribers by sending them spam.

How to avoid becoming a spammer

- Don't send out unsolicited mass e-mailings, or subscribe people to mailing lists without their permission.

- Never post action alerts to email discussion lists or news groups on unrelated issues. If your action alert is about clean air, you're likely to get flamed if you send it to a discussion list focused on free speech.

- If you want to create your own mailing list, start by sending a message to appropriate discussion lists and newsgroups, announcing the new list and inviting people to subscribe. "Appropriate" means the topic of the discussion list or news group is related to the issue you address in your message. Be as specific as possible about the topic and how the list will operate. Will it be an unmoderated discussion list, or a moderated announcement list? Will there be several postings daily, or one posting every few weeks?

- As explained in Part 2B, avoid using the "To" and "Cc" fields when sending messages. Put your own e-mail address in the "To:"

field and use the "Bcc" field for all the other addresses.

How to fight spam that you receive in your mailbox

- When you receive spam, do NOT reply to the sender and ask to be taken off of the list - even if the mailing instructs you to do so. Often spammers will take the e-mail address of the people who reply to spam mailings and add them to other spam lists.
- Use a "disposable" e-mail address when registering with websites. (See the section on mailing list privacy issues for more information on "disposable" e-mail addresses.)

Further steps to combating spam include reporting spammers to their ISPs, who will often take action against them by shutting down their accounts. Visit the Network Abuse Clearinghouse for more information on how to report spammers.

Links to more information about spam

- Boycott Internet Spam! - A thorough introduction to spam, why it's bad and ways to combat it.
- EFF's Spamming, Cybersquatting, Net Abuse, and Online Responsibility Archive - Press releases, letters to Congress, and articles by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an advocacy group dealing with Internet and technology issues.
- EPIC's Spam Page - Includes information on anti-spam bills under consideration in Congress, in addition to links to articles on spam.
- Junk Email Resource - The resource center for information on the fight against spam. Includes links to spam-related lawsuits, a step-by-step form to report fraud conducted through spam, and other resources.
- SpamCop - After you register with SpamCop, you can copy and paste your spam e-mails into a text box and SpamCop will automatically report the offender to his or her ISP.

Security

As information technology has become increasingly important to the mission of many nonprofit organizations, so too has the need for computer security. Although the focus of computer security concerns has primarily been on the potential threat to corporate and government computer systems, computers are no less critical to the operations of nonprofit organizations devoted to serving the public interest. Moreover, many nonprofit organizations lack sufficient financial resources to recover from a cyber attack.Some risks are obvious:

- Without daily backups, an organization may lose important data when a hard drive crashes.
- Without regular updates, anti-virus software cannot protect an organization's computers from newly released viruses and worms.
- Without a firewall, malicious hackers can use an organization's server as a spam relay or a launch pad for a distributed denial-of-service (DDOS) attack against a corporation or government agency.

Other risks may not be as obvious:

- Without adequate password protection a disgruntled employee could retrieve addresses from an organization's database and send threatening letters to donors.
- Without encryption, a nosy volunteer could access an organization's personnel records or confidential files.
- Without off-site storage of backups and a data recovery plan, electronic records could be permanently lost if an organization's computers were destroyed in a fire or other disaster.

In the winder of 2001-2002, NetAction conducted an online survey of security practices in nonprofit organizations to find out what nonprofit organizations are doing to prevent cyber attacks.We published the survey results in January 2002. Our checklist of cyber security practices can help you assess and improve your organization's computer security practices.

Copyrighted Material on the World Wide Web

Copyright laws apply to material published on the World Wide Web just as with books, articles, CDs, and videos. But many Web pages lack explicit copyright notices that inform visitors of what may or may not be downloaded or posted elsewhere, for public or private use.

When creating a Web site containing original material, it's a good idea to post a copyright policy in an easily noticeable spot. An example of an extensive copyright policy can be found at http://www.mlanet.org/copyright.html.

The "Digital Millennium Copyright Act" was enacted in October 1998 specifically to address Internet copyright issues. For more

information on the DMCA, please visit the Association of Research Libraries' analysis of the bill at http://www.arl.org/info/frn/copy/dmca.html.

What Web material is copyrighted?

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all original content on a Web site is copyrighted to the creator or owner of that Web site. If you would like to use content, text, or graphics from someone else's website, both common courtesy and the law dictate that you must first obtain that author's permission.

Web page addresses are merely links and cannot be copyrighted. However, a collection of links that an author compiled may be copyrightable, since it would be the author's original collection.

Because of the nature of the Web, it is not always easy to determine exactly what content on a Web site is subject to copyright laws. For some practical tips for dealing with copyrights on the Web, visit The Copyright Website: The WWW, at http://www.benedict.com/digital/www/webiss.htm.

For more information on copyrights and the World Wide Web, see the following sites:

- Intellectual Property on the Web - This site addresses several problematic questions having to do with copyrighted material on the Internet.
- Copyright and the World Wide Web - The Information Architecture division of the Los Alamos National Laboratory has written this short article on copyrights and the World Wide Web.

Censorship

Censorship is a complicated issue that divides some progressive groups that generally agree on other issues. Free speech advocates like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) have opposed any limitations on Internet speech, but other organizations worry that acts of violence may be promoted if there are no restrictions at all on hate speech. Planned Parenthood, for example, won a $109 million judgment against the authors of the "Nuremberg Files" Web site, arguing that the site incited visitors to conduct acts of violence against individual abortion providers. (See Planned Parenthood's press release and an alternative view on free speech.

Filtering software

The proliferation of pornography, hate speech, and other offensive content, as well as the potential threat of Internet predators, raises concerns among parents about what their children view online. Some parents use filtering software such as NetNanny and CyberSitter to block access to Web sites they consider inappropriate for their children, or simply offensive.

But filtering software can also inadvertently block useful Web sites. Most filtering software look for "keywords" when blocking specific Web pages. Yet Web sites that support breast cancer research, for example, may be blocked because they contain the word "breast."

For more information on the capabilities of filtering software and reviews of the most popular brands, visit PC Magazine's 1998 Utility Guide: Parental Filtering Utilities. For more information on the problems with filtering software, visit Peacefire.

Free speech resources

- Peacefire.org.
- Center for Democracy and Technology: Free Speech Online - A thorough, well-defined Web site on all things related to Internet censorship, including original publications, news on legislation and court cases, and resources for parents.
- EFF's Censorship & Free Expression Archive - A long list of articles, files, and links documenting Internet censorship.
- Free Expression Network: Internet Issues - The Free Expression Network is a coalition of free speech groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way, and EPIC. This site contains current news on Internet censorship issues.

Next: The Virtual Activist Reader

NetAction's Cyber Security Checklist

Use this checklist of computer security basics to assess and improve your computer security practices:

- **Do Your Work Habits Promote Security?**

Passwords and user names are your first line of defense in cyber security. Use passwords that are difficult to guess and change them frequently. (If you think you might forget your password, write it down and file it where only you can get to it.) Always remember to logoff when you aren't using your computer. The most basic, and low-tech, security practice is to lock or shut down a computer when it's not in use. If you don't, there's little point in password-protecting your hard drive.

- **Can Your Data Be Restored If Your Computer Crashes?**

Regular backups are a crucial component of computer security. Documents and other data should be backed up daily. Backed up data can be stored on removable media (such as CDs), on a separate hard drive that is connected to your computer externally, on a tape drive, or on a secure web site. Redundancy is the best strategy: create several backup sets so at least one is stored off site. It's also a good idea to periodically make a full backup of your hard drive so that if your hard drive crashes you won't have to reinstall each software program individually.
Many new computers include CD drives that make data backups easy and affordable. External hard drives that can be disconnected and stored off site are an affordable option for backing up a complete hard drive.

- **Is Your Computer Safe From Viruses and Worms?**

New computer viruses and worms are discovered all the time. Installing and regularly updating your anti-virus software is essential to maintaining the security of your computer files.

- **Is Your Computer Safe From Malicious Hackers?**

Every computer connected to the Internet without a firewall is vulnerable, but the risk is greater if you are using DSL or cable broadband, or are connected to an office network. Because these types of connections are typically always on, malicious hackers can get into your computer and steal confidential information, deface your organization's web site, or use your computer as part of a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack directed at another server. Firewall software is available from many of the same developers who produce anti-virus software, including Symantec and McAffee.

- **Are Your Mailing Lists Safe From Spammers?**

Email lists are frequent targets of spam, so mailing list security is a high priority. If you are running commercial list software, such as Majordomo, configure your email lists so only the list owner has access to subscribers' addresses. If you are using your email client software, such as Eudora or Outlook, avoid disclosing subscribers' addresses by putting all your recipients' addresses in the "Bcc" field. If you are using an application service provider, such as Topica or Yahoo Groups, make sure the lists are configured to prevent the disclosure of addresses. Also, back up your subscriber list regularly. Those addresses are one of your organization's most important assets!

- **Are Your Confidential Files Safe From Snoopers?**

Nearly everyone stores some data on their computer that is sensitive or confidential. Use passwords and encryption to protect private data. Disable operating system features that allow files to be shared unless it's absolutely necessary, and when you do allow sharing use passwords to ensure that only authorized users have access. If you send or receive confidential data, encrypt your email messages.

- **Do You Check "Under the Hood" Periodically?**

Although not strictly a security issue, good disk maintenance is also important. Several software vendors sell utility tools (such as Norton System Works) that can alert you to and fix minor problems, and sometimes even retrieve lost data. Specific maintenance requirements vary, so review the User Guide and check your disk periodically to ensure optimal performance.

- **Are You Prepared for the Worst?**

Hard drives crash; accidents happen, natural disasters occur without warning. If you depend on computers, disaster planning is a necessity. Start by keeping an up-to-date backup of your hard drive off site, but don't stop there. Inventory your hardware, software and service providers. Ask yourself what it would take to get back online if your office was destroyed in an earthquake or fire. Write it all down and keep a copy with your off site backup. Periodically review your plan to make sure it's up-to-date.

Major Areas: < [Our Future](#) >< [Virtual Activist Training Guide](#) >< [Search](#)>
Our Writing: < [Broadband Briefings](#) >< [NetAction Notes](#) >< [Archives](#) >
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<NetAction>

The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

Part 6: Technology Planning

As our reliance on technology grows, so too does our need to plan for it. But technology planning is seldom on the "to do" list of nonprofit organizations and grassroots community groups. If the subject does come up, it could generate lots of kicking and screaming (speaking metaphorically, of course) from busy individuals. But it doesn't have to be that way.

In a nonprofit organization or grassroots community group, technology planning isn't just about deciding if it's time to replace your computers or upgrade your software; it's about connecting your technology needs to your organization's mission. Typically, the steps involved in preparing a comprehensive technology plan include assessing your existing technology infrastructure, determining your future technology needs, identifying the available resources, and establishing a time line for implementation. Ideally, this type of planning process starts with a team that includes board members as well as staff, and concludes with the drafting of a written plan to guide implementation and possibly also help your organization secure the necessary funding to implement the plan.

There are many useful online resources to help nonprofits plan for their future technology needs. Some of our favorites are included in The Virtual Activist Reader. In the section below we introduce some of the tools that organizations can use to prepare a technology plan and summarize the steps involved in creating a plan, gleaned from a variety of online resources as noted.

What *Is* Technology Planning?

TechSoup defines technology planning as "the process of determining how your organization can best use technology to further your mission. The process of technology planning involves assessing your existing resources, defining your needs, and exploring solutions. A successful planning process will draw on management support and the leadership of a technology team made up of a range of staff members to provide input. It will help you budget for technology and make cost-effective purchases. The first outcome of the planning process is a written technology plan which outlines the phases of technology development, and can also be used as a key tool to advocate for technology funding."

Assessing Technology Resources

Before you begin the planning process, it's a good idea to assess your existing technology resources. Technology Literacy Benchmarks is a comprehensive assessment tool for evaluating your organization's technology savvy. It covers all aspects of technology in nonprofit organizations, including a section on technology planning. It's well worth the time to work through the entire assessment, but it's also useful if you just complete the section on technology planning benchmarks. If you don't already have a plan, it will give you a peek at what's in store. If your organization does have a plan, you can see how your organization compares to the best practices.

Leadership

A great deal of attention has been paid to the need for leadership in technology planning. Marc Osten wrote an excellent article on Technology Leadership for TechSoup. Strong leadership encourages enthusiasm about using technology to further an organization's mission, contributes to buy-in from staff and board, aides in credibility with potential funders, and can counter the negative responses of technophobes within an organization. Ideally, an organization's executive director provides strong leadership, but it can also come from program managers or Board members.

The Planning Team

Whenever possible, technology planning should be a team activity. The team's responsibilities include assessing current technology, identifying technology needs and priorities, drafting a technology vision statement, preparing a budget and timeline, drafting the

technology plan, monitoring the plan's implementation, and ensuring stakeholder buy-in. Ideally, the team includes the executive director (or another manager), a project manager, administrative assistant, bookkeeper or accountant, development director, system administrator or tech consultant, and Board member. But not all organizations have sufficient resources for this, and even those that do face numerous challenges: lack of time, lack of technical knowledge, frustration with technology and a lack of interest in planning, among others. There are also some logistical issues to consider, including when and how often the team meets, how the team communicates internally and with other staff, and whether or not an outside facilitator is needed.

Technology Assessment Tools

There are many useful tools to guide you through the assessment process. See Section V of the Virtual Activist Reader for links to additional tools that are available online. Here are a few of our favorites:

OneNorthwest's Organizational Infrastructure Assessment Form, which is available as a downloadable PDF file, is a good one to start with. It's comprehensive enough for most purposes and will probably lead to some useful brainstorming. Strategic Technology's Components of Tech Assessment & Readiness is a much more detailed set of documents which can be downloaded individually as PDF files. NPower's Tech Surveyor and Tech Atlas are interactive online tools. TechSoup takes a different approach to assessment by providing a series of worksheets listing questions on specific aspects of technology.

Identifying and Prioritizing Technology Needs

After you've assessed the current state of your technology, the next step in the planning process is brainstorming to identify your organization's future technology needs, and to prioritize them. At this point the planning team will want to go back to the rest of the staff for a brainstorming session. Every organization will have its own specific needs, but the possibilities include:

- Purchasing new software or software updates
- Customizing current software to better meet users' needs
- Providing general training for the staff
- Focused training on a specific piece of software or skill
- Replacing or customizing a database
- Networking office computers
- Establishing an Internet presence
- Developing an email action alert list
- Improving online marketing and outreach
- Designing a new web site, or redesigning an existing site
- Developing policies and procedures for using computers
- Implementing backup systems and other security measures
- Replacing obsolete hardware
- Hiring a technology manager

Since your brainstorming session will most likely identify far more technology needs than your organization can address, the next step will be to prioritize your needs. What are the three most important items on your organization's list? Be realistic about what you can accomplish, and set priorities accordingly.This part of the planning process is likely to generate some lively discussion!

Vision Statement

After you've identified your priorities, it's time to draft a technology vision statement. Start by reviewing your organization's mission statement. This should get you thinking about what you need. Key questions to consider include:

- How will technology help your organization fulfill it's mission?
- How will it improve organizational effectiveness?

Budgeting

The next step in the process is developing a technology budget. This will require some research. It's not unusual for organizations to narrowly define costs as the price of a new computer or software package. You might even remember to include the cost of hiring a consultant to install the new equipment. But there's a good chance you won't consider what some experts refer to as the "total cost of ownership." This includes many costs that aren't obvious, such as:

- Staff time to learn new software programs or attend training classes
- Backup hardware and software
- Monthly updates to anti-virus software
- Frequent security patches (especially for computers running on Microsoft's Windows operating system)
- Creating and updating an operations manual (or having to explain the same thing half a dozen times because you don't have a manual)
- Network connectivity costs such as an ISP for Internet connection, and routers and cables for internal networking
- Application service provider costs such as secure servers for credit card donations, or email list services

Including realistic costs is crucial. See Marc Osten's So What's the Real Cost of Technology? for helpful advice on how to make sure you've considered all the costs in your budget.

Timeline for Implementation

The final step before you actually start writing your technology plan is to establish a timeline for implementation. Ideally, you'll be working on a plan that can be implemented over a period of a year or more. (The planning process isn't useful if your server just died and you need to replace it.)

As you develop your timeline, ask and answer these questions:

- What are the first things you will need to do?
- How long do you estimate it will take to complete those tasks?
- Once those tasks are completed, what are the next steps?
- How long will it take to complete those tasks?
- What are the next steps, etc.

Timelines should be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseen events, but rigid enough to maintain momentum. You will most likely want to segment your timeline into phases of three to six months. Be sure to include the time you will need to secure funding if you're going to have to apply for grants or undertake other fundraising activities to raise the money you've budgeted to implement your plan. See the timelines in Strategic Technology's examples of completed plans.

Writing the Plan

You have assessed your existing resources, identified and prioritized your needs, drafted your technology vision statement, prepared a budget and created a timeline for implementation. You're finally ready to write your plan. Fortunately, much of the work you've already done will be incorporated into the plan.

The written plan should include at least these four key elements:

- A technology vision statement
- A description of the strategy for implementing that vision, which is where you identify your technology needs
- A timeline
- A budget

More detailed plans might include:

- An organizational profile
- A mission statement
- An inventory of current technology and/or staff skills
- A breakdown of benefits, tasks, and costs of implementation
- A breakdown of long and short-term goals (useful for plans covering longer periods of time)
- Evaluation criteria (this may be important if you're seeking a grant to implement your plan)

Funding for Technology

With luck, the effort that goes into preparing a technology plan will help you get the plan funded. That's why it's so important that your technology vision statement describes how technology will help your organization fulfill it's mission. While there are a few foundations that specifically provide grants for technology, most are overwhelmed with requests. Your best option may be to approach funders and donors who are already supporting your mission, and use your plan to demonstrate how technology is necessary to carry out your mission.

If your technology plan budget is based on "total cost of ownership" principles, you may be able to fund a portion of your technology by including those costs in the program budgets you submit with grant applications. If you're a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, you may qualify to purchase software from CompuMentor's DiscounTech at greatly discounted prices.

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The Virtual Activist

A Training Course

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New! The Virtual Activist Reader in Spanish

The Virtual Activist Reader

Section I: General Resources for Activists

- About.com's section on nonprofits and charitable organizations
- Idealist's links to staff and management resources, employment and internships
- Common Dreams Newswire progressive nonprofit information portal
- International Organizations' Web page
- WebActive Directory, annotated list of 1,000+ charities, run by RealNetworks
- Compass Point Nonprofit Services (formerly the Support Center/Nonprofit Development Center)
- National Alliance for Nonprofit Management (formerly the Support Centers of America)
- NetAction's Virtual Activist Training Guide
- Getting Started on the Internet (from idealist.org, Action Without Borders)
- ITrain's collection of Internet training materials
- Online Resources for Non-profit Organizations
- California Public Libraries with Internet Access
- ONE/Northwest
- The Management Center
- Benton Foundation's Best Practices Toolkit
- ILC Glossary of Internet Terms
- Project Vote-Smart: Information on Politics, Activism, and Elections
- Nonprofit GENIE
- Nonprofit Consultants ONTAP
- Mailing List Directory (locates email lists)
- Directory of Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists (PAML)
- Google Groups (locates newsgroups)
- The Bay Guardian Action Network
- Craig's List (events, jobs, items of local community interest)
- MediaChannel

Section II: Additional Resources on Web Page Development

- Web Interface to Whois (at Network Solutions)
- HTML Editors
- About.com's HTML guide
- All About the Web (W3 Consortium)
- Use the META Tag

Section III: Articles on Internet Activism

- [Phil Agre on Internet petitions](#)
- [Nonprofit and Watchdog Groups Work the Net](#) (You will be prompted for login/password to NY Times's site. Free subscription.)
- [The Online Activist](#)

Section IV: Additional Resources for Online Activism

- [LINC Project welfare rights organizers toolkit](#)
- [Free Speech Internet Television](#)
- [IGC's Progressive Gateway](#)
- [Organizers' Collaborative](#)

Section V: Non-Profit Technology Planning and Assistance

- [TechSoup](#) (articles and worksheets)
- [Strategic Technology](#) (detailed lesson plans, worksheets, articles and examples)
- [NPower](#) (online interactive assessment and planning tools)
- [Technology Literacy Benchmarks](#) (comprehensive assessment tool)
- [One/Northest](#) (assessment and planning tools)
- [LINC Project presentation](#) for low-income organizations on developing a technology strategy
- Arts Wire ["Spider School" Training on Technology Planning](#)
- [New York Foundation for the Arts](#) technology planning curriculum
- [NYFA's budget worksheet](#)
- [Nonprofit Use of the Internet](#)
- [The eNonprofit: A Guide to ASPs, Internet Services, and Online Software](#)

Section VI: Fundraising Resources

- [Community Wealth](#) and their [Resources Directory](#)
- [GuideStar donor's guide to nonprofits and charities](#)
- [PhilanthropySearch search engines for nonprofits and philanthropy](#)
- [Council on Foundations](#)
- [Foundation Center](#)
- [Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers](#)
- [eBase: Free Database for Managing Donor, Member, and Supporter Information](#)

Section VII: NetAction Notes Articles on Internet Activism

- No. 8: [Notes from the Virtual Activist Workshop](#)
- No. 9: [Resources for Virtual Activists](#)
- No. 11: [More Resources for Virtual Activists](#)
- No. 14: [Act Locally, Organize Globally](#)
- No. 14: [Is It Outreach or Is It Spam?](#)
- No. 18: [Cyberspace Challenges to Racism and Hate](#)
- No. 18: [Raising Hell With Email](#)
- No. 20: [Media Online](#)
- No. 20: [A Tool Kit of Media Tips](#)
- No. 20: [Freedom of Information in Cyberspace](#)
- No. 22: [Atoms in Cyberspace](#)
- No. 25: [A Look at Lists](#)
- No. 26: [The Value of Freeware](#)
- No. 27: [Technology Tools for Empowerment](#)
- No. 28: [More Technology Tools for Empowerment](#)

- No. 31: [Power to the People Online](#)
- No. 31: [Digital Postcards from the Epidemic](#)
- No. 33: [Pictures and Words](#)
- No. 38: [Preparing for the Millennium](#)
- No. 39: [Post That Protest](#)
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The Virtual Activist

A Training Course
developed by Audrie Krause, Michael Stein,
Judi Clark, Theresa Chen, Jasmine Li, Josh Dimon,
Jennifer Kanouse, and Jill Herschman

            o Copyright
            o Censorship

     * The Virtual Activist Reader
            o Section I: General Resources for Activists
            o Section II: Additional Resources on Web Page Development
            o Section III: Articles on Internet Activism
            o Section IV: Additional Resources for Online Activism
            o Section V: Non-Profit Technology Planning and Assistance
            o Section VI: NetAction Notes Articles on Internet Activism

This paper is also available to be downloaded in the following formats:
regular HTML documents, and a single HTML page. This document last modified
5 January 2001.

             A Note About Using This Site

This training course includes links to many other sites, which we are using
to provide you with examples of how the Internet is being used for activism.
We recommend that you BOOKMARK THIS PAGE now so that you can return to it
easily as you make your way through the curriculum. Or, if you prefer, you
can use the BACK button to return to the site after leaving it to view one
of the examples we have linked to it.

We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. Feel free to contact
us at info@netaction.org.

             Copyright Notice

Many thanks go to Michael Stein, Judi Clark, Theresa Chen, Jasmine Li, Josh
Dimon, Jennifer Kanouse, and Jill Herschman for their help compiling this
information.

Terms of Use for Commercial Users (see site)

             Part 1: Introduction

The Internet is a powerful tool that allows us to expand our networks by
identifying and communicating with like-minded people anywhere in the world.
It enables us to disseminate information widely, cheaply, and
instantaneously. Although you'll need some special skills to build and
maintain a Web site, email is easily mastered even if you have little or no
technical expertise. If you can read and write and your computer has a
modem, you can be a Virtual Activist!

With its blinking graphics, streaming video, and interactive capabilities,
the Web gets a lot more attention than plain old text-based email. But don't
let email's simplicity fool you. For activists and nonprofit organizations
engaged in advocacy, email is the tool of choice.

In this virtual classroom, NetAction will teach you how to use email and the
Web as effective, inexpensive, and efficient tools for organizing, outreach,
and advocacy.

The Big Picture

There are currently more than 100 million Americans using the Internet, and
that number is expected to continue to grow. A recent study by the Pew
Research Center for the People and the Press found that 35 percent of U.S.
citizens currently use the Internet to inform themselves on politics, and
this number is also increasing. Advocacy organizations working to influence
public policy will increasingly need to incorporate the Internet into their
outreach and organizing efforts.

The Pew report is on the Web at:
http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=22.

Technology is a tool that can be used strategically to enhance grassroots
organizing and outreach efforts related to political campaigns and public
policy issues. It is most effective as a supplement to -- not a substitute
for -- traditional organizing and outreach techniques. So don't stop
organizing rallies, house parties and press conferences, keep making those
phone calls, and continue building your membership through direct mail
and/or telemarketing.

What do you need to get started with Internet advocacy? Surprisingly little.
You'll need a computer, of course, but don't worry if it doesn't have all
the latest bells and whistles. Internet access and email software are all
you really need. Even a Web site isn't absolutely necessary, although having
one is certainly a good idea.

Suppose your organization wants to publicize a recent legislative
breakthrough that drastically affects a current campaign on which your
organization is working. Choosing from traditional organizing and outreach
techniques, you may choose to hold a press conference or issue a press
release to alert the media. You may also want to write an article for your
organization's quarterly newsletter and prepare a list of talking points to
distribute to staff members and volunteers who will be contacting the media.

But you can also use the Internet, your Web site, email lists and news
groups in your advocacy campaign. For example, email would be a faster and
cheaper way to mobilize volunteers. And posting information to your Web site
will allow you to reach more potential supporters at no additional cost.
Before we discuss the use of email and Web-based tools in detail, let's look
at these tools in perspective.

Active and passive tools

It is important to understand the difference between active and passive
techniques for communicating electronically. The Internet is a global
network of computers that communicate with each other over another network
-- the telecommunications system. Computers use the Internet to "talk" to
each other in much the same way people use the telephone network to talk to
each other.

Although many people think of the Web as the Internet, the Web is actually
just one part of it. Web sites are simply documents that are housed on a
specific computer. When you visit a particular Web site -- such as
NetAction's -- your computer is using the telephone network to communicate
electronically with the computer where the document named www.netaction.org
is located.

Email is more like a telephone call. When you send an email message to your
sister, the network of computers that make up the Internet carries your

electronic "words" from your computer to your sister's computer in much the same way that the network of telephone wires carries your voice from your telephone to your sister's telephone.

Email is much more widely used than the Web, and is a far more effective tool for outreach. When you send email, whether it is a private message to one individual or an electronic newsletter to a list with hundreds of subscribers, you are "pushing" information to other Internet users. Your message gets delivered to the in-boxes of everyone you send it to. You can't be certain that everyone who receives it will read it, of course, but in a later lesson we will discuss strategies to increase the likelihood that your message will be read and acted upon.

In contrast, when you create a Web site, you are placing a document on one computer and giving it a unique "address." People who know the address can visit it, but the actual document stays on that one computer.

So email is an "active" way to communicate your message. Web pages, on the other hand, are passive. People who visit your Web site will only see information that you post on your Web site. If you think of the Internet as an "information superhighway," email is the package that gets transported by truck to the recipient's home, while Web sites are the billboards you pass when you're driving down the highway (as depicted in this graphic used with the permission of CARAL).

[picture described above]

Now that it's clearer how active and passive tools work differently, can you name some of the active tools that an advocacy group could use on a particular campaign? And how might the more passive Web tools be used?

Maxiumum impact

Email is by far the most effective online advocacy tool because it is active, immediate, and widely used. But the effectiveness of email outreach can often be enhanced when email and Web-based tools are used together. For example, the children's and families' rights organization FamiliesUSA recently sent out the following email message to its action alert list:

> "Friends: On behalf of Families USA and our many national cosponsors, I'd like to invite you to join us on January 25-27 at 'Health Action 2001.' Last year, this national grassroots meeting brought together over 500 health advocates from across the country to learn about breaking issues, share ideas with old and new friends and colleagues, and get recharged for the challenging year ahead...
>
> You can get all the details at:
> http://familiesusa.org/pubs/conbro.htm."

Note that the alert includes a hyperlink to FamiliesUSA's Health Action 2001 Web site. A hyperlink is text that contains a link to another document that is displayed when the reader clicks on it. This is a technique that is used frequently by activists and advocacy organizations to integrate email and Web- based advocacy tools. To see how it works, click on the hyperlink in the above action alert. (When you've done that, use the "Back" button in your Web browser to return to this page.)

After looking at the email alert, can you think of some ways that your organization could link email messages and Web-based tools? You'll find plenty of examples in Part 3.

Suggested reading: "How the Internet is Reshaping the Rules for Policy Campaigns" at: http://www.delaneypolicy.com/publications/campaigns.htm.

Part 2A: Using Email for Outreach, Organizing, and Advocacy -- The Fundamentals

When should you use the Internet as part of your organizing and advocacy work? When you need an immediate response, want to contact a lot of people as quickly as possible, and don't have a lot of money to spend on printing and postage. Virtually all of the written materials that your organization produces can be adapted for electronic distribution via email, the Web, or both. If you're not already using email as part of your advocacy work, here are some tips to help you get started.

  * Collect email addresses from your members, supporters and volunteers,
    the media, your contacts in legislative offices, your funders and
    anyone else you communicate with regularly. Include a space for email
    addresses in your membership sign-up forms, newsletter subscription
    forms, and fundraising reply cards.

  * If your organization publishes a newsletter, offer your members the
    option of receiving it electronically. Encourage them to switch by
    reminding them that your organization will save money.

  * Train your staff, board and volunteers to regularly collect email
    addresses from colleagues, friends and supporters and feed those into
    the email newsletter list. Nominate one month as "Email Collection
    Month" and do an all- out push to increase your lists.

  * If your organization has a Web site where visitors can sign up to
    volunteer, to subscribe to a newsletter or action alert, or to donate
    money, be sure to ask for an email address as well as other contact
    information.

  * If your organization has a table at a conference, rally, or other
    event, include space for an email address on your sign-up sheet.

  * If you distribute press releases to the media, start sending them by
    email instead of fax. (Also, be sure to add online media outlets to
    your distribution list.)

  * Use email to communicate with staff consultants in legislative offices.
    (But not with lawmakers, for reasons we'll explain later.)

  * Establish and promote an email action alert list, using the tools we
    discuss in this Virtual Activist training.

Although our focus in this lesson is on email activism, once you get started you'll discover that there are many other ways in which technology can enhance your organization's communications. Many people prefer to receive information electronically because it reduces the amount of paper they accumulate. (See Working With Online Media for more on using email for public relations and media advocacy.)

Suppose you wanted to design an Internet outreach effort to supplement your traditional techniques. To get the word out, your organization has planned a press conference and written a press release. You have plans to write an article for your newsletter, and you are actively preparing a list of

talking points for staff and volunteers to use in communicating with the media. What Internet tools can you use to enhance the effectiveness of your effort? You can publish a copy of your press release on your Web site, distribute an email version of your newsletter, and/or post an electronic copy of the newsletter on your Web site.

Elements of email advocacy

Think of email advocacy as an extension of your grassroots organizing efforts. Email action alerts are typically used for strategic purposes in conjunction with issue campaigns that have clearly defined goals. Let's take a look at a real action alert that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a national nonprofit constitutional liberties advocacy organization, sent out recently:

> Subject: ACLU Action List: Defend the Rights of People with Disabilities!
>
> Defend the Rights of People with Disabilities: Ironically enough, on the ten- year anniversary of the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the House of Representatives is considering legislation proposed by Rep. Mark Foley (R-FL) that would circumvent the goal and meaning of the ADA.
>
> Entitled the "ADA Notification Act" (HR 3590), this legislation would sanction individuals who did not first notify a business of an ADA violation and then wait three months before filing a lawsuit. Supporters of this bill claim that it would ensure that businesses are given adequate notice, ignoring the fact that the ADA has been in effect for ten years.
>
> The U.S. Justice department provides ample information and training for businesses to make sure that they are in compliance, including a toll-free ADA information line that handles more than 100,000 calls a year. There is no need for to provide businesses more time to discriminate against people with disabilities.
>
> Take Action! You can read more about this legislation and send a FREE FAX to your Representative from our action alert at: http://www.aclu.org/action/ada106.html
>
> --
> ONLINE RESOURCES FROM THE ACLU NATIONAL OFFICE
> --
> ACLU Freedom Network Web Page: http://www.aclu.org
> America Online: keyword ACLU
> --
> ACLU Newsfeed
> American Civil Liberties Union National Office
> 125 Broad Street
> New York, New York 10004
> --

In sending out this message, the ACLU achieved its goal of reaching out to gear up opposition to the ADA Notification Act. The action alert also served the secondary purpose of publicizing the ACLU's website and contact information.

Let's see how another organization uses email action alerts. This alert comes from CARAL (California Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League):

Subject: CARAL email action list

Dear Friends,

As the November election quickly approaches, it becomes more and
more urgent for CARAL to reach as many pro-choice individuals as
possible with information about key reproductive rights
information.

We need your help!

Please COPY the message below, paste it into an email message, and
send it to all your pro-choice friends, family and colleagues.
Feel free to add or change anything to the message to personalize
it. (Please be sure to list them in the "bcc" field when you are
addressing your email message!)

And if you are not on the CARAL action alert list yourself, please
use the handy link below to sign up today.

Thank you for your help protecting reproductive rights.

Yours for Choice

****
Dear Friends,

As you know, protecting women's reproductive rights is very
important to me. And with the upcoming elections, I believe that
it's more important than ever for pro-choice individuals like us
to be informed and able to take action.

I am a member of the CARAL email action alert list, and I want to
ask you to join this list too. You will get email updates with
essential information and quick, easy action items that you can
take to protect and promote Choice.

All you have to do is click on this link:
mailto:samplenonprofit.org?Subject=PutMeOnYourMailingList

Please do this today!

Thank you.

This is an excellent example of how email can be used strategically to build
your organization's base of support. The message is short and simple: CARAL
needs to reach more pro-choice voters before the election. The requested
action is easy to accomplish: copy the message, paste it into an email
message form, and send it to everyone you know who shares your pro-choice
sentiments. CARAL also makes it as easy as possible for your friends and
colleagues to subscribe to the action alert list by including a "mailto"
hyperlink. We'll discuss "mailto" hyperlinks in more detail later.

Preparing an email action alert

Before the Internet was widely used, activists and advocacy organizations
distributed action alerts by mail and fax. Preparing an email action alert
is similar. But since email has the potential to reach a significantly
larger audience, there are some special considerations. NetAction has
prepared a simple checklist to help you determine if your action alert is

ready to circulate in cyberspace:

   * Will readers know who sent the action alert? It's important to clearly
     identify your organization as the source of the action alert. (If
     you're sending out an alert as an individual, you'll need to identify
     yourself.)

   * Will readers know how to contact your organization? Always include your
     organization's email address, postal address, Web site address, phone
     number and fax number in action alerts. (Or your personal contact
     information if you're distributing an alert as an individual.) Although
     not essential, it is helpful to include the name, title and phone
     number of someone in your organization who can be contacted if readers
     have questions.

   * Will readers want to open the message? The subject line can determine
     whether someone opens and reads your message, or deletes it unread.
     Make the subject line compelling or provocative -- and never send an
     action alert with a blank subject line.

   * Will readers know if the action alert is timely? Always include the
     date that your action alert is distributed and the date by which action
     is requested. (And don't forget the year!) Outdated action alerts can
     circulate online for years, and many do because the preparer failed to
     include a date.

   * Will readers understand why action is important? Include clear, concise
     background information and the key point(s) to communicate. Keep layout
     simple, use ascii text, avoid jargon, use short paragraphs, section
     headings, bullets and simple formatting to mark the start and end of
     the alert. Don't assume the reader will be familiar with the issue.
     Include hyperlink pointers to Web sites where additional background
     information can be found.

   * Will readers know what action to take? Be specific about how the reader
     can help. Include the postal address or phone number if you are asking
     readers to write letters or make phone calls. Include a hyperlink
     pointer to online information to help readers locate their elected
     representatives.

     NOTE: There are many online resources to locate elected officials.
     Project Vote Smart is one of the most comprehensive. In addition to
     elected representatives at the local, state and national level, the
     site tracks the candidates in thousands of races.

   * Are you sure of the facts? Electronic action alerts can literally go
     around the world in minutes. Since you won't know exactly who sees your
     alert, factual errors aren't easily corrected. Make sure the
     information is correct before you hit the "send" key. If you're
     drafting an alert in response to information provided to your
     organization, make sure it's from a trusted source, or can be verified
     by a trusted source, before sending it out. If you're forwarding
     information from another organization, contact the organization to
     verify that they sent it before forwarding it to others.

     NOTE: Almost everyone has received an outdated or fake alert at one
     time or another, often from a well-meaning friend or colleague. Unless
     you are absolutely sure it's accurate, don't forward an alert. If you
     suspect an alert isn't real, check one of the sites that monitors
     Internet hoaxes, http://www.nonprofit.net/hoax/hoax.html, or
     http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org/HBUrbanMyths.shtml.

* Are you building your base of support? Always include information on how readers can subscribe to or unsubscribe from your action alert list. It's also a good idea to include information on how to join your organization.

There are some excellent online resources that provide more detailed information about how to prepare an action alert. See "Writing Effective Action Alerts by OneNorthWest for a brief, 10-step guide, and "Designing Effective Action Alerts for the Internet" by Phil Agre of UCLA's Department of Information Sciences.

Prof. Agre is also the author of "Against Chain-Letter Petitions on the Internet,", which discusses the problems with email petitions and sign-on letters circulated by email. Email petitions and sign-on letters have proven to be problematic, and should be avoided.

Distributing an email action alert

When your action alert is ready, you'll be distributing it to the people who subscribed to your alert list. (We will review the tools that you can use to set up your action alert list later.) But your organization's subscriber list isn't your only option. There are thousands of email discussion lists and news groups on the Internet.

When you post the same action alert to several discussion lists or news groups, it's called cross-posting. This can be a very effective way to expand the universe of Internet users who receive your alert. But be careful to target only appropriate lists. If you plan to cross-post your action alerts, you'll have to identify and subscribe to the lists and news groups ahead of time to become familiar with the topics they address.

See What is Usenet, The USENET FAQ, and Another View for a more detailed discussion of newsgroups.

How do you identify the news groups and discussion lists that might be appropriate places to cross-post your action alert? One way is to ask your own subscribers, as well as your friends and colleagues, for suggestions. Or you can locate appropriate lists by surfing other organizations' Web sites to see if they have lists focused on similar issues. For example, if your organization is concerned with welfare issues, you might try posting your alert to news groups that deal with poverty and homelessness. There are also search tools available for a more systematic approach. For email discussion lists try the Liszt directory of mailing lists at http://www.liszt.com. For news groups try http://www.dejanews.com/. It's also possible to search the commercial list service Web sites, like Topica http://www.topica.com.

CAUTION: Take care to understand fully the topic and the "environment" of a news group. It's a bad idea under any circumstances to post your alert to a news group you haven't been reading, or an email list you aren't already subscribed to. You need to be familiar with the news group or list to make sure that your action alert is appropriate to post. Otherwise, it could be considered spam (an Internet term for unsolicited junk email) and result in complaints from other subscribers to the list owner, or to your ISP.

There may also be complaints if you post your email action alert to several lists with overlapping subscribers, since people might wind up with three or four copies of the same action alert. If you get a lot of complaints from people who receive multiple copies, reduce the number of lists and news groups that you cross-post to.

Do's and Don'ts

The key to success in distributing email action alerts is as much in knowing
what NOT to do as in knowing what to do. Here is NetAction's quick reference
list of Do's and Don'ts for email action alerts:

DO:

  * Keep the text short and focused.
  * Make the subject line compelling or provocative.
  * Include all your contact information: phone, address, fax, email, URL.
  * Include phone, fax and/or postal addresses of targeted decision-makers.
  * Post only to relevant discussion lists and news groups.
  * Use ascii-friendly symbols to break up text (i.e. # or ^ or =).
  * Test your alert before distributing it by sending it to yourself.

DON'TS:

  * Ask people to send email to elected officials.
  * Spam individuals or lists.
  * Use wide margins.
  * Post to discussion lists or news groups on unrelated issues.
  * Leave the subject line blank.

NOTE: NetAction is frequently asked why we recommend not sending email to
decision makers. At this time, email is not an effective way to communicate
with most decision makers because few of them read it and they have no way
of knowing whether the messages they receive are from constituents. It's
more effective to phone or write a letter and either mail it or fax it.

Cyberspace Networking

Because of the borderless nature of the Internet, it can be a powerful tool
for networking. Organizations with similar concerns can form coalitions and
alliances that literally span the globe. The following sites are sponsored
by coalitions that developed as a result of cyberspace networking.

Forming Cyberspace coalitions:

    Example: Coalition for Networked Information http://www.cni.org/
    Example: Global Internet Liberty Campaign http://www.gilc.org/
    Example: People's Global Action http://www.agp.org/agp/index.html
    Example: Internet Free Expression Alliance http://www.ifea.net/

Intranets and electronic networks

Intranets and electronic networks are common in workplaces. They enable a
specific group of computer users to communicate online, but they are not
part of the larger Internet. America Online is an example of a commercial
intranet. If you subscribe to AOL, you have access to a variety of forums,
discussion groups, and online services that are not accessible to the
general public. Non-profit organizations and grassroots groups can also set
up these types of networks.

    Example: Institute for Global Communications Internet
    http://www.igc.org/igc/gateway/index.html

    See IDM Intranet FAQ

Virtu-odexes

We have physical rolodexes on our desks, and many have contact databases or online versions of our family, friends and colleagues. A "virtuo-dex" (a newly created term) extends our online "rolodex" to our online contacts, sharing our information with each other.

Sometimes it's "who you know" that's important, but other times it's "friends of who you know." There are commercial tools (like Six Degrees) that help create networks of people and their friends, relatives, and colleagues--networks where you can see the relationships among everyone. Building and allowing others to use your network enriches the whole community and helps people find others who are connected to their work and interests. Of course there are privacy considerations in this world--Six Degrees has privacy statements posted online.

    See: Six Degrees http://www.sixdegrees.com/

Collaborative Discussion Tools

The hotword of the day is "community" -- everyone wants to build or be part of an online "community." Non-profits are their own community with common interests: fundraising, advocacy, membership, and others. Your membership is another community, and your organization is representing and addressing their interests. We have seen many ways (above) to reach out to your members. However, some organizations want to be a little more interactive.

There are two forms of interactivity: immediate, no archives, often referred to as chat or chat rooms, and nearly-immediate, sometimes archived for later reference and participation, often called Web forums, bulletin boards, or online conferences.

    Example: Yahoo's Messanger (also commercial service)
    http://messenger.yahoo.com/

    Example: E-groups (a commercial service--check their privacy policy!)
    http://www.egroups.com/

Chat and IRC

Chat is a form of communication which allows immediate interaction on the Internet. The earliest form was Internet Relay Chat (IRC), a text-based communications network. Now, there are newer Internet technologies which make it possible for a group of people to meet and converse online. With chat technology, all conversations take place in real time. That's why IRC has been used extensively for live coverage of world events, news, sports commentary, etc. For activists, it can be a useful tool for convening online meetings, debates, conferences, and town halls.

As a communication tool, chat is somewhere between a personal phone call and an announcement over the radio. Yahoo's Chat Help file has some useful tips for using chat appropriately.

    Example: TalkCity (also commercial, uses java software)
    http://www.talkcity.com/

Instant Messaging

Another collaborative tool, which is growing in popularity, is instant
messaging. Instant messaging applications require users to select their
friends, so activists can use them to identify colleagues they might want to
be in contact with when both are online at the same time. In addition to
sending instant text messages, some services make it possible for activists
to send files and pictures instantly, and to conduct audio and/or video
conferences. Users should be aware that not all instant messanging services
are inter-operable. For example, if you are using Yahoo's messanger, you
will not be able to send instant messages to someone using AOL's instant
messanger. Hopefully, this won't always be the case.

Examples of instant messaging services include AOL's Instant Messenger, and
ICQ (I Seek You) See how ICQ works at:
http://www.icq.com/icqtour/quicktour.html

Part 2B: Using Email for Outreach, Organizing, and Advocacy -- Mailing Lists

Creating your email list

Email is a simple yet powerful tool that your organization can use to
communicate with your supporters. It is fast, effective and highly
affordable. You may already be in the habit of sending individual,
personally composed email messages as part of the normal course of daily
business. This discussion is about email lists, the practice of collecting
large numbers of email addresses and storing them in a software program so
that you can send electronic "mass mailings" to your supporters.

We're going to begin by reviewing the features available in the email
software you are already using to send and receive individual messages, the
email list services that are available through commercial Web sites, and the
mailing list software that you can install and use in-house if your
organization maintains its own "server." (A "server" is a computer that is
connected to the Internet and used to host one or more Web sites.) We will
also be reviewing the different ways you can set up and use email lists to
communicate with your members, supporters, volunteers, and the media.

Using your regular email software

The simplest way to create and use email lists is to do it in-house using
your regular email software. The most common products you might use are
Qualcomm's Eudora, Microsoft Outlook, or Netscape Mail. This option is a
good choice if your list has no more than a couple of hundred subscribers at
most.

There are two common ways you send email with Eudora, Outlook, and other
consumer software products. One is a personal note, addressed to an
individual or to a small group of people. When you send an individual
message, you type the recipient's email address in the "To" field, and you
might also type a second recipient's address in the "Cc" field.

The other way -- which is useful for email activism -- is to use the address
book feature in your email software program. This is a very useful tool for
individual activists and for organizations in which the staff has little
technical expertise. All email software programs have a feature that lets
you set up an address book, and most will let you store hundreds or even
thousands of names in the address book. Many people use this function to
store the individual email address of friends and acquaintances. But it is
also possible to use this function to create a simple announcement-only
mailing list, which you can then use to distribute messages to a large

number of people.

For example, if your organization periodically sends out press releases, you can set up a personalized address book, labeled "Media," that includes a list of the email addresses of all the reporters you know who are interested in the issues your organization is working on. Using the address book feature makes it possible to send the press release to all of the reporters at once, rather than emailing the message individually to each reporter.(See the example below.)

If you plan to use your address book to create an email list, you will need to know how to send email without disclosing the recipients' addresses. So if you haven't already been introduced to the "Bcc" field, it's time to get acquainted. ("Bcc" is an acronym for "blind carbon copy." Along with "Cc" for "carbon copy" the term has its origins in the days when typists made copies of documents by placing carbon-coated paper between sheets of regular paper before typing.)

At the top of every email message, you'll (usually) see a header with these fields:

```
================================================================
To:
From:
Subject:
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachment
================================================================
```

NOTE: In some email software, "Bcc" is not included in the default setting of the header display. In some versions of AOL's software, for example, you will have to open the address book and select "Blind Copy." If you don't see it, check the "Help" file or the User Manual that came with the software, or contact the company's support service by phone or email.

To send a press release to your "Media" address book, type "Media" in the "Bcc" field of the message header and put your own email address in the "To" field. That way, all of the reporters will receive the message, but only your email address will be disclosed. (And you'll get a copy of whatever you send, since your address will be in the "To" field.)

CAUTION: ALWAYS use the "Bcc" field if you are creating an email list in your address book. If you type the address book's name in the "To" or "Cc" field, all of the addresses will appear in the "To" field when the message is sent! There are two problems with this. First, some people prefer not to disclose their email address, and if the list has a lot of addresses the header will be long. This is annoying to some people because they have to scroll through screens full of addresses before they see the message.

Do you like seeing something like the following when you open an email message?

```
=================================================================
From: "Jane Doe" <janedoe@hotmail.com>
To: James King <JKing@msn.com>, Alan Williams
<awilliams@sirius.com>,
Dave Garrison <DG@aol.com>, "Jennifer Reilly" <Reilly@Reilly.com>,
"George Kelly" <Gkelly@pacbell.net>, "Thomas Jones" <tj54@aol.com>,
Gina Rogers <GinaR@uswest.com>, Dan Stevens <dans@yahoo.com>,
Vincent Davis <vince@att.net>, Ron Butler <ronbutler@dnai.com>,
```

"Marc Smith" <marc_smith@earthlink.net>, Tony Altura
<tonya@food.org>, "Jeffrey Carr" <carr867@aol.com>,
"Michael Milton" <mmilton@ucla.edu>,
Peter Boyd <pboyd@mindspring.com>, "Susan Smith" <ss@home.com>
===

In contrast, here's what you'll see when you use the "Bcc" field to
distribute a long list of names:

===
Date: Mon, 11 Sep 2000 09:07:38 -0700
To: audrie@netaction.org
From: Audrie Krause
Subject: NetAction Urges Consumer Protection For Software Buyers
===

Most Web email services, like YahooMail and HotMail, also offer address
books as part of their free service. These can also be used to store large
numbers of email addresses. If you use a Web email service, be sure to check
if there is a limit to the number of email addresses that can be stored in
the address book.

NOTE: NetAction uses and recommends Eudora. It's easy to use, less
vulnerable to virus attacks than Microsoft Outlook, and can be downloaded
for free from Eudora's Web site.

Another important issue to deal with is backing up the email addresses that
you have stored in your address book. A fatal crash of your computer's hard
drive could wipe out months or years of collected addresses, so be sure to
back up these names. If your organization has a network administrator, make
arrangements to have this information backed up regularly. If not, copy the
address book onto a floppy or zip disk regularly, or buy and use a
commercial backup software product, such as Retrospect Express by Dantz. If
you are using a Web email service, learn how to back up your data, also.

Other email list software options

There are also some email list software products and services specifically
for managing mailing lists. The two main types that you might use are
Web-based Application Service Provider (ASP) services, and commercial list
software for mail servers. These options are useful for lists with hundreds
or thousands of names. Another alternative is eBase software, which we
discuss in Part 4.

Application Service Providers (ASP)

ASPs are commercial Internet companies that offer email list services over
the Web, usually at no cost to the user. Application Service Providers that
you might be familiar with are Topica, eGroups, and ListBot from Microsoft.

These services let you to set up an email list without having to install
special list software, which we will discuss in the next section. The
advantage of ASPs is that they automatically handle all the subscribing and
unsubscribing for you. That means people will be able to join and leave the
list without extra work on your part. This is particularly useful if you
aren't going to individually review and approve every new subscriber.

ASPs may be a good choice for individual activists who want to set up email
discussion lists, and for organizations in which a staff with limited
technical expertise needs to manage multiple or large lists. You don't need
much technical experience to manage lists that are set up through these

services, you have more choices about how the list works, and you have access to technical support if you need it.

Another advantage of these services is that they automatically store all the messages on a Web site. (This is called an archive.) An archive is useful if you want to have a record of everything that has ever been posted to the list. You might want such a record so that new subscribers can read messages posted before they joined the list, or so that people can read the messages without having to subscribe to the list.

But there are also some important disadvantages to consider. Under the user agreements, if you use their services the ASPs will own your lists, any of your work that's posted to your lists, and the content of your list archive. This gives the ASP the right to do anything it wants with this information.

Also, because these services are free, the companies that offer them add a small advertisement header or footer to each message, similar to the ones you see if you get email from someone who uses YahooMail or HotMail for Internet service. While some people would rather not use a service with advertising, others consider it a reasonable price to pay for a free service. Here is an example of the type of advertisement you would see if you subscribed to an email list operated by Topica:

```
========================================================================


_____
T O P I C A The Email You Want. http://www.topica.com/t/16
Newsletters, Tips and Discussions on Your Favorite Topics
========================================================================
```

Another downside of using one of these services is that you can't customize the list with your organization's domain name to indicate that the message was sent by your organization. (A domain name is what appears after the "www" on a Web site address. For example, "sierra.org" is the domain name of The Sierra Club.) Messages sent through an ASP list might have a header that looks like this:

```
========================================================================
From: johndoe@yahoo.com
Subject: Support H.R. 2502!
Date: Wed, 5 Jul 2000 20:09:32 EDT
BestServHost: lists.best.com
Sender: actionalert-errors@lists.best.com
Reply-To: johndoe@yahoo.com
To: actionalert@lists.best.com
========================================================================
```

When you customize the list name to match your organization's domain name, the message will have a header that identifies your organization by its domain name. So it might look something like this:

```
========================================================================
Date: Wed, 5 Jul 2000 01:06:27 -0600 (MDT)
From: Audrie Krause
Subject: NetAction Notes No. 58
Sender: netaction-owner@netaction.org
Reply-To: audrie@netaction.org
========================================================================
```

If you are thinking of using a service like Topica, eGroups or ListBot, you'll need to weigh the advantages against the disadvantages. If you decide

to go ahead, be sure to ask how you can keep a backup of your email
subscriber list. Like the database of your members' addresses and phone
numbers, your email subscriber list is a valuable asset.

Commercial in-house email list software

Another way to set up a list is to install commercial list software on your
organization's "server" computer. Some of these commercial products are
free, and others have to be purchased. Commercial list software is not very
user-friendly. So this is only a good option if your organization runs its
own in-house mail server, has a dedicated high bandwidth Internet
connection, and employs a network administrator.

Three common software packages for handling email lists are:

  * Listserv
  * Majordomo
  * Lyris

All three offer free versions of their software package, though more
advanced features require purchasing a license.

NOTE: NetAction uses and recommends Majordomo list software if your
organization has the hardware and technical expertise to operate it. Once
the software has been installed and configured the way you want it -- which
is the part that requires technical expertise -- anyone with basic computer
skills can easily manage the list. Also, the process by which people
subscribe or unsubscribe is simple enough that most people don't need help
from the list manager.

Techniques for using email lists

If you use a Web-based list service or a commercial list software product,
you'll have some decisions to make about how the list will operate. In the
following section, we will be reviewing several techniques to set up and use
email lists so they serve your organization's needs.

Annoucement-only email lists

This configuration provides one-way communication from the list owner to the
list subscribers. This configuration is good for distributing electronic
newsletters, action alerts, and other information quickly, cheaply and
easily to a large number of people. When you configure a list for
announcements only, you need a password in order to post messages. Since you
determine who knows the password, you determine who can post messages to the
list. You can limit posting privileges to one individual, or several people
in your organization.

If you set up your own list using the address book and "Bcc" features in
your regular email software, you are in effect creating an announcement-only
list. That's because you will be the only person with access to the list and
the ability to post to it, and your address is the only address that
recipients can reply to since the others won't be visible.

The main advantage of an announcement-only list is that the owner has
complete control of the content and the frequency of postings. This makes it
a good choice if you want to distribute electronic action alerts, press
releases, or newsletters. The main disadvantage is that subscribers cannot
just hit "reply" to comment to the whole list about something that was
posted.

If you're using commercial list software, you can configure the list so that readers can't reply at all, or so that replies go back to the list's owner. One way to be certain that any replies get back to you is to include a "mailto" hyperlink in the text so that readers who want to comment can do so without having to open a message form. A "mailto" hyperlink automatically opens a message form. Double click on the link below to see how it works, then delete the form to return to this lesson.

```
================================================================
mailto:somebody@yourorganization.org
================================================================
```

Creating a "mailto" hyperlink is very easy. All you have to do is type: mailto: followed (without any spaces) by the email address you want to link to. For practice, type a "mailto" using your own email address, then click on it to open a message form addressed to yourself. Type "testing" in the subject line, and "hello" in the message field, and send it off. The next time you check your email, you'll find a message from yourself with "testing" as the subject line.

Whether or not you use a "mailto" hyperlink, it is always a good idea to include the email address that readers can write to when you send out an action alert, press release, or other information to an email list.

Moderated email lists

A moderated email list allows for controlled two-way communication. Anyone who subscribes to a moderated list can post a message to the list, but the message is routed to the list owner, who gets to decide whether or not to post it. This gives the list owner nearly as much control over the content as the owner of an announcement-only list.

You can also set up a moderated discussion list by using the address book and "Bcc" features in your regular email software. You set it up exactly as you would an announcement-only list (using the "bcc" field). But when you send something out you include a brief note informing readers that their comments are welcome. Any replies are automatically directed to you since you sent the message. To distribute replies that you approve, simply copy and paste the reply text into a new email form and send out another email to the list you created with your address book and "Bcc" field.

The main advantage of a moderated list is that the moderator can make sure that comments from readers are relevant to the purpose of the list. The main disadvantage is that you'll have to read every reply you get from list subscribers in order to decide whether or not to post them. This can be time-consuming if the list is very active. Also, if you decide not to post someone's comment you may take some heat from the subscriber whose post is rejected. You can minimize such criticism by having a clearly articulated statement describing the purpose of the list.

Unmoderated email lists

An unmoderated list allows for open communication among all subscribers. Anyone who subscribes to an unmoderated list can post a message to the list for everyone else to see. This configuration gives your subscribers the most freedom to communicate. But it also gives you as the list owner the least amount of control over the content.

The main advantage of an unmoderated list is low maintenance for the list owner. If subscription is automatic, rather than by approval, you will be able to manage the list with minimal effort. The main disadvantage, of

course, is that you'll have almost no control over the content. This list configuration is the most likely to be abused by subscribers -- and also by spammers -- since there is no way to stop someone from posting anything they want to the list.

You can exercise some control over an unmoderated list by requiring that all subscriptions be approved by the owner. This will allow you to screen out spammers, and also to remove a subscriber who becomes disruptive or impolite. With the exception of spammers, however, you should be cautious about removing subscribers because of concerns about the content of their posts. If the removal of a subscriber is perceived as censorship, it may generate more complaints than it resolves.

Open subscription process (anyone can participate)

An open subscription list allows anyone who is interested to subscribe. You won't have to approve any new subscribers. If you are configuring an "announcement only" list or a "moderated" list, as described above, you may want an open subscription process to avoid having to approve each new subscriber. Since you will control everything that gets posted, you won't have to worry about spammers sending junk email to your list. If you are configuring an "unmoderated" list, and have an open subscription, you are very likely to get spammers subscribing and then spamming the list with junk email.

Membership-only lists (subscription approval, password-protected Web sites)

When you set up a list to require subscription approval, all subscription requests are forwarded to you, or whoever you've designated as the list owner. If you want to allow the subscription, you'll reply to the message with the list password. If you don't want to allow it, you won't need to do anything.

If you set up a list with your own email software, you are in fact setting up a list that requires approval since you're the only one who can add new email addresses to your address book.

How should your organization operate its mailing list? Should it be announcement-only? Is a moderator necessary? What subscription process would be better? Consider your organization's needs and goals before deciding.

Signature files

A signature file (also known as sig or dot-sig file) at the end of an email message is an excellent way to provide contact information. If you include a complete URL, the signature file will also serve as a hyperlink to your Web site. Here is an example of a very basic signature file:

```
=================================================================
<<NetAction>>
Audrie Krause, Executive Director
E-MAIL: audrie@netaction.org
601 Van Ness Ave., No. 631
San Francisco, CA 94102
TELEPHONE: (415) 775-8674 FAX: (415) 673-3813
* * * WEB: http://www.netaction.org * * *

**********************************
=================================================================
```

It's also possible to include a sentence or two in the signature file that

promotes an event or action that your organization is involved in. Here is
an example of a signature file that contains a message:

```
===============================================================
THE SUITCASE CLINIC
A student-run non-profit organization providing free services
for the homeless and low-income communities.

570 University Hall, Berkeley, CA 94704
(510) 643-6786

website: http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~suitcase/
e-mail: suitcase@socrates.berkeley.edu
===============================================================
```

Most email browsers allow the user to set up a signature file that will
automatically be tacked onto the end of every email message. If the
signature file is the default, your browser should have a menu choice that
lets you send a message without the signature in the event you don't want to
include the identifying information. Some browsers also allow the user to
set up an alternate signature so that you can include organizational contact
information for your activist messages, and personal information for your
personal correspondence.

If you plan to use a signature file, you should be aware that many Internet
users consider it bad manners if your signature file is larger than your
message. So if you frequently send short notes, remember to suppress the
signature file.

TRY A PRACTICE ALERT: Get permission from two or three friends to
temporarily subscribe their addresses, then create an address book email
alert list. Draft a short action alert, and send it to your list.

       Part 2C: Tips for Effective Online Media

       A NetAction Mini-Trainer

Email is an excellent tool for communicating with media. It is a
cost-effective way to quickly distribute press releases and newsletters, and
is also useful for submitting letters to the editor or opinion articles.
Electronic press releases and newsletters can also be posted to your Web
site. NetAction offers the following suggestions for communicating online.

Tips for Effective Online Media:

Distribute email press releases in plain ascii text.
Draft your press release as you would any other email message, using an
email software program such as Eudora or Microsoft Outlook. Never send press
releases as attachments to email, or attach other documents to email press
releases. If you need to prepare a paper copy of the press release, copy and
paste the ascii text into a word processing document (such as Microsoft
Word) after the release is written in the email browser.

Keep the text brief and focused.
An electronic press release should follow the same "pyramid" format as any
other press release. Start with the most important information (and remember
the five "W's" - who, what, where, when and why). Use short paragraphs and
keep it brief.

Write a subject line that's compelling or provocative.
Keep in mind that the subject line is the first thing reporters will see
when they download your release. Never email a press release (or any other
message) with a blank subject line.

Include your electronic contact information.
Remember to include your email address and Web site URL in addition to your
phone and fax number, and address. Put all your contact information at the
top of the press release.

Use hyper-links where appropriate.
If there is additional information available on your Web site -- such as a
white paper or an event announcement -- include a hyper-link so reporters
can click right to it. Online publications will often include these links in
their stories, making this an effective way to direct visitors to your Web
site.

Send a test message before distributing your press release.
Always send a copy of the press release to yourself or to a colleague before
distributing it. Check the format to make sure there are no broken lines of
text, and check for any mistyped Web URLs by testing them to make sure they
work.

Avoid disclosing the recipients' email addresses.
Always type the recipients' addresses in the "Bcc" field of your email
message header, rather than in the "To" or "Cc" field. (See NetAction's "How
to Create An Email Media List.")

Post your organization's media contact information on the home page of your
Web site.
Be sure to keep the contact information up-to-date, and include information
on how reporters can be added to your mailing list.

Treat email media inquiries the same as phone inquiries.
Always respond just as promptly to email media inquiries as you would to
phone calls. Reporters who work for online publications are much more likely
to contact you by email than by phone. If you're responsible for answering
media inquiries, check your email frequently throughout the day.

Set up an online archive for your media communications.
Set aside an area of your Web site where reporters can locate past press
releases. (If you publish a newsletter in electronic form, maintain an
online archive of past issues, as well.)

Post press releases only to appropriate lists, news groups, and
publications.
If you plan to post your press release to any email discussion lists, news
groups or online publications, make sure the topic of your release is
appropriate content for the list or Web site. If your press release
announces a new report on air pollution, it would not be appropriate content
for a forum for race car enthusiasts, for example.

Collect email addresses from your media contacts.
If you've been distributing your press releases by fax or postal mail, ask
your media contacts if you can switch to email distribution. Commercial
media directors (such as Bacon's Metro California Media) routinely include
email contact information. Major newspapers frequently have separate staffs
for their online versions, so you'll need to include those contacts on your
list, too. There are also media directories and news services specifically
for online publications that may be appropriate to add to your media list.

Limit the size of your email message window.
In many email browsers, text that is longer than the width of the message window will "wrap" to the next line. (When text is set to "wrap," you don't need to hit the "return" key at the end of every line.) If the size of your message window is set for more than about 75, the automatic "wrap" may result in broken lines of text.

How to Create An Email Media List

The simplest way to create an email media list is to use your regular email software. The most common products you might use are Qualcomm's Eudora, Microsoft Outlook, or Netscape Mail. To create your own email activism list, you will need to be familiar with two features of your email software: the address book and the "Bcc" field.

Using Your Email Address Book

Most email software programs have a feature that lets you set up an address book where you can store the email addresses of friends, relatives, and business associates. Most email address books will let you store hundreds or even thousands of names, making it a useful tool for creating a simple announcement-only email list that you can use to send out press releases or email newsletters.

For example, if your organization distributes press releases, you can set up an address book entry labeled "Media" to store the email addresses of reporters and editors so you won't have to send individual messages to each of them. In the example below, we created an address book entry labeled "Media" in Netscape Messenger. The first two email addresses in this "Media" entry are reporter@sfgate.com and editor@latimes.com. (The other addresses aren't visible in the screen shot of the address book.)

Using the "Bcc" Field

When the email addresses have been entered in the address book, your list is ready to use. But you'll want to send messages to the list without disclosing any of the recipients' addresses. So if you haven't already been introduced to the "Bcc" field, it's time to get acquainted.

When you open a "New Message" window in your email software, the message form will usually include a header that looks something like this:

```
=======================================================================
    To:
    From:
    Subject:
    Cc:
    Bcc:
    X-Attachments
=======================================================================
```

(Note: In some email software, "Bcc" is not included in the default setting of the header display. If you don't see it, check the "Help" file or the User Manual that came with the software, or contact the software company's support service by phone or email.)

Using the Media list in the example above, here is how you can send a message without revealing the reporters' email addresses: Type "Media" in the "Bcc" field of the message header (instead of in the "To" field) and type your own email address in the "To" field, like this:

```
=======================================================================
   To: janedoe@nonprofit.org
   From: janedoe@caral.org
   Subject: PRESS RELEASE: CARAL lauds FDA approval of mifepristone
   Cc:
   Bcc: Media
   X-Attachments
=======================================================================
```

Always use the "Bcc" field if you send email to a list you've created in
your address book!

If you type "Media" in the "To" field instead of the "Bcc" field, all of the
reporters' addresses will be displayed when the recipients open the message.
There are two problems with this. First, some people prefer not to disclose
their email address. Also, if the address list is long, the header will be
long. This is annoying to some people because they have to scroll through
screens full of addresses before they see the message. If your list contains
several hundred addresses, just imagine how annoying it will be to scroll
through all those screens! Here is an example of an email message from
someone who neglected to use the "Bcc" field:

```
=======================================================================
  From: "Jane Doe" <janedoe@hotmail.com>
  To: James King <JKing@msn.com>, Alan Williams <awilliams@sirius.com>,
     Dave Garrison  <DG@aol.com>, "Jennifer Reilly" <Reilly@Reilly.com>,
     "George Kelly" <Gkelly@pacbell.net>, "Thomas Jones" <tj54@aol.com>,
     Gina Rogers <GinaR@uswest.com>, Dan Stevens <dans@yahoo.com>,
     Vincent Davis <vince@att.net>, Ron Butler <ronbutler@dnai.com>,
     "Marc Smith" <marc_smith@earthlink.net>, Tony Altura
     <tonya@food.org>, "Jeffrey Carr" <carr867@aol.com>,
     "Michael Milton" <mmilton@ucla.edu>,
     Peter Boyd <pboyd@mindspring.com>, "Susan Smith" <ss@home.com>
=======================================================================
```

Online Media Advocacy Resources

Media Advocacy Guides and Tool Kits

Managing the Media, A Guide for Activists
   http://tenant.net/Organize/media.html

"Raising Our Voices," A Tool Kit for Activists
   http://www.media-alliance.org/voices/index.html

ConsumerNet's "How To Work With the Press" Guide
   http://www.consumernet.org/library/pr_writing.shtml

ConsumerNet's "Nonprofit Publicity" Guide
   http://www.consumernet.org/library/publicity.shtml

Benton Foundation's Best Practices Toolkit
   http://www.benton.org/Practice/Toolkit/publicize.html

NetAction Notes 20 on Media Activism
   http://www.netaction.org/notes/notes20.html

NetAction Notes 47 on Media Activism
   http://www.netaction.org/notes/notes47.html

Online Media and News Services

Media Alliance Links to Media Organizations
   http://www.media-alliance.org/medialinks.html

Thousands of General Media Links
   http://ajr.newslink.org/

Ascribe Public Interest News Wire
   http://www.ascribe.org/

Links for Progressives and Media Activists
   http://www.nlightning.com/bookmarks.html

Salon Magazine
   http://www.salon.com/

Institute for Global Communication (IGC)
   http://www.igc.org/

AlterNet
   http://www.alternet.org/

Common Dreams Newswire
   http://www.commondreams.org/community.htm

The Village Voice
   http://www.villagevoice.com/

NewcityNet
   http://www.newcitynet.com/

Weekly Wire
   http://weeklywire.com/ww/current/ww_news.html

NewsBytes News Service
   http://www.newsbytes.com/

Directories

Mailing List Directory
   http://www.liszt.com/

Deja News Search locates news groups
   http://www.dejanews.com/

Publicly accessible mailing lists
   http://www.paml.net/

Bay Area Progressive Directory & Events Calendar
   http://www.emf.net/~cheetham/index.html

Craigslist announcement mailing lists for Bay Area events, jobs, etc.
   http://www.craigslist.org/

Newstrawler searches for news on the Internet
   http://www.newstrawler.com/nt/nt_home.html

Online Public Relations

Bibliography

Bacon's Internet Media Directory
    1782 pages, $195.00
    Primedia Information Inc.
    101 Lake Drive, highstown, NJ 08520-5397
    Phone: 800-621-0561
    Web: http://www.baconsinfo.com

Poor Richard's Internet Marketing and Promotions
    By Peter Kent and Tara Calishain
    404 pages, $29.95, ISBN 0-9661032-7-0
    Published by Top Floor Publishing
    P.O. Box 260072, Lakewood, CO 80226
    Web: http://www.PoorRichard.com/promo

Public Relations on the Net
    By Shel Holtz
    332 pages, $24.95, ISBN 0-8144-7987-1
    Published by AMACOM, American Management Association
    1601 Broadway, New York, NY 10019
    Web: http://www.amanet.org

Publicity on the Internet
    By Steve O'Keefe
    401 pages, $29.99 ISBN 0-471-16175-6
    Published by Wiley Computer Publishing, Wiley & Sons, Inc.
    Professional, Reference and Trade Group
    605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012
    Web: http://www.wiley.com/compbooks/

Spin Works!
    By Robert Bray
    128 pages, $23.95 ISBN 0-9633687-9-6
    Published by the Strategic Press Information Network (SPIN),
    a project of the Independent Media Institute
    77 Federal Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
    Web: http://www.spinproject.org/

    Part 3A: Web-based Advocacy and Outreach Tools -- Basic Strategies

When it comes to Web sites, "less is more" is often the best strategy. In
many cases, your organization will be better off leaving the high-end
graphics to the "dot-coms" and focusing on informational content. Although
there is much hoopla about DSL and cable broadband, the vast majority of
Internet users are still using dial-up Internet service providers. Extensive
use of graphics could make your Web site difficult to reach.

The key to building a useful Web site is to identify your organization's
core competency and build your Web site around that core so visitors will
have fewer things to choose from and fewer choices. Do less, but do it
better. The less you do on your Web page, the easier it will be to keep it
updated and fresh.

Think about how interactive tools are going to work on the Web site. Will
you use a "mailto:" form, a fax server or a CGI script (a small programming
application)? How will you manage the communications that will result from
your Web prescence? Will someone on staff be responsible for answering

email? Who will keep the content up-to-date?

You'll need to make a decision about how you will build and maintain your
Web site. Will a staff member or volunteer be responsible, or will you hire
a consultant? (See our mini-trainer on Web design for more on this topic.)

Avoid Web centrism, the tendency to focus on your Web site and ignore
text-only technologies like email, mailing lists and news groups. Text is
still far more popular, and has the advantage of being an active "push"
technology. Keep in mind that most people check their email first. Bring
people to your Web site with targeted, content-rich email announcements and
reminders.

Monitor your email box on a regular basis. People will contact you from your
Web site and will expect a quick reply. Create standard reply files for easy
email management. Compile a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page to reduce
the need to respond to common questions. (As people email you with repeat
questions, add them to the FAQ.) Periodically revise your Web site so that
it addresses the concerns and questions of your audience.

Integration of email and Web tools

An important aspect of conducting successful activism using the Internet is
to integrate email and Web tools to create a comprehensive online campaign.
Your organization's Web site should be fully operational to conduct the
online activism campaign of your choice. In addition, you should use email
outreach and publicity through other Web sites to drive traffic to your Web
site activism tools.

Work with other Web sites and portals to publicize your online activism
campaign. Web sites such as eActivist, Idealist, HandsNet, and IGC's
Internet Progressive Gateway will be supportive of your efforts and will
list you free of charge. Surf the Web periodically to find sites likely to
assist you in your campaign.

Newsletter sign-up

As we discussed in Part Two, collecting email addresses from your supporters
and signing them up to receive your email newsletter is an essential
component of your online activism efforts. Your Web site is an important
part of this effort. Include your newsletter sign-up form on as many pages
of your Web site as possible to make it easy for people to sign up. Keep in
mind that some people will find your Web site through search engines and may
not even see your Home Page. Make sure that each page has a newsletter
sign-up form or a link to the sign-up form.

Publicizing your URL and email list

Think "cross medium" in your effort to publicize your Web site address and
any email addresses that are important to your online activism campaign.
Your print newsletters, reports, press releases, brochures and business
cards should include all of this information. Consider printing up a small
flyer or bookmark that you drop into all outgoing mail from your office.
We've already mentioned adding this type of information to your email
signature files. Add your URL to your voice mail message, particularly on
phone numbers used for incoming calls from the general public.

Consider adding a "tell-a-friend" script on your Web site. Visitors can type
in the email addresses of friends to email them a brief message recommending
that they visit your site. See the American Association of Retired Person
(AARP)'s "Tell a Friend!" page at

http://legislators.com/cgi-bin/friend.pl?dir=aarp.

Whenever possible, make your Web site and email references specific to the content. Saying: "Visit our Web site at www.childrensdefense.org" is good. Saying "Sign the online petition to protect access to child care at www.childrensdefense.org" is even better. Get creative!

If you're using email outreach to announce an upcoming campaign and keep supporters informed as the campaign progresses, include a hyperlink to the campaign page on your Web site. This hyperlink is a vital component of your effort to get people involved quickly and with a minimal time commitment. If your goal is to send 250 faxes to a targeted decision maker, or to collect 5,000 names on a Web site petition, keep your supporters informed, and appeal for their support, with a notice on your Web site. Finally, when an online campaign is complete, report back to your supporters on how you made use of their signature or their faxes. Close the activism loop through this feedback.

Here are some examples to show you how much variety there is in the tools activists are using on Web sites.

Fax server sites:

  * Corporate Watch. Last year they campaigned to "Tell Salomon Smith
    Barney to Stop Underwriting World Bank Bonds!" Although this service is
    no longer active, you can see it at
    http://www.corpwatch.org/trac/action/2000/18.html.
  * American Civil Liberties Union Fax to Tell Your US Representative and
    Senator to Support "Driving While Black" Legislation. Visit
    http://aclu.org/action/dwb106.html.
  * Global Exchange Fax To Support Democracy in Haiti. Visit:
    http://globalexchange.org/getInvolved/haitifax.html.

Online petitions:

(We discussed the problems with email petitions in Lesson 2A. Web-based petitions are less problematic, so we've included some examples here.)

  * The Jane Goodall Institute Petition to End Illegal Hunting of
    Threatened & Endangered Species (including chimpanzees and other
    primates) in the Congo Basin in Africa,
    http://www.janegoodall.org/chimps/bushmeat.htm.
  * National Center on Institutions and Alternatives Petition to Support
    the Coalition for Federal Sentencing Reform. Visit:
    http://www.sentencing.org/sign.html.
  * International Rivers Network Petition in Support of the Struggle to
    Stop Dams on India's Narmada River. Visit:
    http://www.irn.org/programs/india/petition.000823.html (No longer
    active, but a good technique in explaining that the campaign is
    complete and where to go for further information.)
  * SFmusician.com Petition to Save the Local Music Scene. Visit:
    http://www.sfmusician.com/petition/.

Letter sign-ons:

  * National Organization for Women Letter to Support Increase in Child
    Care Funding. Visit:
    http://www.capweb.net/now/LegAlert.morph?LegAlert_id=339.
  * Planned Parenthood Letter to Support Contraceptive Equity Legislation &
    Choice. Visit: http://www.plannedparenthood.org/rchoices/lac/.
  * Center for Food Safety Letter to Take Genetically Engineered Bovine

Growth Hormone Off the Market. Visit:
http://www.foodsafetynow.org/send.asp?cam_id=57.
* Council for A Livable World Letter to Tell the President to delay a
decision on deploying a national missile defense. Visit:
http://congress.nw.dc.us/cgi-bin/alertpr_oracle.pl?dir=clw&alert=14.

Postcards:

* GEFoodAlert.org ePostcard to Tell Campbell's and Kellogg's to Test and
Label Genetically Engineered Foods. Visit: http://gefoodalert.org/.
* NARAL's Choice for America Campaign. Visit:
http://www.naral.org/choice/forms/postcards/postcard.html

Let's think a moment for how your organization could use these Web tools.
Which Web tools would be useful for an advocacy campaign supporting a
particular bill? How should your organization keep its supporters up-to-date
on the campaign's progress and finish?

Web Outreach

Relatively new services on the Web are allowing organizations to find and
communicate with other organizations and interested people that may be
concerned with similar issues. These outreach services are provided through
online forums, web-portals, or other outreach services.

Web Forums

Web Forums are areas on the Web where you can post and respond to messages.
It's likely that in the future, many businesses, government offices, schools
and non-profit organizations will have forums on their Web sites.

Web forums are similar to "usenet" in that both forums and usenet allow
users to post and respond to messages. The difference is that Web forums are
based on the Web (rather than a separate Internet system like usenet), and
are considerably more flexible than usenet (especially with respect to
customization, security, and advertising). Web forums are also similar to
"chat" in that both forums and chat allow users to gather and interact on
the web. The main difference is that forums do not require all participates
to be online at the same time.

Since conventional search services are not designed to efficiently index
forum discussions, Forum One Communications Corporation has made its Forum
One index available to the public at no charge.

Examples of non-profits using open source and shareware tools to create
forums:

Example: Environmental Defense Fund
http://plaza.edf.org/discussion.nsf/
Example: Multicultural Education Discussion Board
http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/pavboard/pavboard.html

An example of a site using Web forums:
Alternet's message boards provide a number of Web forums on widely
varying topics.

Other forms of online forums allow users to connect to discussions about any
number of topics related to the site by connecting the user to a
newsgroup,allowing them to sign up to listserves, or providing them with
chat connections.

* Charity Channel provides discussion forums on many subjects concerning nonprofits. This service is provided through listserves that you can sign up for.
* Deja.com's Usenet Discussion Service allows users to search for topics in Usenet newsgroups.
* Liszt.com is a directory of mailing lists, newsgroups, and IRC chat channels.

Web Portals

Web Portals are services that connect people and organizations to many different networks and Internet resources through one site. They connect any number of organizations around the world through their sites and thus help promote coalitions between organizations that otherwise may have never contacted each other.

Some of these Portals only provide the network links for organizations to utilize. These portals facilitate in the organization and disbursement of information throughout the web.

* The Institute for Global Communications (IGC) is a site that provides links to several networks including Peace Net, Eco-net, Women's Net and the Anti-Racism Net. Each of these in turn provide information and links related to the respective subjects.
* The Common Dreams Center is another site that provides links to over 120 organizations in the United States.
* Union of International Associations website has links to over 12,000 NGO's and other organizations indexed by name, region and subject area.

Other portals are more actively involved in helping organizations make connections and link with others of similar goals an interests. These portals provide search mechanisms and other services that allow organizations to actively search out other groups with similar goals.

* Action Without Borders' site www.Idealist.org is one such portal that allows organizations to search a database of over 20,000 international non-profits by subject, dates, or names in order to facilitate in coalition building.
* www.guidestar.org also provides a searchable database of over 640,000 non-profit organizations throughout the United States indexed by name, subject, location and date.

Finding Volunteers

Nonprofit organizations can find volunteers online through Web services that match volunteers with organizations. Nonprofits can find volunteers in their area or volunteers who want to work at home. Virtual volunteering is work that is done over the Internet from a home or work computer. Virtual volunteers give nonprofit groups more freedom in finding help; they are no longer limited to volunteers in the area. See the Virtual Volunteering Project for more information.

Example: http://www.servenet.org
Example: Points of Light Foundation (List of Volunteer Centers by U.S. State)
Example: http://www.idealist.org (Allows prospective volunteers to find you through a search on organizations indexed by subject, date, location, skills, or language)

Also see Web Sites to Find Volunteer Opportunities.

Job Opportunities

In addition to volunteers, nonprofit organizations can also find paid
employees on the internet. Many websites help users find jobs with nonprofit
groups and let nonprofit organizations list their job opportunities.

   * Idealist.com's Job Search lets users search for Nonprofit jobs by
     location, category, and description.
   * ACCESS is a nonprofit organization that list jobs, offers career
     counseling, and has archives of articles concerning nonprofits.
   * OpportunityNOCs.org helps users search for jobs and sign up for their
     mailing lists about nonprofit jobs.

Web-Based Services for Nonprofits

Many Web companies and organizations offer services, like management or
research tools, specifically designed to assist nonprofit organizations.

Management

Many nonprofit organizations are interested in improving efficiency within
their organization. There are online services that have information on how
to manage organizations.

   * Nonprofit Assessment Tool is a free tool to assess different parts of
     your organization's management.
   * Free Management Library has links to many different management-related
     topics.
   * Center for Nonprofit Management educational services, consultation, and
     information.
   * CompassPoint Nonprofit Services management support services to
     nonprofits.

Research

The Internet makes it very easy to do research on almost any topic. Instead
of spending hours at the library, people can do research from their home
computers. Research about nonprofit organizations can be found online.

There are a number of media sites and online portals that allow
organizations to access the information they have in their archives and
databases. These include both free and paid sites.

Some sites will provide searchable databases of information that they have
collected. Most of these sites are free.

   * National Center for Charitable Statistics data on the nonprofit sector
     in the United States
   * The Literature of the Nonprofit Sector a searchable database of the
     Foundation Center's libraries
   * Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly articles and papers that
     report research on voluntarism, philanthropy, and nonprofit
     organizations
   * The Right to Know Network provides access to databases on industries,
     housing and environmental factors in the United States. If the server
     is down or you cannot find what you are looking for, RTK will do the
     research for you and email you the information they find.

Other sites may offer access to their databases for a fee.

* www.alternet.org is a news portal site that provides alternative news articles both written by them and collected from a large number of freelance writers and other organizations. They provide a syndication service that gives access to over 9,000 stories in their archives for an annual fee.
* Lexis-Nexis is one of the largest news and research portals on the web. They provide research memberships for organizations as well as individuals depending upon each's respective research needs.

Additional Resources

There are many other services available on the world wide Web for nonprofit organizations. Many other websites have information about different services for nonprofit groups. Some sites allow users to search for specific services.

* Idealist's List of Services and Programs
* The Non-profit Zone is a comprehensive resource base for non-profits that provides many of the resources discussed here for free.
* INC: The Nonprofit FAQ is a collection of information from many different e-mail lists and Usenet groups.
* Helping.org's Resources for Nonprofits
* Yahoo's List of Nonprofit Resources
* Government Resources for Nonprofits
* The Internet Prospector

Here are some additional information sources on the World Wide Web.

* The World Wide Web Consortium
* WebReference.com
* Web Developer's Virtual Library
* Yahoo's World Wide Web links

Part 3B:Web-based Advocacy and Outreach Tools -- Web Site mini-trainer

How to Get Web Space for Your Organization

Before a webpage can be seen by the public, it needs a Web address. Some Internet companies offer a limited amount of free webspace and provide users with various tools to begin building their webpages.

Example: http://www.geocities.com
Example: http://www.tripod.com

Non-profit organizations might also consider buying their own domain names. ICANN has a list of accredited companies that help companies and individuals register domain names. Most of the companies charge a yearly fee to reserve a domain, but may also offer a variety of free services, such as free e-mail, technical support, and website forwarding. Compare a few different services to find the one that best suits your organization. See How to Find the Perfect Web Hosting Solution.

Example: http://www.yournamefree.com
Example: http://www.webhosting.com

HTML

The main language used on the World Wide Web is HTML. HTML stands for HyperText Markup Language.

HTML is used on the Web for three reasons:
   o Software independence
   o Hardware independence
   o Standard formatting

The basics of HTML are relatively simple. The structure of a Web page is:

        <HTML>
        <HEAD>
        <TITLE> Title of Page </TITLE>
        </HEAD>
        <BODY>
        Put the body of the page here.
        </BODY>
        </HTML>

Most HTML commands use two tags, one at the beginning of the tagged text and another at the end:

        <TAG>TEXT</TAG>

See HTML 4.0 Elements for a list of all the HTML tags.

Tutorials that teach the basics of HTML are available on the web. See About.com's list of HTML Tutorials, Tips, and Tricks.

    Example: HTML: An Interactive Tutorial for Beginners
    Example: NCSA's Beginner's Guide to HTML

Additional HTML resources:

  * HTML 4.01 Specification
  * htmlgoodies.com
  * MediaBuilder: free online tools including an image editor, HTML editor,
    and font mapper.
  * MediaBuilder's List of HTML Editors

For a list of common mistakes made on the web, see Jakob Nielsen's Top Ten Mistakes in Web Design.

The HTML code on a website does not all have to be coded by hand. There are programs that will convert documents of non-HTML file types to HTML. See W3's HTML Converters Page for information and links to different HTML converters.

JavaScript

JavaScript is an optional object-oriented scripting programming language that can be used to change colors or pictures as your mouse moves over something on your Web page, or for interactive menus, or for other tasks. JavaScripts are short programs that allow users to interact with your web page. Not all browsers are capable of or enabled to run these scripts. Some people turn off this capability for security reasons because malevolent Internet users have found ways to exploit security holes in browsers with JavaScript. The security risk, however, is usually minimal. Do not create a

web page with navigation based entirely on JavaScript.

   * IDM: JavaScript FAQ
   * The Definitive JavaScript Resource
   * JavaScript Code Examples
   * Netscape's JavaScript Documentation

Web Content and Accessibility

Focusing on content is the easiest way to make a site compelling and
accessible to the widest range of users. There are a couple of things to
consider in assuring the accessibility of your page to people with varying
technology and needs. These are interoperability, internationalization, and
accessibility to disabled persons.

   * Interoperability merely refers to the need to make the site compatible
     with different Web browsers and technology. Consider how different web
     browsers will view your page.

       o View your page(s) with different browsers, and even different
         versions of the same browser, such as Netscape Navigator,
         Microsoft's Internet Explorer, and AOL's older browser. For more
         info, see the Best Viewed With Any Browser Campaign.

         Example:
             Web Page Backward Compatibility Viewer
             http://www.delorie.com/web/wpbcv.html

       o Validation of your page is very important to ensure that any
         mistakes that might be overlooked in one version of a browser will
         be caught. For more information, read Why Validate Your HTML.

         Example:
             Web Page Validator http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/

       o One method of achieving interoperability is by making multiple
         pages formatted for each browser, which can be very time and labor
         intensive.

       o An easier method is to limit the use of frames and high-end
         multimedia, as they're not widely adopted yet. Using fancy,
         advanced features of web-sites, such as large graphical images,
         photos, frames, Shock-wave animations, or Java applets, will
         reduce the number of users who can view your website, and will
         cause long download times even for those who can view it.

         Examples:
             + Earth Vision: http://www.earthvision.net/ (lots of graphics,
               takes a while to load)
             + The Role Model Project for Girls Bookstore
               http://www.womenswork.org/girls/books/ (gives choice of
               frames or not)
             + HateWatch http://hatewatch.org/frames.html (example of page
               using frames)
       o Create good "ALT" tags on your Web site for visitors with images
         turned off or text-only browsers, or create "text-only" Web pages.

             Example: Good Alt Tags at Corporate Watch
             http://www.corpwatch.org/

       o If you can, survey your membership and watch your logs to

understand their technological "level" so you can adapt the
technology on your Web site to fit their needs, interests and
abilities.

* Internationalization deals primarily with the incorporation of certain
  standards within the HTML encoding, but is important for
  translatability of Web sites to different languages. While this can get
  fairly complicated, there are a few things that you can do for
  starters. For more in depth reading on this check out:

    RFC2070 ("Internationalization of the HyperText Markup Language",
    F. Yergeau, G. Nicol, G. Adams, and M. Drst, January 1997).
    http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2070.txt
    Weaving the Multilingual Web, 15th international Unicode
    Conference, Aug 31st
    http://www.w3.org/Talks/1999/0830-tutorial-unicode-mjd/

  o Mark up the primary language of the site. To do this you just
    insert a Lang attribute into the HTML tag at the begining of your
    page. Language tagging helps control classification, searching and
    sorting by search engines, control hyphenation, quotation marks
    and spacing and allows for accurate voice synthesis by non-visual
    browsers.

        Example: <HTML LANG="en-US">

  o Specify any changes in the language for a particular part of your
    document. This is also important to disabled accessibility as
    discussed later. To do this you just insert the Lang attribute
    into the part of the document which changes languages.

    Example
        <P Lang="ja">

    For a full list of language codes see:
        http://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/bibcodes.html
  o There are online tools that can be used to translate the text of
    your site to other languages if you want. Some of these are paid
    services, others are provided free of charge. The free ones are
    mechanical translations and not entirely how we'd say thing if we
    were actually speaking the second language, so take them with a
    grain of salt.

    Examples:
        Weblations' Description of Translation services:
        http://www.weblations.com/eng/articles/art_1.htm
        AltaVista World's Translation services:
        http://world.altavista.com/

* Accessibility requires that people with varying physical disabilities
  can utilize a site. This includes making the page compatible with
  Braille readers, non-visual browsers, and other forms of non-graphical
  or visual technology. The W3C's paper on accessibility outlines
  "checkpoints" that can used to make a site accessible to disabled
  peoples. These include:

  o Providing textual descriptions of all non-textual content either
    within the alt tags of the images or separate, redundant textual
    descriptions. This includes tables that do not convert easily to
    linear text format.

o Use style sheets to define the format of a document for easier use
  by text or non-visual browsers. These are called Cascading Style
  Sheets (CSS) and are described in more detail at :
  http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/css/

o Being aware of the colors used in the page, as high contrast is
  needed for some with color or seeing disorders. Don't use color
  alone to relay information.

o Clearly identify any changes in the language of the page, as some
  non-visual readers can shift languages if they are instructed to.
  See previous Internationalization bullet on how to do this.

o Provide linear text alternatives to any tables that are necessary.
  Text only and non-visual browsers have a hard time rendering side
  by side text in tables.

o Avoid Screen Flickering, Text Blinking, Scrolling, Auto Refreshing
  or other movement on the page unless you include a method to
  disable it in a script or applet. Some people with photosensitive
  disorders may have seizures from screen flickering at rates
  between 4 and 59 flashes per second!!!

o Provide clear and consistent navigation, with site maps, search
  abilities, navigation bars, content listings, and clear labels to
  all links.

A much more complete description of disabled accessibility can be obtained
at W3C's technical accessibility guidelines at:
http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/

An easier to follow, slide show based curriculum of the Web accessibility
guidelines proposed by the W3C is available at:
http://www.w3.org/WAI/wcag-curric/

Michael Stein wrote a great article called Focus on Content (reprinted with
permission) that provides a brief methodology for creating content driven
sites.

Web Promotion

Web site promotion and maintenance should be considered as you begin to
design your site. In this section, we identify some of the things you need
to consider.

  * Design an outreach plan
     o what is your URL going to be?
     o find volunteers to help
     o what is your staffing commitment?
  * Get listed with all search engines
     o Search Engine Comparisons
        + The search-engine secrets of the pros (ZDNet)
        + How to Search the Web: A Guide To Search Tools
        + Introduction to Search Engines
     o Major Engines
        + Alta Vista http://altavista.com/
        + Excite http://www.excite.com/
        + HotBot http://www.hotbot.com/
        + Infoseek http://www.infoseek.com/
        + Lycos http://www.lycos.com/
        + WebCrawler http://www.webcrawler.com/

       + Yahoo http://www.yahoo.com/
    o Search Agregators (may cost money)
       + Submit-it http://www.submit-it.com/
       + Yahoo's list on how to promote your Web site
        http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/World_Wide_Web/Information_and_Documentation/
Site_Announcement_and_Promotion/
       + Yahoo's list of companies that will do it for you
        http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/World_Wide_Web/Site_Announcement_and_Promotion/
       + Postmaster http://www.netcreations.com/postmaster/

Michael Stein presented an excellent outline called Success on the Internet:
Creating An Effective Online Presence at a conference in June, 1999
(reprinted with permission).

Additional Tips

Other Web Tools

Password protected Web sites let you limit access to an entire site, or to
portions of a site. This configuration can be useful for membership
organizations that wish to provide dues-paying members with services or
information not available to the general public. It can also be a useful way
for an organization's leadership (Board of Directors, steering committee,
etc.) to exchange information or discuss strategy.

Set up a page on your site with links to other Web pages relevant to your
message. Whenever you provide a link to another site, contact that site's
webmaster and ask for a reciprocal link back to your site. Reciprocal links
can help drive traffic to your site from other sites, as well as enrich the
content that you offer readers since you are pointing them to other relevant
information. But keep in mind that these links can also drive traffic away
from your site. That it why it's important to ensure that the links are
relevant to your message, and to ask for a reciprocal link back to your
site.

Set up a good META Tag for Web crawlers

Key words, page descriptions, expiration dates and other information about
your page and site can be "tagged" with html code in the header lines so
that they can be located by search engines such as Alta Vista or Infoseek.
This will increase the chance of your site being located in a search. See
the example below for more information on how to use Meta tags.

    Examples: Web Design Group's FAQ (question 26)
    http://htmlhelp.com/faq/wdgfaq.htm#26
    Examples: HTML Meta Tag
    http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-html40/struct/global.html#h-7.4.4 (Note: this
    one best used by those familiar with HTML)

Do pro-active promotion to mailing lists and newsgroups

    Example: NetAction Notes #32
    http://www.netaction.org/notes/notes32.html
    Example: Jakob Nielsen's Alert Box alert-box.txt

Enhance staff/board signature files to provide a friendly reminder for your
correspondents

    Examples: a few email signature (.sig, pronounced dot-sig) samples

Create campaign icons for linking with other sites.

Icons can be very effective in advocacy campaigns, and they may also help
drive traffic to your site. The best icons are simple, small, and easily
associated with the issue. They can also be integrated with other aspects of
your advocacy. For example, the same graphic can be used on bumper stickers
or buttons.

Examples: Any Browser Campaign http://www.anybrowser.org/campaign/
Examples: NetAction's Fish Campaign
http://www.netaction.org/msoft/winfish.html

Be careful about the use of graphics.

Graphics can be used to enhance your webpage. However, the overuse of
graphics will slow down your website and may distract users from the
information on your website. Sites with low graphics are going to be more
accessible than sites with high graphics or advanced features like video
streaming. See NetAction Notes No. 33 for a discussion of the use of
graphics on the web. Organizations can create their own graphics or use
graphics from websites that offer free graphics for use on other webpages.
Webcom's Index of Icons and Graphics has a list of these sites.

Regularly review your Web site statistics to analyze how your site is doing.
Obtain statistics not just on your main page, but for other main "section"
pages as well.

Examples: NetAction Sample Log
http://www.netaction.org/training/sample-log.html

As you see in reviewing the sample log from NetAction's Web site, there is a
lot of information that can be collected and analyzed. The Internet Service
Provider who hosts your Web site may have a uniform way of reporting the
statistics on your site, in which case you will have less flexibility about
what information you can obtain and analyze.

Monitoring your Web site statistics is useful for a number of reasons.
First, it can help you gauge the effectiveness of your Internet outreach. If
the statistics tell you that only 150 people have visited your Web site in
the last six months, you will probably want to consider other strategies, or
possibly reconsider whether maintaining a Web site is the best use of your
organization's resources. You can also use the statistics to determine which
aspects of your site are attracting interest, and which are not. This could
be useful when you consider a redesign of your site, or the addition or
deletion of specific information.

Non-profit organizations may also find the Web site statistics helpful in
convincing potential funders that your efforts are worthy of their support.
For example, you can document the number of signatures on an electronic
petition, or the number of faxes sent to a member of Congress from your
site's fax server.

Part 4: Membership and Fundraising

The Internet provides activist organizations with new ways of communicating

with members, recruiting new members, and soliciting contributions. With
some exceptions, Internet membership building and fundraising activities
will mostly have an incremental effect in the short run, and it is too early
to predict what will occur in the long run. Organizations that start now to
integrate an online presence into existing activities will be in the best
position to capitalize on the technology as it evolves.

Your Membership

  * Craft your online presence for your existing membership

    Know your organization's mission and understand your members before
    trying to identify online strategies that enhance your organization's
    work. Do your members need to know the latest information about AIDS
    treatment? A daily email newsletter that summarizes developments in
    AIDS treatment and provides pointers to more detailed reports on the
    Web might be a useful supplement to your other communications. Does
    your organization offer a support group for parents of children with
    diabetes? An email discussion list could supplement the group's weekly
    meeting.

  * Publicise your online efforts across the mediums at your disposal:
      o Newsletter
      o Events
      o Voice mail
      o Phone
      o Add email addresses and Web URLs to business cards, bumper
        stickers, buttons, and other give-away items
  * Train your staff, board and volunteers to understand how your online
    presence works, and how to explain it and promote it to members.
  * Get as much feedback from your members as possible about your Internet
    presence. You are doing this for them, so let your efforts reflect
    their needs.
  * Avoid Web-centrism, particularly with members.
  * Don't just repackage your brochure or newsletters since your members
    already receive that. Look for ways to deliver new content or new
    methods of interaction that are not available through other mediums.
  * The Internet is a "fast" medium -- can it play a role for "urgent
    action alerts" for your members?

Keeping Track

A free tool is available on the Web for non-profit organizations that need a
membership database to track contributions and donor demographics. The tool
is ebase, a database template that any nonprofit organization can adopt to
its needs. In addition to its database functions, ebase can be used to print
envelopes and mailing labels and generate customized merge letters,
including personalized email messages to subsets of the organization's
membership list. Manuals and online help are also available. The database
was developed by Desktop Assistance with support from several foundations.

Copies can be downloaded from the Web at: http://www.ebase.org/

Fundraising

Many organizations are experimenting with cyberspace fundraising. Email
solicitations are increasingly popular, especially as year-end appeals. And
despite early concerns, these solicitations are not generating widespread
complaints about spam. The key is to limit your online soliciting to those
individuals who have already expressed an interest in your work, by becoming
a member, joining a list service, or participating in an action or event

that your organization sponsored.

Many organizations have set up membership forms on their Web sites. These efforts range from "bare bones" efforts that provide a postal address and encourage readers to send in a check, or sophisticated secure servers that enable the donor to use a credit card.

Some groups raise money by online sales of buttons, bumper stickers, T-shirts, publications, or other items. Others offer donors a technology-oriented gift. Examples range from simple items such as mouse pads, to fairly sophisticated screen saver software that the donor can download in exchange for a contribution. Some of the issue-oriented organizations have set up links with Amazon.com, which donations a portion of the book sales to the organizations promoting the books. However, some groups now have concerns about Amazon.com's privacy policy. For more information, please visit the Electronic Information Privacy Center (EPIC)'s press release on the matter.

General fundraising articles

Example:Using the Internet for Fundraising
http://www.nonprofit-info.org/misc/981027em.html
Example:Taking the plunge into e-mail fundraising
http://www.netaction.org/training/funding.html
Example: Fundraising Online http://www.fundraisingonline.com/index.html

Three different examples of fundraising approaches:

Example: EPIC http://www.epic.org/epic/support.html
Example: CARAL http://www.caral.org/form.membership.html
Example: WomensWork's secure server
https://secure.manymedia.com/womenswork/form.html

Security should not be taken lightly on the net, especially when you are trusted with other people's financial information. It is not wise at this time to send your credit card information over the net without using some kind of secure methodology, be it encryption via PGP and/or use of a secure server. Many non-profit organizations house their Web sites on external site hosting providers, while others are in full control of all resources related to their Internet connectivity. Similarly, you may have the capability of implementing electronic commerce software on your server or through your host service provider to offer the security needed for credit card transactions. Alternatively, you may choose an intermediate service such as a trusted third party (such as First Virtual), funds transfer (such as CyberCash), digital cash (as it is), or an outside credit card processing firm to handle your transactions.

Financial resources on the Web

There are many different ways that organizations can fundraise on the Internet. Read How Can We Use the Internet for Fundraising? and Netaction Notes Click and give online and Profiting from non-profits for starters.

Some websites match people who want to donate money with charities that are trying to raise money. Nonprofit organizations can register with these sites to find potential donors.

example: http://www.helping.org
example: http://www.egrants.org
Fundsnet Services is a grants and fundraising portal.

There are also sites that will do the soliciting of donors for the
organizations that are registered with it.

Example: www.charitableway.com solicits donors based on profiles of the
organizations that register with them. They take 10% of the donations.

Other sites allow a certain portion of their profits to be donated to
non-profit organizations.

Example:www.4charity.com provides an online "Charity Mall" where 5-40%
of sales go to the non-profits signed up.

For further information on non-profits and e-commerce, read this article
from www.Benton.org

Financial transactions on the Web can be handled in a couple of different
ways.

CyberCash is a secure payment technology that facilitates financial
transactions between banks, financial institutions, transaction processors,
merchants, and consumers. Consumers must first establish an account with
CyberCash. Once they have done so, they can make purchases from
participating merchants, and CyberCash collects a fee for processing the
transaction.

Credit card processing firms, such as creditnet.com, facilitate financial
transactions by providing a secure server through which the transaction is
processed. This prevents the consumer's financial information from being
read by any of the computers it goes through as the data travels from the
customer's computer to the credit card company.

A third alternative is to encrypt, or code, the data so that it cannot be
read as it travels over the Internet. Here is some background on PGP, one
popular encryption technology.

More resources:

  * GuideStar donor's guide to nonprofits and charities:
   http://www.guidestar.org/
  * Philanthropy Journal's Meta-Index of Nonprofits:
   http://www.pj.org/links_metaindex.cfm
  * PhilanthropySearch search engines for nonprofits and philanthropy:
   http://www.philanthropysearch.com/
  * Council on Foundations: http://www.cof.org/
  * Foundation Center: http://www.fdncenter.org/
  * Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers: http://www.rag.org/
  * Free Database for Managing Donor, Member, and Supporter Information:
   http://www.ebase.org/
  * Electronic Commerce FAQ:
   http://cism.bus.utexas.edu/resources/ecfaq.html

        Part 5: Privacy, Copyright, and Censorship

Privacy

Mailing list privacy issues

All mailing lists (also known as listserves) are managed via email - a form of communication that is inherently insecure. Sending mail via the Internet is like sending a postcard through the post office - given the time and resources, anyone who wants to read your mail can do so. So the tips below will not completely ensure secure and private mailing lists.

One way that you can circumvent some security issues is by using Web-based commercial list services like those discussed in Part 2B. These services often provide all the capabilities of commercial mailing list software - mass emailing, easy subscription and unsubscription procedures - with easier management, better security, and extra options like archival abilities. As noted in Part 2B, however, while these services are usually free there are some drawbacks. The companies that provide them attach short advertisements to the top or bottom of all mailings, and most include terms of use that give the service ownership of the content of your lists. You can find a listing of "community groups" at http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/Chats_and_Forums/Mailing_Lists/.

Tips for operating your organization's list:

   * Encourage people to use "disposable" email addresses when signing up
     for your mailing list. (See "Tips for Mailing List Members," #1, below,
     for information on "disposable" email addresses.) While this policy is
     impossible to strictly enforce, you can promote it by suggesting it on
     the mailing list sign-up page of your Web site and other written
     material that includes information about signing up for your
     organization's list.

   * Hide the list membership when you configure the list. Unless the list
     administrator explicitly disables the ability for outsiders to view the
     list membership, anyone on the Internet can view the entire membership
     of a mailing list with a simple e-mail command.

   * If your list is used for announcement purposes rather than open
     discussion among members, you'll want to configure your list to
     restrict posting privileges. Allow only staff members or trusted
     volunteers to post to the list, rather than allowing all subscribers to
     post. This will help prevent spammers or email harassers from attacking
     your members.

   * If your list is used for open discussion among members, you'll want to
     configure your list to be moderated (see Part 2B.) Designate a staff
     member or trusted volunteer to serve as moderator and approve every
     post before it is sent. This will help prevent spammers or e-mail
     harassers from attacking your members.

Tips for mailing list members:

   * Use a "disposable" e-mail address when signing up for mailing lists.
     "Disposable" e-mail addresses minimize the risk in the event an
     unauthorized person gains access to the list membership.

     A good "disposable" e-mail address has two characteristics: strangers
     cannot easily gain information about the sender merely by looking at
     the address, and the "disposable" address is separate from a personal
     or work e-mail address. The e-mail address "audrie@netaction.org," for
     example, would not make a good "disposable" address, because strangers
     can easily decipher that the address belongs to someone at NetAction
     whose first name is Audrie.

     Good places to obtain "disposable" e-mail addresses are websites that

offer free webmail, such as Yahoo! or Hotmail. You can find a listing
of free e-mail sources at Yahoo's listing of free e-mail sources.

* Consider using a "screen name," rather than your real name or a
  combination of your initials and name, when subscribing to mailing
  lists or posting to newsgroups.

World Wide Web privacy issues

The Internet allows users separated by thousands of miles to communicate
instantaneously, and the physical distance between users can lead to a false
sense of security. In reality, the World Wide Web is highly insecure. If you
want to see exactly how much information can be obtained about you and your
computer when you visit a Web site, take the test at
http://www.privacy.net/analyze/.

Cookies

Internet "cookies" are text files that Web sites place on the hard drive of
your computer when you visit the site. Some people don't like having their
online movements tracked, and view cookies as a threat to their privacy.
Other people aren't troubled by cookies. Whether or not you like having your
movements tracked on the Internet, cookies were created for legitimate
business purposes. Online shopping sites, for example, use cookies to
"remember" which items you have placed in your "shopping cart."

How dangerous are cookies? Cookies are simple text files, so they cannot
transmit viruses or cause any other damage to your computer's hard drive or
to your data. But there are good reasons to be concerned about your privacy.
Both Netscape Communicator and Internet Explorer, the two most popular web
browsers, contain several potential major security holes related to cookies.
For example, one privacy monitoring Web site (http://privacy.net/)
discovered a bug in both Netscape and Internet Explorer that allows any Web
site to download all cookies on a user's computer. Though the bug occurs in
only one out of thousand computers, it allows Web sites to obtain e-mail
addresses, passwords, and other sensitive information from affected
browsers. (For more information on this bug, see
http://privacy.net/cookiebug/.

Tips for using cookies:

* Give your Web browser a free upgrade to the latest version, which
  should include a patch that fixes cookie-related security bugs like the
  one described above. You can update Netscape at
  http://home.netscape.com/ and Internet Explorer at
  http://www.microsoft.com/ie/.

* If you want to know how often Web sites place cookies on your computer,
  set your Web browser's preferences to alert you when sites are about to
  place cookies on your computer, and then visit some of your favorite
  Web sites. Most browsers have three options for cookie notification:

    o You may choose to have your browser accept all cookies without
      first informing you.
    o You may have your browser ask you whether a cookie should be
      accepted every time a Web site tries to place one on your
      computer.
    o You may refuse all cookies.

  In Netscape, you will find these options under Edit --> Preferences -->
  Advanced. In Internet Explorer, go to Tools --> Internet Options -->

Security", click on the button that says Custom Level and scroll down to the section entitled Cookies.

Since many cookies are harmless, and popular websites such as Hotmail and Amazon.com utilize them in many transactions, you may not want to deny all cookies. The second option - asking your browser to inform you when a website presents you with a cookie - affords you the option to deny a cookie from websites that you may not trust.

Cookie information links

* Cookie Central - A nicely designed site that tells you everything you
  ever wanted to know about cookies, good and bad. Includes bug alerts,
  ways to disable cookies, and the friendly uses of cookies.
* Junkbuster's How Web Servers' Cookies Threaten Your Privacy - Clear-cut
  guide on why cookies are bad, and how you can disable cookies.
* EPIC's Cookies Page - Links to articles on problems with cookies, as
  well as the Internet Engineering Task Force's proposal to fix many of
  the problems with cookies.

Secure Sockets Layer (SSL)

SSL is an Internet standard that provides for the safe transfer of personal information, such as a credit card number, over the Internet. It does this through encryption, a process that scrambles the information you type on a Web page into a code that can only be read by someone with the specific key to unlock that code. When directed to a Web page using SSL, your browser will automatically encrypt all information that you submit to the Web site. Any time you are asked to provide sensitive personal information on a Web site - such as your credit card numbers or home address - you should use a secure Web site, as explained below.

Tips for conducting safe online transactions using SSL:

* Your Web browser will automatically encrypt information for you, using
  its highest level of built-in protection. Older browsers, however, may
  not utilize 128-bit encryption, the highest level of protection
  currently available. You can upgrade your browser to use 128-bit
  encryption for free, by visiting http://home.netscape.com/ for
  Netscape, or http://www.microsoft.com/ie/ for Internet Explorer.
* Always ensure that your connection uses SSL before conducting business
  on the Internet. Look at the bottom left corner of your Web browser. If
  the Web site uses SSL, you will see a closed lock icon in Netscape, or
  a key icon in Internet Explorer. Also look at the Web address (URL)
  locator bar in your browser. Transactions using SSL will have addresses
  that begin with https:// instead of the standard insecure http://.
* Always print a hard copy of online transactions after you fill out the
  Web page form - and do it before you hit the "Send" or "Submit" button.
  Keep a printed record of the company's contact information, including
  the email address, phone number, and URL, in a safe place.

Web site privacy policies

Any Web site that asks you for information should explain its privacy policy and tell you up front what it intends to do with that information. A good privacy policy will tell you exactly what information the Web site collects from visitors, as well as how that information will be used. For example, if the Web site includes a mailing list sign-up form, the policy should disclose whether your address will be shared with other Web site operators without your permission.

Examples of robust privacy policies include:

* American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
* Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR)
* People for the American Way (PFAW)

Spam

When not referring to the canned pinkish meat, "spam" refers to the mass
mailing of unsolicited e-mail. ("Spam" also refers to the unsolicited or
junk e-mail itself.) Like traditional junk mail sent through the post
office, spam is annoying and wasteful, and at times deceitful or offensive.
Examples of spam include e-mail advertisements for consumer products,
pornographic material, and get-rich-quick scams. Internet hoaxes, the
virtual equivalent of urban legends, are another form of spam, as is
unsolicited political e-mail.

Spam is wasteful for several reasons. E-mail users across the world waste
time downloading, reading, and deleting unwanted e-mail. Furthermore,
spammers (the people who send spam) usually target large groups of e-mail
users, adding significant stress to mail servers, the computers operated by
Internet service providers to send and deliver their customers' e-mail. In
the worst cases, spam can completely overwhelm a mail server, causing it to
shut down and preventing the ISP's customers from sending or receiving any
e-mail.

Sometimes it can be hard to determine whether a particular email message is
spam or is useful, wanted information posted to a mailing list for outreach
purposes. If you manage a mailing list for your organization or your own
personal activism, use the tips below to make sure that you don't alienate
your subscribers by sending them spam.

How to avoid becoming a spammer

* Don't send out unsolicited mass e-mailings, or subscribe people to
  mailing lists without their permission.

* Never post action alerts to email discussion lists or news groups on
  unrelated issues. If your action alert is about clean air, you're
  likely to get flamed if you send it to a discussion list focused on
  free speech.

* If you want to create your own mailing list, start by sending a message
  to appropriate discussion lists and newsgroups, announcing the new list
  and inviting people to subscribe. "Appropriate" means the topic of the
  discussion list or news group is related to the issue you address in
  your message. Be as specific as possible about the topic and how the
  list will operate. Will it be an unmoderated discussion list, or a
  moderated announcement list? Will there be several postings daily, or
  one posting every few weeks?

* As explained in Part 2B, avoid using the "To" and "Cc" fields when
  sending messages. Put your own e-mail address in the "To:" field and
  use the "Bcc" field for all the other addresses.

How to fight spam that you receive in your mailbox

* When you receive spam, do NOT reply to the sender and ask to be taken
  off of the list - even if the mailing instructs you to do so. Often
  spammers will take the e-mail address of the people who reply to spam
  mailings and add them to other spam lists.

  * Use a "disposable" e-mail address when registering with websites. (See
    the section on mailing list privacy issues for more information on
    "disposable" e-mail addresses.)

Further steps to combating spam include reporting spammers to their ISPs,
who will often take action against them by shutting down their accounts.
Visit the Network Abuse Clearinghouse for more information on how to report
spammers.

Links to more information about spam

  * Boycott Internet Spam! - A thorough introduction to spam, why it's bad
    and ways to combat it.
  * EFF's Spamming, Cybersquatting, Net Abuse, and Online Responsibility
    Archive - Press releases, letters to Congress, and articles by the
    Electronic Frontier Foundation, an advocacy group dealing with Internet
    and technology issues.
  * EPIC's Spam Page - Includes information on anti-spam bills under
    consideration in Congress, in addition to links to articles on spam.
  * Junk Email Resource - The resource center for information on the fight
    against spam. Includes links to spam-related lawsuits, a step-by-step
    form to report fraud conducted through spam, and other resources.
  * SpamCop - After you register with SpamCop, you can copy and paste your
    spam e-mails into a text box and SpamCop will automatically report the
    offender to his or her ISP.

Copyrighted Material on the World Wide Web

Copyright laws apply to material published on the World Wide Web just as
with books, articles, CDs, and videos. But many Web pages lack explicit
copyright notices that inform visitors of what may or may not be downloaded
or posted elsewhere, for public or private use.

When creating a Web site containing original material, it's a good idea to
post a copyright policy in an easily noticeable spot. An example of an
extensive copyright policy can be found at
http://www.mlanet.org/copyright.html.

The "Digital Millennium Copyright Act" was enacted in October 1998
specifically to address Internet copyright issues. For more information on
the DMCA, please visit the Association of Research Libraries' analysis of
the bill at http://www.arl.org/info/frn/copy/dmca.html.

What Web material is copyrighted?

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all original content on a Web site is
copyrighted to the creator or owner of that Web site. If you would like to
use content, text, or graphics from someone else's website, both common
courtesy and the law dictate that you must first obtain that author's
permission.

Web page addresses are merely links and cannot be copyrighted. However, a
collection of links that an author compiled may be copyrightable, since it
would be the author's original collection.

Because of the nature of the Web, it is not always easy to determine exactly
what content on a Web site is subject to copyright laws. For some practical
tips for dealing with copyrights on the Web, visit The Copyright Website:
The WWW, at http://www.benedict.com/digital/www/webiss.htm.

For more information on copyrights and the World Wide Web, see the following sites:

* Intellectual Property on the Web - This site addresses several problematic questions having to do with copyrighted material on the Internet.
* Copyright and the World Wide Web - The Information Architecture division of the Los Alamos National Laboratory has written this short article on copyrights and the World Wide Web.

Censorship

Censorship is a complicated issue that divides some progressive groups that generally agree on other issues. Free speech advocates like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) have opposed any limitations on Internet speech, but other organizations worry that acts of violence may be promoted if there are no restrictions at all on hate speech. Planned Parenthood, for example, won a $109 million judgment against the authors of the "Nuremberg Files" Web site, arguing that the site incited visitors to conduct acts of violence against individual abortion providers. (See Planned Parenthood's press release and an alternative view on free speech.

Filtering software

The proliferation of pornography, hate speech, and other offensive content, as well as the potential threat of Internet predators, raises concerns among parents about what their children view online. Some parents use filtering software such as NetNanny and CyberSitter to block access to Web sites they consider inappropriate for their children, or simply offensive.

But filtering software can also inadvertently block useful Web sites. Most filtering software look for "keywords" when blocking specific Web pages. Yet Web sites that support breast cancer research, for example, may be blocked because they contain the word "breast."

For more information on the capabilities of filtering software and reviews of the most popular brands, visit PC Magazine's 1998 Utility Guide: Parental Filtering Utilities. For more information on the problems with filtering software, visit Peacefire.

Free speech resources

* Peacefire.org
* Center for Democracy and Technology: Free Speech Online - A thorough, well-defined Web site on all things related to Internet censorship, including original publications, news on legislation and court cases, and resources for parents.
* EFF's Censorship & Free Expression Archive - A long list of articles, files, and links documenting Internet censorship.
* Free Expression Network: Internet Issues - The Free Expression Network is a coalition of free speech groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way, and EPIC. This site contains current news on Internet censorship issues.

The Virtual Activist Reader

Section I: General Resources for Activists

  * About.com's section on nonprofits and charitable organizations
  * Idealist's links to staff and management resources, employment and
    internships
  * Common Dreams Newswire progressive nonprofit information portal
  * International Organizations' Web page
  * WebActive Directory, annotated list of 1,000+ charities, run by
    RealNetworks
  * Compass Point Nonprofit Services (formerly the Support Center/Nonprofit
    Development Center)
  * National Alliance for Nonprofit Management (formerly the Support
    Centers of America)
  * NetAction's resources page
  * NetAction's Virtual Activist Training Guide
  * Getting Started on the Internet (from idealist.org, Action Without
    Borders)
  * ITrain's collection of Internet training materials
  * Online Resources for Non-profit Organizations
  * California Public Libraries with Internet Access
  * IGC's Product Center
  * ONE/Northwest's Activist Toolkit
  * The Management Center
  * Benton Foundation's Best Practices Toolkit
  * ILC Glossary of Internet Terms
  * Comprehensive Information on Politics, Activism, and Elections
  * Nonprofit GENIE
  * Nonprofit Consultants ONTAP
  * Mailing List Directory (locates email lists)
  * Directory of Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists (PAML)
  * Deja News Search (locates newsgroups)
  * San Francisco Bay Area Progressive Directory
  * The Bay Guardian Action Network
  * Craig's List (events, jobs, items of local community interest)
  * MediaChannel

Section II: Additional Resources on Web Page Development

  * Web Interface to Whois
  * HTML Editors
  * About.com's HTML guide
  * All About the Web (W3 Consortium)
  * Use the META Tag

Section III: Articles on Internet Activism

  * Phil Agre on Internet petitions
  * Nonprofit and Watchdog Groups Work the Net (You will be prompted for
    login/password to NY Times's site. Free subscription.)
  * The Online Activist

Section IV: Additional Resources for Online Activism

  * LINC Project welfare rights organizers toolkit
  * Free Speech Internet Television
  * IGC's Progressive Gateway
  * Organizers' Collaborative

Section V: Non-Profit Technology Planning and Assistance

  * LINC Project presentation for low-income organizations on developing a
    technology strategy
  * CompuMentor's Nonprofit Resource Center

 * Arts Wire "Spider School" Training on Technology Planning
 * Nonprofit Use of the Internet
 * Project Connect and select the "Project Connect"

Section VI: Fundraising Resources

 * Share Our Strength's revenue generating opportunities and resource
   database for nonprofits
 * Community Wealth Resources
 * GuideStar donor's guide to nonprofits and charities
 * PhilanthropySearch search engines for nonprofits and philanthropy
 * Council on Foundations
 * Foundation Center
 * Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers
 * eBase: Free Database for Managing Donor, Member, and Supporter
   Information

Section VII: NetAction Notes Articles on Internet Activism

 * No. 8: Notes from the Virtual Activist Workshop
 * No. 9: Resources for Virtual Activists
 * No. 11: More Resources for Virtual Activists
 * No. 14: Act Locally, Organize Globally
 * No. 14: Is It Outreach or Is It Spam?
 * No. 18: Cyberspace Challenges to Racism and Hate
 * No. 18: Raising Hell With Email
 * No. 20: Media Online
 * No. 20: A Tool Kit of Media Tips
 * No. 20: Freedom of Information in Cyberspace
 * No. 22: Atoms in Cyberspace
 * No. 25: A Look at Lists
 * No. 26: The Value of Freeware
 * No. 27: Technology Tools for Empowerment
 * No. 28: More Technology Tools for Empowerment
 * No. 31: Power to the People Online
 * No. 31: Digital Postcards from the Epidemic
 * No. 33: Pictures and Words
 * No. 38: Preparing for the Millennium
 * No. 39: Post That Protest
 * No. 43: Virtual Tools for Human Rights
 * No. 44: Making the Most of Lists

 Major Areas:
  < Broadband >< Open Source Software >< Virtual Activist Training Guide >
 Our Writing:
  < Broadband Briefings >< NetAction Notes >< Articles & Papers >
 What You Can Do:
  < Become a Member! >< Subscribe to NetAction Notes or Broadband Briefings >
 About NetAction: < Our Privacy Policy >< Our Sponsors >< How to Contact Us >

New Internet Users:
What They Do Online, What They Don't, and
Implications for the 'Net's Future

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Abstract: With Internet penetration now at about half of all Americans, new users will be coming online for some time into the future, while the Internet itself continues to evolve. Tomorrow's new user will not be like today's, just as today's new user differs from yesterday's. This paper compares new users surveyed in a March 2000 poll to those from a November 1998 poll, and it examines what types of activities people pursue online in the two time periods.

In exploring the characteristics and usage habits of new Internet users, this paper finds that the most enthusiastic new Internet users are women, and that this group feels most comfortable engaging in fun activities online (e.g., playing games, listening to music). Relative to long-time users, this group is reluctant to conduct financial or commercial transactions over the Internet. Additionally, people's willingness to engage in transactions online is found to be a significant threshold point for online activities; once new users who have chosen to make an online transaction, their Internet usage patterns are similar to more experienced users. Finally, new users today are different from new users of two years ago; in 1998, new users quickly engaged in fun activities, but used the Internet as an information utility to a greater extent than their 2000 counterparts.

A likely explanation for new users' reluctance to conduct transactions online is worry over the security and privacy of sending credit card information over the Internet. New users are almost twice as likely as veteran Internet users to report high levels of concern over online credit card theft, but they are only half as likely as Internet veterans to have purchased something online. New users' quick embrace of fun activities suggests that they value a choice of a wide variety of Internet content as they learn to use the Internet.

I. Introduction

The Internet is not only one of the most rapidly disseminating technologies in history, it is also—to a degree different from other mass communications technologies—rapidly evolving as it disseminates. Today's new adopters of the Internet face a range of options undreamed of by their predecessors of just a few years ago. With higher connection speeds, a greater variety of access devices, and a broader range of content, today's Internet is different from the Internet of five years ago or even two years ago. Today's Internet user is also different from the typical Web surfer of a few years ago. The early user of the Internet was likely to be a well-educated reasonably well-off white male. However, as the Pew Internet Project reported in May 2000, women now make up half of all Internet users, with older women in particular coming online at a slightly higher rate than other user groups.[1] Hispanics are now about as likely to be online as whites, and African Americans are coming online at accelerating rates.

In general, people like the Internet and the number of years they have been online is strongly associated with the amount of time they spend online on a given day. Length of time online is also positively associated with the frequency with which they engage in Internet activities such as email, news gathering, game-playing, or online purchasing. However, not all Internet users are the same. Some people march up the Internet learning curve with astonishing speed and quickly fold it into their daily lives. Others find the technology less compelling and, even though they may remain online, are fairly unenthusiastic about the Internet.[2]

In this paper, I examine new users' attitudes toward the Internet with particular focus on new users who are strongly enthusiastic about the Internet. Why new users and why new users who embrace the Internet enthusiastically? Enthusiastic new users, "Instant Acolytes" as I call them, are the sophisticated demanders of Internet services who are likely to shape the Internet's future, in terms of the kinds of content that wins in the marketplace or the kinds of Internet access devices that become popular. Once, of course, "Instant

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[1] "Tracking Online Life: How Women Use the Internet to Cultivate Relationships with Family and Friends." Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 10, 2000.

[2] Some people go offline; 13% of non-Internet users surveyed say that they used to be online, with reasons given for going offline including changing jobs (14% of those who used to be online), no longer having computer access (21%), that the Internet was not interesting or useful (9%), and privacy worries (8%).

Acolytes" were most of the Internet population, and these people—in the earliest days university researchers—gave the Internet its academic feel and established the "information wants to be free" ethic of the early Internet. With the advent of the Worldwide Web and the growing commercialization of the Internet, commerce has grown in prominence, but the growing Internet population has spurred a diversity of non-commercial content, from religious Websites to support groups that address people's special concerns. As new "eyeballs" come to the Internet—eyeballs with different gender, educational background, and ethnic heritage—the most ardent users may have a disproportionate influence on how the Internet evolves in the future.

In addition to looking at the profile of recent Instant Acolytes, I will examine yesterday's Instant Acolytes, who are today's experienced users and the most wired among us. The comparison will provide a portrait of what enthusiastic new Internet users did online several years ago in contrast to what today's Instant Acolytes do.

II. Definitions and Methodology

This paper is built on the findings of the Pew Internet and American Life Project's tracking survey of Internet activities, which was designed to get an accurate reading on the impact of the Internet on Americans' lives. Running almost continually since March 1, 2000, the daily poll has asked thousands of Internet users not only about what they have ever done online, but also about what they did "yesterday." Using a daily sample design, this approach measures the scope of Internet activities more accurately than conventional surveys because it focuses on activities that are fresh in respondents' minds. It also provides new insights into the range of online behavior that occurs daily. For March, the primary source of information for this report, the survey interviewed 3,533 Americans, some 1,690 of whom are Internet users. The section on privacy draws on the May-June Pew Internet Project poll, which interviewed 4,606 Americans and 2,277 Internet users.

Additionally, this paper uses data from a November 1998 Internet user survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Since 1995, the Pew Research Center has included questions about people's Internet usage habits as part of its polling on how people follow the news. Many of the same questions from the Pew Research Center's surveys have also been included in the Pew Internet and American Life Project's surveys, which is an initiative of the Pew Research Center. The inclusion of the same

questions permits the comparison between March 2000 and November 1998. The Pew Research Center poll interviewed 3,184 adults from October 26, 1998 to December 1, 1998. The Pew Research Center survey also included an over sample of 1,184 adult Internet users.

The Instant Acolyte classification is built on two questions from the surveys, one that asks "When did you first start going online?" and another that asks "How much would you miss the Internet if you could no longer go online?" For the Pew Research Center November 1998 survey 46% of users had gone online within the previous year, while 53% had been online for two years or more. In the Pew Internet Project March 2000 survey, 39% of Internet users reported going online within the previous six months, with 61% having been online for two or more years. With respect to missing the Internet, 72% of respondents in the March 2000 survey said they would miss that Internet "a lot" or "some" with 28% saying they would miss the Internet "not much" or "not at all." In the November 1998 Pew Research Center survey, 68% said they would miss the Internet "a lot" or "some" while 31% said they not miss the Internet "not much" or "not at all."

Instant Acolytes are a subset of Internet users who express an opinion on how much they would miss the Internet and also report how long they have been online. Specifically, Instant Acolytes are people who have not been online a long time, but who nonetheless say they would miss the Internet if they could no longer go online. As the following table shows, Instant Acolytes are one of four categories that come from combining the two questions.

	Miss Going Online	**Wouldn't Miss Going Online**
Online for < 1 year	I. Instant Acolyte	II. Cautious Adopter
Online for > 2 years	III. Veteran Enthusiast	IV. 'Net Apathetic

In terms of distribution of Internet users among the four categories, the breakdown for the November 1998 poll looks like this:

	Miss Going Online	**Wouldn't Miss Going Online**
Online for < 1 year	I. Instant Acolyte **27%**	II. Cautious Adopter **19%**
Online for > 2 years	III. Veteran Enthusiast **41%**	IV. 'Net Apathetic **12%**

PEW RESEARCH CENTER POLL, NOVEMBER 1998.

For the March 2000 Pew Internet Project poll, the breakdown is as follows:

	Miss Going Online	**Wouldn't Miss Going Online**
Online for < 1 year	I. Instant Acolyte **23%**	II. Cautious Adopter **15%**
Online for > 2 years	III. Veteran Enthusiast **49%**	IV. 'Net Apathetic **13%**

PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT POLL, MARCH 2000.

There are some differences in the distribution of categories between 1998 and 2000, with 8 percent more users falling into the Veteran Enthusiast category in 2000, a slight drop in the share of Instant Acolytes, and a decrease in the percentage of Cautious Adopters. It is not surprising that the share of Veteran Enthusiasts has grown since 1998, because yesterday's Veteran Enthusiasts are likely to stay that way and yesterday's Instant Acolytes will swell the ranks of today's Veteran Enthusiasts. The decrease in the share of Instant Acolytes likely has to do with the pool of new users the Internet draws from over time. New users today, who have lower incomes and lower levels of educational attainment than those of yesterday, may be less disposed toward embracing technology than their earlier counterparts. Section VI. explores possible reasons for the reluctance to embrace the Internet, focusing on heightened concerns about online privacy as the reason.

III. The Internet's Newcomers

Who are the people that fall into these categories of Internet users and are they different in 2000 than they were in 1998? A large part of the story of new users in 2000 is that they are mostly young women and more enthusiastic about the Internet than men who are new to the Internet. Slightly more than 1 in 4 women on the Internet, or 26%, are Instant Acolytes compared with 19% of men on the Internet who are Instant Acolytes; looked at differently, almost three out of five (58%) Instant Acolytes are women. Of people who have come online in the year prior to March 2000, 54% were women. Moreover, Instant Acolytes are more likely to go online from home than other user categories, suggesting that the Internet is becoming a home-based information/entertainment tool, and is less of an extension of work or school.

Instant Acolytes

<u>November 1998:</u> This group of users is more female, less educated, and with a lower income than the overall Internet population of 1998. Women make up 55% of Instant Acolytes versus 48% of all Internet users at the end of 1998. Only 29% of this group has college or post-graduate degrees, compared with 38% of all users, and 35% of 1998 Instant Acolytes have household incomes over $50,000 versus 40% for all Internet users. Nonetheless, at least by one measure of Internet activity, Instant Acolytes have taken to the Internet with enthusiasm comparable to the larger Internet population; 84% of Instant Acolytes report using email and 85% of all 1998 Internet users report the same.

<u>March 2000:</u> Like their earlier counterparts, the Instant Acolyte 2000 group is more female, less wealthy, and less educated than the overall Internet population of March 2000. As already noted, women comprise 58% of Instant Acolytes in early 2000 versus 50% of the entire Internet population. Slightly more than 27% of this group has college or post-graduate degrees compared with 37% of all Internet users. And 35% of Instant Acolytes have household incomes over $50,000 as opposed to 42% of all Internet users. Email is an equally popular Internet activity across both groups; 91% of Instant Acolytes are email users versus 93% of all Internet users in March 2000.

<u>*Discussion:*</u> The key difference between Instant Acolytes in 1998 and 2000 involves young women, specifically those between ages 18 and 29. Among Instant Acolytes between 18 and 29, 44% were women in 1998, but 59% were women in 2000. Women between age 30 and

45 were also prominently represented among Instant Acolytes; 61% of Instant Acolytes between 30 and 45 were women in 2000 versus 57% in 1998. At the other end of the age spectrum, women over 56 years of were quite enthused by the Internet in 1998, with 64% of Instant Acolytes over 56 being women. In March 2000, only 44% of Instant Acolytes in the "over 56" age group were women.

Cautious Adopters

<u>November 1998:</u> This group looks about the same as the overall Internet population in terms of gender breakdown (46% of Cautious Adopters are women compared with 48% of all Internet users), but Cautious Adopters are less educated and wealthy than the average user. Thirty-four percent of Cautious Adopters have household incomes over $50,000 in contrast to 40% among all users, and 28% have college or post-graduate degrees versus 38% for all Internet users. A striking contrast within age groups comes in the 18-29 cohort; 68% of Cautious Adopters in this category are men, with the remaining 32% women. Older women are more likely to be Cautious Adopters than their male counterparts; 63% of Cautious Adopters over age 56 are women. With respect to email use, 68% of Cautious Adopters have used email (the November 1998 average is 85%), with 72% of women and 65% of men saying they have used email. The gap in email usage suggests that caution translates into less Internet use, since email is the Internet's most popular application.

<u>March 2000:</u> The Cautious Adopter of 2000 is slightly more likely to be male than the overall Internet population (52% are male versus 50% for the Internet population), less wealthy, and rate substantially lower on educational attainment. Just 30% of this group makes more than $50,000 per year compared with 42% of the overall Internet population. Only 20% of Cautious Adopters have college or post-graduate degrees versus 37% of the entire Internet population. As with the 1998 group of Cautious Adopters, among young Cautious Adopters there are more men than women; 59% of Cautious Adopters between ages 18 and 29 are men and 41% are women. The pattern reverses with age; 58% of Cautious Adopters over age 56 are women and 42% are men. Not surprisingly, the mainstay Internet application— email—has not strongly captured this group's imagination; 78% are email users (in contrast to the 93% average), with 81% of men and 74% of women reporting having used email.

<u>*Discussion:*</u> While Cautious Adopters are very similar in 1998 and 2000, two points stick out in the 2000 group, namely education levels and email use. The 17-point deviance from the

average for college and post-grad educational attainment for the 2000 group (as opposed to 10 points for 1998) may reflect the declining pool of well-educated new users as Internet penetration rises. Email use among Cautious Adopters in 2000 is a puzzle, with men reporting higher email use than women. The Pew Internet Project has found that women are more frequent emailers and like it better. Fully 92% of women have used email and 46% report having used it "yesterday", while 91% of men have used email and 40% used it "yesterday." And 78% of women say they look forward to checking their email versus 62% of men.

Veteran Enthusiast

November 1998: Unsurprisingly, the Veteran Enthusiasts are, as a group, wealthier, more educated, and more male than the average Internet user of the latter part of 1998. Nearly 58% of Veteran Enthusiasts are men, as opposed to 52% of men overall among the online population. Forty-nine percent of this group have college or post-grad degrees compared with the 38% average. And 48% have household incomes over $50,000 versus 40% of the overall Internet population. Veteran Enthusiasts also embrace email; 94% count themselves as email users (with no difference in usage rates between men and women), a figure 9 points higher than the average for Internet users.

March 2000: The March 2000 Veteran Enthusiasts are very much like the November 1998 group, which is understandable because veteran enthusiasts of two years ago are today's veteran enthusiasts. They are slightly more male (52% are males versus 50% of the entire Internet population), wealthier (50% have household incomes over $50,000, eight points higher than the average), and more educated (47% graduated from college or beyond, ten points higher than the average for the Internet population). 1998's Instant Acolytes are probably reflected here, 55% of whom were female, and with the fervent embrace of email by women, it is not surprising that women have increased their representation among Veteran Enthusiasts by March 2000. Within age categories, older men seem to be particularly ardent 'Net users. Among Internet user over the age of 56, 60% are men; among Veteran Enthusiasts over age 56, 64% are men. Finally, Veteran Enthusiasts are active emailers; 96% of all Veteran Enthusiasts use email, 97.2% of women and 95.7% of women.

'Net Apathetic

<u>November 1998</u>: Users who have been online for more than 2 years but who say that they would not miss the Internet are more likely to be female and less wealthy than the average Internet user, but about as well educated. Fifty-two percent of the 'Net Apathetic are women (in contrast to 48% of women in the entire Internet population at the end of 1998), and 34% have household incomes over $50,000 versus the 40% average. However, 36% of the 'Net Apathetic have college or post-grad degrees, nearly the level as all Internet users (38%). Interestingly, the 'Net Apathetic are on balance younger than the overall Internet population. Fully 40% of the 'Net Apathetic are between 18 and 29, compared with 28% in that age group in the Internet population at large. This cohort is more likely to be female; women are 43% of the December 1998 Internet population between ages 18 and 29, while women make up 53% of the 'Net Apathetic in the 18-29 age group. In terms of email use, 84% of the 'Net Apathetic are email users, 85% of men and 83% of women.

<u>March 2000</u>: The typical 'Net Apathetic user for early 2000 is very much like the average Internet user, although the 'Net Apathetic is more likely to be male and better educated than the average Internet user. While half of all Internet users were men in March 2000, 59% of the 'Net Apathetic are men. Fully 39% have college or post-graduate degrees (versus 36% of all Internet users), and 35% of the 'Net Apathetic have attended some college, as opposed to 31% of all Internet users. Yet 42% of the 'Net Apathetic have household incomes above $50,000, and that matches the number for all Internet users. Unlike the 1998 'Net Apathetic group, youth is not an issue; 31% of the 'Net Apathetic are between 18 and 29 for the March 2000 group versus 30% of all Internet users in the 18-29 age bracket. There is simply a general pattern in all age groups of more men than women falling into the 'Net Apathetic category. Not surprisingly, the 'Net Apathetic are less frequent email users than average; 86% report having used email, with no differences across gender, which is about 5 points below the March average. As discussed further below, the likely reason for this lower rate of email use has to do with access; the 'Net Apathetic are less likely to have online access from home, which depresses Internet usage in all categories of activities, not just email.

The following tables summarizes the demographic characteristics of the user types in November 1998 and March 2000.

Summary of Demographic Characteristics by User Classification

TABLE 1A

NOVEMBER 1998—SEX, EDUCATION, INCOME, EMAIL USE

	Sex % Male	Sex % Female	Education (Percent College & Post Grad)	Income (Percent House hold income > $50K)	Email Use (Ever sent email)
Instant Acolyte	45%	55%	29%	35%	84%
Cautious Adopter	46	54	28	34	68
Veteran Enthusiast	42	58	49	48	94
'Net Apathetic	48	52	36	34	84
Average for all Internet Users	52	48	38	40	85

TABLE 1B

NOVEMBER 1998—AGE BREAKDOWNS

	Percent betw. 18 and 29	Percent betw. 30 and 45	Percent betw. 46 and 55	Percent betw. 56 and older
Instant Acolyte	25%	44%	19%	12%
% Male	56	43	41	36
% Female	44	58	59	64
Cautious Adopter	26	46	17	11
% Male	68	49	53	37
% Female	32	51	47	63
Veteran Enthusiast	28	43	19	9
% Male	57	58	56	62
% Female	43	42	44	39
'Net Apathetic	40	42	9	10
% Male	47	46	66	49
% Female	53	54	34	51
Average for all Internet Users	28	44	17	11
% Male	57	51	51	47
% Female	43	49	49	53

Summary of Demographic Characteristics by User Classification

TABLE 2A

MARCH 2000—SEX, EDUCATION, INCOME, EMAIL USE

	Sex % Male	Sex % Female	Education (Percent College & Post Grad)	Income (Percent House hold income > $50K)	Email Use (Ever sent email)
Instant Acolyte	42%	58%	27%	35%	93%
Cautious Adopter	52	48	20	30	78
Veteran Enthusiast	52	48	47	50	96
'Net Apathetic	59	41	39	42	86
Average for all Internet Users	50	50	37	42	91

TABLE 2B

MARCH 2000—AGE BREAKDOWNS

	Percent betw. 18 and 29	Percent betw. 30 and 45	Percent betw. 46 and 55	Percent betw. 56 and older
Instant Acolyte	30%	40%	16%	14%
% Male	41	40	41	56
% Female	59	61	59	44
Cautious Adopter	24	44	20	13
% Male	59	54	46	42
% Female	41	46	55	58
Veteran Enthusiast	32	42	15	12
% Male	49	52	46	64
% Female	51	48	54	36
'Net Apathetic	31	42	16	11
% Male	57	52	60	86
% Female	43	48	40	14
Average for all Internet Users	30	42	16	13
% Male	49	50	46	60
% Female	51	50	54	40

IV. What People Do Online

The only Internet activity considered above is email, but people do much more online than simply send email. As the Pew Internet Project has found, people surf the Web as frequently as they go online to check email.[3] By comparing what Instant Acolytes do online to the average Internet user and the most enthusiastic veterans, we can gain a sense of what matters most to new users and make guesses as to how that might affect the Internet in the future. And by comparing what new users today value on the Internet with what new users valued in 1998, we can get a sense of how Internet users are changing, and speculate about how the Internet may evolve.

The following tables compare Internet activities for Instant Acolytes, Veteran Enthusiasts, Cautious Adopters, the 'Net Apathetic, and the overall average for March 2000 and November 1998.

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[3] "Tracking Life Online," op. cit., p. 26.

Table 3

Internet Activities
March 2000

Activity: have ever done	Average (% have ever done)	Instant Acolyte (% have ever done)	Veteran Enthusiast (% have ever done)	Cautious Adopter	Net Apathetic
Email	91%	93%	96%	78%	86%
Fun Activities					
Info on a Hobby	76	76	84	61	68
Online just for fun	63	67	66	57	50
Video/Audio Clip	47	45	57	32	34
Instant Messages	45	50	51	28	35
Listen/Download Music	36	38	41	25	24
Sports Scores	35	36	40	22	30
Play a Game	35	41	35	28	28
Chat rooms	28	33	30	20	20
Information Utility					
Product Information	74	72	84	55	62
Travel Information	64	59	76	46	53
Weather	62	61	71	43	52
Info on Movies/Book/Music	62	61	72	42	55
News	60	56	70	40	52
Research for School	55	54	62	40	53
Health Information	54	56	63	32	39
Work-related activity besides email	48	41	58	31	49
Government Website	47	39	60	27	38
Financial Information	44	38	54	29	34
Look for Job	38	33	46	21	37
Info about Politics	35	29	46	18	26
Look for Place to Live	27	21	37	12	21
Religious/Spiritual Info	21	22	23	17	19
Transactions					
Buy something	47	43	62	25	33
Made travel reservations	36	28	47	19	32
Online Banking	17	13	26	4	10
Online Auction	15	12	21	5	8
Buy/Sell Stocks	12	8	18	7	8
Lottery/Gamble	5	5	5	5	3

Table 4

Internet Activities
November 1998

Activity: have ever done	Average (% have ever done)	Instant Acolyte (% have ever done)	Veteran Enthusiast (% have ever done)	Cautious Adopter	Net Apathetic
Email	85%	84%	94%	68%	84%
Fun Activities					
Info on Hobbies	73	73	83	63	63
Chat Rooms	55	48	51	35	34
Listen to Audio	46	44	58	27	41
Travel Information	68	67	80	55	59
Information Utility					
Info about Politics	66	65	77	50	60
Medical Information	53	56	63	34	42
Financial Info	51	48	59	34	39
Work-related activity besides email	70	63	80	63	63
Transactions					
Buy something	32	27	46	15	22
Banking Online	13	12	18	8	7

In both tables, the activities are divided into three categories, "fun" activities, activities in which the Internet is used as an information utility, and transactions. For March 2000, the Instant Acolytes engage in "fun" activities to an equal or greater extent than the average user in 7 of 8 activities. In a number of cases, such as going online for fun, playing a game, or going to a chat room, Instant Acolytes are more active than Veteran Enthusiasts. When it comes to using the Internet as an information utility, Instant Acolytes approach the frequency of use of average users in most areas, although their lower-than-average usage levels are notable in looking for financial information, political information, or visiting government websites. Veteran enthusiasts substantially outpace Instant Acolytes in using the Internet as an information utility, with 10 to 20 point gaps in a number of categories. The interesting exception is health care information, the one category in which Instant Acolytes' usage rate exceeds the average and (setting aside spiritual information) the gap between Instant Acolytes and Veteran Enthusiasts is narrowest (7 points).

Turning to transactions, it is clear that even the most enthusiastic new users are reluctant to make purchases online. Instant Acolytes lag behind the average in all categories,

and the gap between this group and Veteran Enthusiasts is wide in all activities, except gambling. Length of time on the Internet is strongly associated with willingness to conduct Internet transactions, and perhaps the most compelling evidence of this is seen in a comparison of Cautious Adopters with the 'Net Apathetic. The Cautious Adopter, the new user who would not miss the Internet, is nonetheless about as likely to engage in "fun" Internet activities as the 'Net Apathetic, who has been on the Internet a while but has not become enamored of it. But when it comes to transactions, people in the 'Net Apathetic category are more frequent online purchasers and far more likely to make online travel reservations or bank online than Cautious Adopters.

The November 1998 results follow the same general pattern as the March 2000 results, with the important differences being that Instant Acolytes lag further behind Veteran Enthusiasts in fun activities and seem somewhat more active in using the Internet as an information utility, both in absolute terms and relative to Veteran Enthusiasts. All users were more likely to go online to look for political information—perhaps because the 1998 poll was taken during an election season—with Instant Acolytes closer to Veteran Enthusiasts' usage rate than in 2000. Instant Acolytes are 10 points more likely to go online for financial information in 1998 than 2000, while Veteran Enthusiasts are 5 points more likely. The results for "work-related activity besides emails" are also telling. Internet users in general engaged in this information-gathering activity at a much higher rate in 1998 versus 2000, with 70% of 1998 users having done this compared with 48% in 2000. With high usage rates across all user categories in "work related activities", Instant Acolytes lag behind Veteran Users and the overall average. Nonetheless, the gap in the likelihood in going online to do a transaction is wide, with 46% of Veteran Enthusiasts having gone online to buy something compared with 29% for Instant Acolytes.

Another element that influences the usage habits of these user classes is frequency of Internet use, amount of time spent online, and where people go online from. By asking what people did online yesterday, the Pew tracking poll sheds light on these factors. The following table summarizes the findings for the four categories of Internet users.

Table 5

Did you yesterday . . . ?	Average (% did yesterday)	Instant Acolyte (% did yesterday)	Veteran Enthusiast (% did yesterday)	Cautious Adopter (% did yesterday)	Net Apathetic (% did yesterday)
Go online	59%	56%	72%	36%	49%
Go online from home	76	81	77	72	65
Go online from work	41	33	44	31	47
How much time yesterday did you spend online?					
< 15 minutes	10	9	6	25	20
15-30 minutes	15	21	12	22	19
30 min – 1 hr.	18	17	16	23	25
About 1 hr.	18	17	21	10	14
1-2 hours	11	10	13	5	7
2-3 hours	11	14	12	10	4
3-4 hours	6	3	7	6	3
> 4 hours	10	9	13	0	7

Several distinctions among user classes are evident:

1) For Instant Acolytes, the Internet's most enthusiastic new users, the 'Net is a home-based phenomenon to a much greater extent than it is a work-based activity.

2) The 'Net Apathetic have folded the Internet into their lives to a lesser extent than other classes because the Internet is more of a work-based activity for them than it is for other classes. Also, this group is about half as likely to spend 2 or more hours online than the average.

3) Although Cautious Adopters are less likely than any class to have gone online yesterday, they are equally as likely to have spent an hour or more online as the 'Net Apathetic (21% of both groups spent an hour or more online "yesterday").

4) What separates the Cautious Adopter from the 'Net Apathetic is home-based access. The Cautious Adopter is more likely to go online from home, and much less likely to go online from work than the 'Net Apathetic. With Cautious Adopters going online from home about as often as the average user, their usage might be expected to rise over time.

5) Veteran Enthusiasts obviously rate most highly in most categories; this group has folded the Internet into their daily work routine to a greater extent than new enthusiasts.

A number of conclusions emerge from the preceding analysis. First, new users seem most comfortable at the outset with fun activities on the Internet. Second, fun activities seem to engage people to a greater extent today than they did two years ago, when the information utility aspect of the Internet held a stronger attraction (relative to the average and Veteran Enthusiasts) among Instant Acolytes than it did in March 2000. The evidence suggests that people go online today for fun, while two and a half years ago, fun was an important reason, but practical applications held greater sway. That is probably because new users today are more likely than veterans to go online from home; the Internet is a fun activity (relative to the past) that is to be done at home more than at work. Finally, new Internet users—whether enthusiastic about the Internet or not—are reluctant to complete transactions online.

V. The "Transactions Divide" and Internet Usage

Although newcomers to the Internet are reluctant to do online transactions, once they cross the "transactions divide," how do they compare with long-time Internet users? To explore this question, I examined the Internet usage habits of a subset of Internet users who said that they have ever bought something online. As noted in Table 3, 47% of Internet users in the March sample have ever bought something online, and of those 794 Internet users who have purchased something online, 165 are Instant Acolytes. Here's how the frequency of their Internet activities compares with Veteran Enthusiasts profiled in Table 3, and Veteran Enthusiasts who have ever bought anything online.

Table 6

Internet Activities: Transactors

Behavior	Instant Acolytes Those who have purchased online	Veteran Enthusiast All VEs: March	Veteran Enthusiast Those who have purchased online
Did you yesterday?			
Go online	58%	72%	78%
Go online from home	83	77	81
Go online from work	38	44	48
Have you ever . . . ?			
Fun Activities			
Email	96	96%	98
Info on a Hobby	80	84	88
Online just for fun	71	66	68
Instant Messages	50	51	54
Video/Audio Clip	51	57	62
Listen/Download Music	41	41	44
Play a Game	42	35	37
Sports	40	40	41
Chat rooms	34	30	31
Information Utility			
Product Information	86	84	92
Travel Information	73	76	83
Weather	70	71	77
Info on Movies/Book/Music	74	72	77
News	62	70	75
Research for School	60	62	68
Health Information	60	63	71
Work-related activity besides email	46	58	66
Government Website	43	60	65
Financial Information	46	54	64
Look for Job	38	46	50
Info about Politics	32	46	50
Look for Place to Live	29	37	42
Religious/Spiritual Info	24	23	24
Transactions			
Made travel reservations	45	47	58
Online Banking	18	26	33
Online Auction	21	21	32
Buy/Sell Stocks	11	18	23
Lottery/Gamble	7	5	7

The table suggests that Instant Acolytes who have bought something online are in many ways like veteran users who have over time woven the Internet into their daily lives. For "fun" activities, Instant Acolytes who have taken the step to purchase something over

the Internet are more active users than veterans in most cases. Looking at "information utility" activities, Instant Acolyte purchasers match Veteran Enthusiasts in a number of categories. For information utilities that have professional, financial, or news gathering overtones, Instant Acolyte purchasers lag behind Veteran Enthusiasts. With respect to transactions, it would seem that Instant Acolytes who have made an online purchase are comfortable with relatively less important online transactions, such as auctions or making travel reservations. For transactions that involve money management, which presumably are of larger magnitude or importance than auctions or travel expenditures, Instant Acolytes show lower levels of activity than Veteran Enthusiasts. Finally, it is important to note that 60% of Instant Acolyte purchasers are women. That is slightly more than the overall number for Instant Acolytes (58%) and reinforces the point that women are enthusiastic and active new users of the Internet.

The table also shows that Veteran Enthusiasts who have made an online purchase are the most active Internet users, with these users being most active in transactions of all kinds. In a number of "fun" activities, however, such as going online just for fun, playing a game, or going to chat rooms, it is notable that Veteran Enthusiasts purchasers and Instant Acolyte online purchasers are equally active users.

Between this section and the preceding one, we see that generally Instant Acolytes are active Internet users in many respects *except* when it comes to conducting online transactions. But once Instant Acolytes have crossed over into the world of online transactions, they are nearly as active on the Internet as veteran users, and more active in "fun" uses of the 'Net. The choice to conduct an online transaction is tantamount to a choice to take one's Internet use to the next level. What determines whether a user makes the choice to transact online? The next section explores reasons this question.

VI. Privacy Worries and Internet Transactions

A sensible guess as to why new users—those who quickly embrace the Net or not—might hesitate to conduct transactions over the Internet is that these users are concerned about theft of credit card numbers or other personal information in the course of the transaction. The Pew Internet Project poll shows that this is the case.

Internet users who have been on the 'Net for a year or less report lower levels of trust than users who have been online for two or more years. When asked whether most people can be trusted, 36% of Internet users online for two or more years answered "yes" versus 27% of users online for a year or less. In terms of using their credit card to purchase things on the telephone, veteran users are only slightly more likely to do this than new users. Seventy-three percent of all veteran Internet users have used their credit cards to make purchases over the telephone compared with 69% of users online for a year or less. Yet new users are much more likely to be concerned about credit card theft when making telephone purchases. Only 16% of veteran Internet users reported worrying "a lot" about credit card theft during phone purchases compared with 27% of veteran users.

Substantial gaps between new and veteran users open up when looking at people's online purchasing behavior and concerns about credit card theft. Veteran users are almost twice as likely to have ever used their credit card to buy things on the Internet; 56% of users online for two or more years have used a credit card to purchase something on the Internet versus 30% of users online for a year or less. Conversely, new users are about twice as likely as veteran users to be worried a lot about theft of credit card numbers when making Internet purchases; 29% of new users say they worry a lot about Internet credit card theft compared with 15% of veteran users. In terms of expressing "some" concern about Internet credit card theft, 40% of new users say they are somewhat concerned versus 35% of veteran users.

Thus, although new Internet users are somewhat less trusting in general than veteran users, this lower level of trust translates into only modestly lower levels of telephone purchasing behavior, but *substantially* lower online purchasing behavior. As noted above, new users are about half as likely to send credit card information over the Internet for purchases, but lag only 4 points behind veteran users in telephone purchases (at a high level of having ever made such purchases for new and veteran users). Even with approximately same "worry rate" about credit card theft for phone and online purchases, new users' inexperience on the Internet results in a reluctance to engage in ecommerce.

The following tables summarize poll findings on privacy and trust and length of time on the Internet.

Table 7

LENGTH OF TIME ON THE INTERNET AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TRUST

Can People Be Trusted? ⇒ Length of Time on Internet ⇓	Most People Can Be Trusted	Can't Be Too Sure	Depends	Don't Know
Online a Year or Less	27%	66%	5%	1%
Online 2 Years or more	36	57	4	3
Total	33	60	4	2

PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT, MAY-JUNE 2000.

Table 8

INTERNET USERS WHO HAVE USED THEIR CREDIT CARD TO PURCHASE THINGS OVER THE TELEPHONE

Use Credit Card to Purchase over Phone? ⇒ Length of Time on Internet ⇓	Yes, have done	No, haven't done
Online a Year or Less	69%	31%
Online 2 Years or more	73	27
Total	72	28

PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT, MAY-JUNE 2000.

Table 9

LEVEL OF WORRY OVER CREDIT CARD THEFT WHEN MAKING TELEPHONE PURCHASES

How much to you Worry about credit card theft? ⇒ Length of Time on Internet ⇓	A lot	Somewhat	Not very much	Not at all
Online a Year or Less	27%	35%	22%	16%
Online 2 Years or more	16	34	33	17
Total	20	34	30	17

PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT, MAY-JUNE 2000.

Table 10

INTERNET USERS WHO HAVE USED THEIR CREDIT CARD TO PURCHASE THINGS OVER THE INTERNET

Use Credit Card to Purchase over Internet? ⇒ Length of Time on Internet ⇓	Yes, have done	No, haven't done
Online a Year or Less	30%	70%
Online 2 Years or more	56	43
Total	48	52

PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT, MAY-JUNE 2000.

Table 11

LEVEL OF WORRY OVER CREDIT CARD THEFT WHEN MAKING ONLINE PURCHASES

How much to you Worry about credit card theft? ⇒ Length of Time on Internet ⇓	A lot	Somewhat	Not very much	Not at all
Online a Year or Less	27%	40%	19%	14%
Online 2 Years or more	15	35	31	19
Total	18	36	28	18

PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT, MAY-JUNE 2000.

VII. Policy Implications and the Internet's Future

One inescapable conclusion is that Instant Acolytes are different from average and experienced Internet users. They are more likely to be women who go online from home, with lower levels of education and income, and with a preference to surf the Internet to a variety of "fun" sites. What, if anything, should policymakers do differently given that today's most enthusiastic new Internet users depart from the traditional stereotype of the educated white-male Internet user? The answer falls into two categories: a) privacy, and: b) content. New Internet users, as will be discussed, have different attitudes toward privacy than experienced users. When it comes to online content, Instant Acolytes, with their focus on "fun" sites, value a variety of Internet content as they explore the 'Net. Policymakers may want to nurture a climate in which a wide range of content is accessible on the Internet.

Privacy

With new Internet users registering clear worries about the privacy and security of their Internet transactions, privacy policy looms large in thinking about possible barriers to the Internet's future growth. Indeed, when asked policy-oriented questions about privacy, new users showed a stronger tendency to entrust government in setting the rules for privacy and less of an inclination to let online companies have free reign with their personal information. The Pew Internet Project poll asked people who should have the most say over how Internet companies track people's online activities. Only 17% of Internet users responded that the government should, while 8% said Internet companies should and 71% said individuals should. Put another way, only 1 in 4 Internet users thought that either the government or Internet companies should set the rules on how Internet companies track people's personal information, but new users in this subset of Internet users—by a margin of 77% to 62%--were more likely to say they wanted the government setting the rules, not Internet companies.

With respect to "opt in" approaches to use of personal information, whereby online sites must explicitly receive permission from users before collecting information, 86% of all Internet users said they agreed with the proposition that Internet companies should ask people for permission to use personal information. Interestingly, the longer a person has been online, the more likely they are to favor "opt in"; 88% of users online for two or more years favored "opt in" versus 82% of people online less than a year. At present, however,

the Federal Trade Commission has adopted the "opt out" approach endorsed by the Network Advertising Initiative, a consortium of Internet advertising companies.

What is notable about people's attitudes about "opt in" is that it appears to be the culmination of a series of rational choices and behaviors vis-à-vis the Internet. The longer people have been online, the more likely it is that they shop online. Although people worry about credit card theft in the course of transactions (54% say they worry " a lot" or "some" about this), 15% have experienced credit card theft of any sort, and of this group, just 8% say the theft occurred over the Internet. That is, less than 1% of all Internet users have had their credit card number stolen over the Internet and only 3% of Internet users report ever having experienced fraud on the Internet of any kind. The convenience and other benefits of online shopping (e.g., lower prices, greater choice, ease of gathering product information) outweigh the cost of credit card theft (which occurs infrequently online). If that weren't the case, it is unlikely that more experienced users would be more frequent purchasers of products over the Internet.

But the perceived and real costs of releasing personal information are evident to Internet users. Only about a quarter of Internet users (27%) believe that Web companies' tracking of their activities is a helpful thing (e.g., because it helps the company provide information that matches their interests). Fully 54% say such tracking is harmful because it violates their privacy. And a substantial number bear the burden of such tracking in their email in-boxes; about 3 in 8 (37%) of Internet users report receiving unwanted "spam" email messages, 70% of which are sales solicitations. It is no wonder that more experienced Internet users prefer "opt in"; they see a significant cost to allowing companies to collect their personal information.

Because Internet users see a cost in making their personal information freely available to Web companies, it makes sense that they—especially Internet purchasers—want to choose whether that information is made available. Fully 89% of Internet users who have bought things online favor an "opt in" approach to privacy versus 79% of all Internet users. Online purchasers are willing to pay the cost of the product purchased, but nothing more. This also shows that online purchasers understand that their personal information has value. If Web vendors want personal information about the purchaser, the "opt in" group of Web buyers—the vast majority of Web shoppers—is saying that they must at least ask

permission. And if the answer is no, under "opt in" the burden then falls back to the online vendor to provide an incentive to Internet consumers to give up something of value.

Online Content

New users are drawn to the Internet by "fun" activities, and it seems to be only a matter of time (assuming their privacy worries are adequately addressed) until they become active in Internet transactions. The implication of new users' preference for doing fun things online is that they value a lot of options in how they may have fun or gather information. Indeed, it may be people's "search and learn" mode early in their online lives is what enables them to trust the technology enough to begin doing online transactions. The openness of the Internet is the essence of the "search and learn" approach to engaging with the Web. The potential of Internet service providers owned by cable companies to restrict access to Internet content flies in the face of a "search and learn" approach by new users. Whether such possible restrictions would dampen the spirits of new users is another question and technology and the marketplace may be rendering such concerns obsolete. Peer-to-peer Internet search technology is a powerful new tool to circumvent central servers that may serve as bottlenecks to content distribution. And, with recent announcements by AT&T that it would allow open access to its cable Internet content, the industry is apparently getting signals from the market that open access is valuable to consumers.

Nonetheless, at one time at least, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) expressed a bias toward encouraging investment in new broadband infrastructure, a bias that would supersede encouraging open access. As FCC Chairman William Kennard commented during litigation by cities to force AT&T to transmit non-AT&T provided content on its high-speed Internet service, the Commission would not weigh in on the side of open access because this might dampen investment incentives to build broadband plant. With the jurisdictional aspect of the question settled,[4] the FCC should adopt a position that encourages open access to a wide variety of Internet content. At a minimum, the findings here suggest that a "first do no harm" policy posture that presently seems to be the mantra for broadband investment should extended to access to Internet content.

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[4] The Court found that individual cities cannot regulate open access, but that the FCC had the authority to require cable providers to open their networks to other Internet Service Providers.

<u>The Internet's Future</u>

In contemplating how today's Instant Acolytes might shape the Internet's future, the early history of the telephone is instructive. As Claude Fischer notes, the Bell System's early marketing efforts focused on the telephone as an item for businesses and professionals.[5] To the extent it was used at home, early adopters were generally men who needed it to conduct business or respond to emergencies (i.e., doctors). When it became clear that women were heavy telephone users, marketers re-targeted their efforts to women as "chief executives" of the household. In creating uses for the telephone, telephone marketers envisioned women using it to manage the household and purchase groceries. However, as Fischer point outs, women used the telephone primarily for sociability, something that came as a surprise to industry marketers. Rural women especially used the telephone to decrease social isolation.

With Instant Acolytes' inclination to go online from home and for fun, the Internet may be evolving much like the telephone into a domestic tool for sociability used more heavily by women. Rather than a mysterious technology that is the province of men, the Internet is on the cusp of becoming a household appliance whose applications are as much social as transactions-oriented. While Instant Acolytes, females or males, will engage in more transactions the longer they are online, the evidence presented here (and from the early history of the telephone) suggests that the social uses of the Internet will be as worthy of scrutiny as the commercial ones. Again, this argues for a policy climate in which a wide diversity of content is allowed to flourish.

The trends toward the Internet as tool for sociability are likely to shape, as well as be shaped by, the coming explosion in bandwidth capacity and the growing variety of Internet access appliances. As the Internet moves out of the home office and into the family room or kitchen, means of Internet access will have to serve people's desires for entertainment, real-time communication with others (either audio or video), and provide a wide choice of information options. Applications such as buying things online and managing personal finances online will continue to be important to Internet users. But shared experiences distributed among different users at different locations may take on a larger meaning for users. Today's Instant Acolytes, at least, are signaling that they see the Internet as a tool for

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[5] Claude S. Fischer, <u>American Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940.</u> Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992. pp. 231-236.

entertainment in the home and interactive communication such as instant messaging and chat rooms.

Tomorrow's Instant Acolytes will look a lot like today's, although with grayer hair. Fully 55% of the current non-online population being women, with one-third of the non-online population women over age 50. This group is somewhat less trusting than the overall population (29% of this group says that people can be trusted versus 33% of people online), and with the proliferation of entertainment websites, will probably value diversity of content as much as today's Instant Acolyte. While the marketplace will drive much of what is available to them, policymakers would be wise to set rules that provide assurances about the privacy of Internet transactions and provide a climate in which a rich variety of content is available to those in "search and learn" mode on the Internet.

The Virtual Activist 2.0

Tips for Effective Online Media

A NetAction Mini-Trainer

Email is an excellent tool for communicating with media. It is a cost-effective way to quickly distribute press releases and newsletters, and is also useful for submitting letters to the editor or opinion articles. Electronic press releases and newsletters can also be posted to your Web site. NetAction offers the following suggestions for communicating online.

Tips for Effective Online Media:

Distribute email press releases in plain ascii text.
Draft your press release as you would any other email message, using an email software program such as Eudora or Microsoft Outlook. Never send press releases as attachments to email, or attach other documents to email press releases. If you need to prepare a paper copy of the press release, copy and paste the ascii text into a word processing document (such as Microsoft Word) after the release is written in the email browser.

Keep the text brief and focused.
An electronic press release should follow the same "pyramid" format as any other press release. Start with the most important information (and remember the five "W's" - who, what, where, when and why). Use short paragraphs and keep it brief.

Write a subject line that's compelling or provocative.
Keep in mind that the subject line is the first thing reporters will see when they download your release. Never email a press release (or any other message) with a blank subject line. Include your electronic contact information.
Remember to include your email address and Web site URL in addition to your phone and fax number, and address. Put all your contact information at the top of the press release.

Use hyper-links where appropriate.
If there is additional information available on your Web site - such as a white paper or an event announcement - include a hyper-link so reporters can click right to it. Online publications will often include these links in their stories, making this an effective way to direct visitors to your Web site.

Send a test message before distributing your press release.
Always send a copy of the press release to yourself or to a colleague before distributing it. Check the format to make sure there are no broken lines of text, and check for any mistyped Web URLs by testing them to make sure they work.

Avoid disclosing the recipients' email addresses.
Always type the recipients' addresses in the "Bcc" field of your email message header, rather than in the "To" or "Cc" field. (See NetAction's "How to Create An Email Media List.")

Post your organization's media contact information on the home page of your Web site.
Be sure to keep the contact information up-to-date, and include information on how reporters can be added to your mailing list.

Treat email media inquiries the same as phone inquiries.
Always respond just as promptly to email media inquiries as you would to phone calls. Reporters who work for online publications are much more likely to contact you by email than by phone. If you're responsible for answering media inquiries, check your email frequently throughout the day.

Set up an online archive for your media communications.
Set aside an area of your Web site where reporters can locate past press. (If you publish a newsletter in electronic form, maintain an online archive of past issues, as well.)

Post press releases only to appropriate lists, news groups, and publications.
If you plan to post your press release to any email discussion lists, news groups or online publications, make sure the topic of your release is appropriate content for the list or Web site. If your press release announces a new report on air pollution, it would not be appropriate content for a forum for race car enthusiasts, for example.

Collect email addresses from your media contacts.
If you've been distributing your press releases by fax or postal mail, ask your media contacts if you can switch to email distribution. Commercial media directors (such as Bacon's Metro California Media) routinely include email contact information. Major newspapers frequently have separate staffs for their online versions, so you'll need to include those contacts on your list, too. There are also media directories and news services specifically for online publications that may be appropriate to add to your media list.

Limit the size of your email message window.
In many email browsers, text that is longer than the width of the message window will "wrap" to the next line. (When text is set to "wrap," you don't need to hit the "return" key at the end of every line.) If the size of your message window is set for more than about 75, the automatic "wrap" may result in broken lines of text.

This page located at: http://www.netaction.org/training/onlinePR.html

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Designing Effective Action Alerts for the Internet

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An action alert is a message that someone sends out to the net asking for a specific action to be taken on a current political issue. Well-designed action alerts are a powerful way to invite people to participate in the processes of a democracy. Having seen many action alerts in my years on the Internet, I have tried to abstract some guidelines for people who wish to use them. Even if you do not plan to construct any action alerts yourself, I do not recommend that you forward anybody else's alerts unless they conform to at least the spirit of these guidelines. If I sometimes seem stern or didactic in my prescriptions, please forgive me. It's just that I've seen badly designed action alerts do an awful lot of damage.

Although an Internet action alert should always be part of an issue campaign with a coherent strategy and clear goals, I won't discuss the larger strategic questions here. Instead, I will simply divide action alerts into two categories, single messages and structured campaigns. Single alerts are broadcast in the hope that they will propagate to the maximum possible number of sympathetic Internet users. Structured campaigns are typically conducted through mailing lists specially constructed for the purpose, and their intended audience may include either the whole Internet universe or a narrower group of already-mobilized partisans.

Both types of action alerts are obviously modeled on things that have been happening on paper, through telephone trees, and lately via fax machines, for a long time. What computer networks do is make them a lot cheaper. A networked alert can travel far from its origin by being forwarded from friend to friend and list to list, without any additional cost being imposed on the original sender. This phenomenon of chain-forwarding is important, and it behooves the would-be author of an action alert, whether a single message or a whole campaign, to think through its consequences:

1. **Establish authenticity.** Bogus action alerts -- such as the notorious "modem tax" alert -- travel just as fast as real ones. Don't give alerts a bad name. Include clear information about the sponsoring organization and provide the reader with several ways of tracing back to you -- e-mail address, postal address, URL, phone number, etc. Including this contact information makes sense anyway -- you want people to join your movement, and this means establishing contact with you. One way to establish authenticity is by appending a digital signature, presumably using PGP. Few people will check the signature, though, and many people will remove the signature when they forward your message to others. So there's no substitute for clearly explaining who you are and giving people a way to reach you.

2. **Put a date on it.** Paper mail and faxes get thrown away quickly, but action alerts can travel through the Internet forever. Even if an alert seems to have faded away, it can sleep in someone's mailbox for months or years and then suddenly get a new life as the mailbox's owner forwards it to a new set of lists. Do not count on the message header to convey the date (or anything else); people who forward Internet messages frequently strip off the header. Even better, give your recommended action a clearly stated time-out

date, e.g., "Take this action until February 17, 1998". If you think there will be follow-up actions, or if you want to convey that this is part of an ongoing campaign, say so. That way, people will contact you or look out for your next alert.

3. **Include clear beginning and ending markers.** You can't prevent people from modifying your alert as they pass it along. Fortunately, at least in my experience, this only happens accidentally, as extra commentary accumulates at the top and bottom of the message as it gets forwarded. So put a bold row of dashes or something similar at the top and bottom so extra stuff will look extra. That way it will be very clear what you and your credibility are standing behind.

4. **Beware of second-hand alerts.** Although it is uncommon for someone to modify the text of your alert, sometimes people will foolishly send out their own paraphrase of an alert, perhaps based on something they heard verbally. These second-hand alerts usually contain exaggerations and other factual inaccuracies, and as a result they can easily be used to discredit your alert. If you become aware of inaccurate variants of your alert, you should immediately notify relevant mailing lists of the existence of these second-hand alerts. Explain clearly what the facts are and aren't, implore the community not to propagate the misleading variants, and provide pointers to accurate information including a copy of your own alert. This action has two virtues: first, it may help to suppress the mistaken reports; and second, it positions you (accurately, I hope) as a responsible person who cares about the truth.

5. **Think about whether you want the alert to propagate at all.** If your alerts concern highly sensitive matters, for example the status of specifically named political prisoners, then you will probably want to know precisely who is getting your notices, and how, and in what context. If so, include a prominent notice forbidding the alert's recipients from forwarding it.

6. **Make it self-contained.** Don't presuppose that your readers will have any context beyond what they'll get on the news. Your alert will probably be read by people who have never heard of you or your cause. So define your terms, avoid references to previous messages on your mailing list, and provide lots of background, or at least some simple instructions for getting useful background materials. In fact, you might consider making the e-mailed alert relatively short and include the URL for a Web page that provides the full details. Your most important audience consists of people who are sympathetic to your cause and want to learn more about it before they can take action. Write your alert with that type of reader in mind, not the complete insider or the apathetic stranger.

7. **Ask your reader to take a simple, clearly defined, rationally chosen action.** For example, you might ask people to call their representatives and express a certain view on an issue. In this case, you should provide a way to find that representative's name and number, and explain how to conduct the conversation: what to say, how to answer certain likely questions, and so on. The purpose of such a script is not to impose your thinking but to help people to learn a skill that might otherwise be intimidating. Decide whether to ask for e-mail messages (which can be huge in number but near-zero in effect), written letters (which will be fewer but more effective), or phone calls (which fall in between). Consider other options as well: perhaps the sole purpose of your alert is to solicit contacts from a small number of committed activists, or to gather information, or to start a mailing list to organize further actions.

8. **Make it easy to understand.** It is crucial to begin with a good, clear headline that summarizes the issue and the recommended action. Use plain language, not jargon. Check your spelling. Use short sentences and simple grammar. Choose words that will be understood worldwide, not just in your own country or culture. Solicit comments on a draft before sending it out.

9. **Get your facts straight!** Your message will circle the earth, so double-check. Errors can be disastrous. Even a small mistake can make it easy for your opponents to dismiss your alerts -- and Internet alerts in general -- as "rumors". Once you do discover a mistake, it will be impossible to issue a correction -- the correction will probably not get forwarded everyplace that the original message did.

10. **Start a movement, not a panic.** Do not say "forward this to everyone you know". Do not overstate. Do not plead. Do not say "Please Act NOW!!!". Do not rant about the urgency of telling everyone in the universe about your issue. You're not trying to address "everyone"; you're trying to address a targeted group of people who are inclined to care about the issue. And if the issue really is time-critical then just explain why, in sober language. Do not get obsessed with the immediate situation at hand. Your message may help avoid some short-term calamity, but it should also contribute to a much longer-term process of building a social movement. Maintaining a sense of that larger context will help you and your readers from becoming dispirited in the event that you lose the immediate battle.

11. **Tell the whole story.** Most people have never heard of your issue, and they need facts to evaluate it. Facts, facts, facts. For example, if you believe that someone has been unjustly convicted of a crime, don't just give one or two facts to support that view; most people will simply assume they are getting half the truth. If your opponents have circulated their own arguments, you'll need to rebut them, and if they have framed the facts in a misleading way then you'll need to explain what's misleading and why. On the other hand, you need to write concisely. Even if you are focused on the actions, good explanations count more. After all, one of the benefits of your action alert -- maybe the principal benefit -- is that it informs people about the issue. Even if they don't act today, your readers will be more aware of the issue in the future, provided that you don't insult their intelligence today.

12. **Don't just preach to the converted.** When you are very caught up in your cause, it is easy to send out a message in the language you use when discussing the issue with your fellow campaigners. Often this language is a shorthand that doesn't really explain anything to an outsider. If you really care about your issue, you'll take the time to find language that is suitable for a much broader audience. This can take practice.

13. **Avoid polemics.** Your readers should not have to feel they are being hectored to go along with something from the pure righteousness of it. Some people seem to associate non-polemical language with deference, as if they were being made to bow at the feet of the king. This is not so. You will not succeed unless you assume that your readers are reasonable people who are willing to act if they are provided with good reasons.

14. **Make it easy to read.** Use a simple, clear layout with lots of white space. Break up long paragraphs. Use bullets and section headings to avoid visual monotony. If your organization plans to send out action alerts regularly, use a distinctive design so that everyone can recognize your "brand name" instantly. Use only plain ASCII characters, which are the common denominator among Internet character sets. Just to make sure, do not use a MIME-compliant mail program to send the message; use a minimal program such as Berkeley mail. MIME is great, but not everybody uses it and you don't want your recipients getting distracted from your message by weird control codes. Format the message in 72 columns or even fewer; otherwise it is likely to get wrapped around or otherwise mutilated as people forward it around the net.

15. **DO NOT use a chain-letter petition.** A chain-letter petition is an action alert that includes a list of names at the end; it invites people to add their own name to the list, send in the petition if their name is the 30th or 60th etc, and in any case forward the resulting alert-plus-signature-list to everyone they know. This idea sounds great in the abstract, but it really doesn't work. The problem is that most of the signatures will never reachtheir destination, since the chain will fizzle out before reaching the next multiple of 30 in length. What's even worse, a small proportion of the signatures will be received in the legislator's office many times, thus annoying the staff and persuading them that they're dealing with an incompetent movement that can never hold them accountable.

16. **Urge people to inform you of their actions.** If you are calling on people to telephone a legislator's office, for example, you should provide an e-mail address and invite them to send you a brief message. Explain that you'll use these messages to count the number of callers your alert has generated, and this information will be invaluable when you speak with the legislator's staffers later on. Only do this, though, if your mail server is capable of handling 50,000 messages in a short period. You might want to check this out with your service provider beforehand.

17. **Don't overdo it.** Action alerts might become as unwelcome as direct-mail advertising. Postpone that day by picking your fights and including some useful, thought-provoking information in your alert message. If you're running a sustained campaign, set up your own list. Then send out a single message that calls for some action and include an advertisement for your new list. If you must send out multiple alerts on the same issue, make sure each one is easily distinguishable from the others and provides fresh, useful information. Above all, don't spam. Post your message only where it belongs. When in doubt, ask the maintainer of a given mailing list whether your alert is appropriate. And include a phrase like "post where appropriate" toward the beginning so that people aren't encouraged to send your alert to mailing lists where it doesn't belong.

18. **Do a post-mortem.** When the campaign is over, try to derive some lessons for others to use. Even if you're burned out, take a minute right away while the experience is still fresh in mind. What problems did you have? What mistakes did you make? What unexpected connections did you make? Who did you reach and why? Which mailing lists was your alert forwarded to, and which of these forwardings actually caused people to take action? Good guesses are useful too.

19. **Don't mistake e-mail for organizing.** An action alert is not an organization. If you want to build a lasting political movement, at some point you'll have to gather people together. The Internet is a useful tool for organizing, but it's just one tool and one medium among many that you will need, and you should evaluate it largely in terms of its contribution to larger organizing goals. Do the people you reach through Internet alerts move up into more active positions in your movement? Do you draw them into conferences, talk to them by phone, meet them in person, become accountable to them to provide specific information and answer questions? If not, why do you keep reaching out to them?

20. **Encourage good practices.** The Internet is a democratic medium that provides us all with the time and space to do the right thing. So let's use the Internet in a positive way and encourage others to do the same. You can help by passing these guidelines along to others who might benefit from them (including people who have sent out badly designed alerts), and refrain from propagating alerts that do not conform to them. Remember, forwarding a badly designed action alert actually harms the cause that it is supposed to support. Modeling thoughtful, constructive action on the Internet, however, provides everyone with a living example of democracy in action.

MANAGING THE MEDIA:

A Guide for Activists

by Carol Fennelly

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This handbook is dedicated in loving memory of
Mitch Snyder
Who taught and inspired us
And whose genius and brilliance continues to be
a guide to good media management

INTRODUCTION

For more than twenty years the Community for Creative Non-Violence has worked in the Nation's Capital on issues of peace and justice. Our work has embraced direct service to homeless and destitute people, as well as resistance to unjust systems and structures. Throughout the years we have tried to raise the consciousness of, and bring needed change to, the world around us through education, direct action, the legal system, and the legislative process. Our most useful tool in this endeavor has been the media.

In Washington, D.C. are more than 3,000 accredited journalists from around the nation and the world. Over the years we have learned many lessons; some particular to this city, others generally applicable everywhere. This handbook is an attempt to communicate these lessons to other activists who may benefit from what we have learned -- our successes as well as our failures.

This handbook discusses ways and means of developing experienced media handlers

within organizations, creating effective media events, developing relationships with the media, and "managing" the media. You will also find other useful media tips, a section on creating public service announcements (PSAs) and getting them aired, and a discussion from the perspective of a reporter.

A GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

Creating a Media Team

Within the "movement" there is the inclination to be egalitarian with respect to who should deal with the media. While this may create an atmosphere of internal fairness, it will not always get the desired results.

In our early years, we shared responsibility, taking turns as spokesperson, making press calls, and writing press releases, believing that everyone should have an opportunity to be our PR person. As times changed, and we saw our work in increasingly life and death terms, we recognized that those we serve deserve the best we can provide, rather than it offering an "experience" for those who may not be well suited for the job. Lives depend on what we do, and we must never lose sight of that truth.

Very often, those who are on the other side of issues that we support have more money, more power, more access. We can only create an equality of dialogue through our creativity, our commitment, and a professionalism that is equal to theirs. A professional approach to handling the media thus becomes essential.

A good, solid media team includes three important roles: a media coordinator, a writer, and a spokesperson. Each is critical to the others, and each is also vital independently to the process of effective media management. Roles may overlap, and often can be handled by the same person, but each position must be covered.

The Media Coordinator

The media coordinator must be someone who is personable, can succinctly articulate the issues, and is willing to spend a great deal of time on the telephone. This person makes sure press releases go out on time, keeps media lists updated, makes press calls, and works actively behind the scenes during events.

The media coordinator should become as well-known behind the camera as the organization's spokesperson is in front of it. One person handling press calls can cultivate important relationships with assignment desk personnel, news producers, and camera people. These people are key to getting the coverage of events you need, and the kind of coverage you want.

Get to know these important people. Always remember that they are people, too. Find out who they are, if they have children, what they enjoy. Make them your best friends, take them to lunch. Develop a personal and working relationship with these pivotal members of the media. They are used to drones calling with stories, and are disarmed by people who actually care about who they are. Make sure they know you are serious about your issue, but don't be so boring or intense that they don't want to talk to you. Be pushy -- but not obnoxious. The important thing is to make sure that someone who can do something takes your call -- that you are not shuffled off to an intern who simply writes down facts and then puts them aside because they don't understand the importance or the urgency of your call. At the same time, interns may someday become assignment desk editors, so don't discount them entirely.

At an event, the media coordinator ensures that all press people receive a statement or handout, that all those present are acknowledged, that all props and sound equipment are in place, that one-on-one interview requests are satisfied, that the photo-op is the one that has been planned beforehand (i.e., that the right people are standing in the right place, etc.), and that the event runs smoothly. The spokesperson should not have to think about these things -- he or she needs to focus attention on what is to be said and not be distracted by details. Again, get to know the people who are there on and off camera. A friendly camera operator can help you get the picture or image you want to

project; a producer can spin the story your way.

The Spokesperson

While the spokesperson must be someone who is articulate, he/she should also be more than that. He/She should be a good listener, have camera presence, be well-informed about your issue, be able to think quickly on his/her feet, have credibility, be able to develop a good rapport with a reporter, and be intuitive enough to know when a reporter is not friendly.

Know your interviewers. Do they have a reputation for honest reporting? Are they sympathetic to your issue? Are they fair? Or combative?

If you want to learn to be a good spokesperson, spend time listening to others who are good at the job. Research your issue until you know it inside and out and can hold your own in a conversation or debate. Think through each question that you are likely to be asked, and consider carefully the possible responses. Always be ready to revise and refine. Listen for "good lines" that others may use. Be humble. You always have more to learn

The Writer

Finally, the writer creates the undergirding for all your press events. Clear, concise, effective writing is essential. Because someone is articulate does not mean he/she can write. Have a good editor available to "tighten up" news releases. Everything that is written and released must reflect accurately the position of your organization. Make sure more than one set of eyes from the media team reviews what goes out.

HANDLING THE MEDIA

Never lie to a reporter. If you don't know an answer, simply say so, but add that you will be happy to find out and get back to them. If you are not at liberty to discuss a particular aspect, again, say so, but never lie. Your lie will be discovered, and a good story will turn bad. We learned this the hard way. The New York Times had learned about a discussion we had been having with the White House regarding the resolution of a campaign in which we were involved. They called for confirmation, and because we had not yet resolved things, as we denied the discussion. The reporter found out the truth, and what should have been a victorious and positive story turned into a negative piece. the next day

Don't be forced into saying something you don't want to say. If you don't feel comfortable answering a particular question, answer the one you want asked. Be clear about the point you want to get across. Always bring the discussion back to your points.

It is important to realize that much of the substance you want to communicate gets lost. The quote that is inevitably used is the one that is the most colorful. Make it count. Everything else becomes background.

Always remember that your story is in competition with many others. Only seventeen minutes of each half-hour news show is actually news. When you consider time spent on sports, entertainment, weather, and other items the time is even shorter. Your event needs to be interesting enough to capture a few of those precious minutes. This will be discussed in-depth in a later chapter.

We learned much from Ronald Reagan about media management. The most important lesson we learned is that it doesn't matter what you say as long as you say it first. What is printed about an issue first is what the public remembers. Everything from there is catch-up and defense. The Reagan Administration used this tactic masterfully. It became known as "disinformation." We are, of course, not advocating lying. We are suggesting that there are lessons to be learned here.

If you have a story, get it out with your own spin instead of waiting for the other side to do their twist on the truth. If you know there is going to be a negative story, counter it

someplace else first. Some very damaging personal information about a CCNV member was about to be printed in a local paper. We countered by calling another paper and giving them the story on our terms. When the other story appeared, it had been completely discredited already by the story we had planted.

Be smart. Be professional. Learn from others. Invite friendly media people to come to your organization to give workshops on interviews, and other topics. Understand the media people you are trying to influence and make sure they understand you.

CREATING A MEDIA EVENT

We often hear complaints from other activists that the media never covers their events, or that their message is distorted. While reporters often lack depth, or the ability or time to investigate a story thoroughly, quite often the problem is with the source. You must not only be able to communicate your story properly, you must also be able to create an interesting story that is worth telling -- and maybe worth retelling. If you are able to generate ongoing debate about your topic, all the better. Controversy is sometimes your best publicity.

Three elements can increase the possibility of coverage of your event: interesting people, interesting places, and interesting subjects.

Interesting People

If you don't have a person in your organization who can attract press attention, try to find someone who can. Whether we like it or not, the reality is that some people are media stars. Build relationships with those people, involve them in your issue, and don't hesitate to ask them to stand with you. Stars also come with egos that need to be stroked, and sometimes handling them can be more difficult than handling the media, so beware.

The other type of person who is a magnet for the media is one who can provide the human-interest story -- the victim of the policy you are addressing. Be sure the person is a sympathetic person who can present himself/herself well. Interview the individual yourself first. Don't take someone else's word for this person's credibility or believability. Ask all the embarrassing questions that a reporter might ask. Don't let yourself be surprised too late when the camera is rolling. In your pre-interview, spend some time helping the person craft answers that better communicate what he/she is trying to say. If necessary, gently recommend grooming changes. If clothes are needed, help out.

Interesting Places

Whenever possible, hold your event somewhere that will reflect your message. Create an effective backdrop. If you are addressing the lack of affordable housing, then go to empty public housing. If you are speaking about militarism, go to a military base. Try to find a place where members of the press don't usually go, but be sure it isn't so far afield that they can't find it (or want to). We once announced the creation of a new housing and homelessness curriculum for public schools. The president of the National Education Association and the superintendent of our local school district were in attendance, but we held it at a school that was so difficult to find that the press missed the event altogether.

Interesting Subjects

One of the most overlooked and yet important elements in creating an interesting media event is visuals. "Talking heads" at press conferences are boring and commonplace. Find a way to make visible what it is you are trying to communicate. When planning a press event always keep in mind the photo-opt What photo do you want to appear in the paper or on the evening news? Make sure the picture says something. A picture really can be worth a thousand words.

The best visual is the one that requires the fewest words to explain. The more words that are required, the more obtuse the message. During the war in the Middle East we wanted to find a way to remind people that lives were being lost to war daily. We had a

long discussion about the nature of that demonstration. First, what was the symbol? Should we mark the dead from other nations? Which location would most clearly communicate the source of the deaths? We ended up with powerful but simple crosses representing each American killed. We planted them on the Ellipse, with the White House in the background. Only one sentence was needed to communicate our message. The photo virtually said it all.

Create a symbol that will represent what you are trying to communicate. While "talking heads" are boring, graphs and charts are only slightly better. A classic Washington media event took place when the Reagan Administration tried to declare catsup a vegetable in the public school lunch program. The sight of members of Congress sitting at a table with a glob of catsup as a side dish still ranks as one of the best news pictures ever taken. Catsup did not become a vegetable.

If there is an event scheduled by someone else that does not portray the truth as you understand it, then don't be afraid to find a way to change the message. One of our favorite examples of this occurred in 1981 when the Reagan Administration announced the first 10% tax cuts through the Kemp-Roth bill. The National Conservative Caucus had planned to serve the world's largest apple pie -- symbolizing a bigger piece of the pie for everyone -- at the Washington Monument. This was not exactly the truth since only those in upper income brackets would really benefit. Five members of CCNV dressed in large business suits, puffed out with pillows, each wearing large tags that bore the names of Ronald Reagan's rich "kitchen cabinet," ran up on the stage during the speeches and jumped into the pie yelling "It's all for me!" The National Conservative Caucus had done all the groundwork and had gathered the media; we simply redefined the message that was communicated.

If you are planning a large event, find ways to promote it in advance by creating other focal points. It is free advertising, and will build interest in what you really want covered. Maximize every opportunity. Where there isn't an opportunity, create one. A good example of a good opportunity came in 1982 when we planned a luncheon prepared from food that had been pulled from dumpsters or otherwise discarded. Our intention was to promote food salvaging and focus attention on the amount of food wasted regularly in our nation. We planned the lunch for Capitol Hill, and had commitments for attendance from several senators and congressmembers. Two days prior to the feast, we took two members of Congress along with some press people to collect trash with us. With cameras rolling and clicking one elected official hoisted himself into a dumpster and began to pull out food. That picture went around the nation, and set the scene for our message to be delivered two days later.

Timing for a media event is critical to maximizing its potential. As a general rule, the best times for an event are Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. until 12 noon. Morning hours will guarantee that deadlines are met, and will allow for further development of the story. Some newspapers do not publish on weekends, which means Friday events won't be covered. Stories covered on the evening news quite often have a bonus in weekday morning coverage as well. News offices usually have short crews on weekends, and simply do not have the personnel available at that time to cover your story. In addition, reporters who are regularly assigned to cover particular issues are often off on weekends. Finally, weekends have fewer news viewers.

Sometimes, however, it is worth taking a calculated risk in timing. For instance, CCNV holds an annual Thanksgiving dinner for the homeless on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol. We schedule it in late afternoon to encourage live television coverage. News on weekends and holidays is often so slow that news directors are looking for stories.

One of the best news events I can remember recently revolved around a fund raising dinner for a boarder baby project. Two Motown groups flew in for the event, scheduled in the evening. The organization held a noon press conference at the home for boarder babies with the president of the non-profit, the celebrities, and some beautiful gurgling babies. After the speeches were made, the singers held the babies and crooned songs in an impromptu concert. The press ate it up.

The best of all media events has plenty of action and creativity. Find the ironies in situations. Inject humor when it is appropriate. Deliver your message with vigor and enthusiasm.

CREATING A PRESS LIST

Maintain two press lists: a press mailing list, and a press call list.

The press mailing list should contain the name of the publication, station, or network, its address, and the names of people that you know at each location. While it is important to mail releases to the assignment desk, it is also important to target specific reporters with whom you may have already developed an ongoing relationship. It is all right to send multiple releases to the same place. Your story may not interest one person, but hook someone else.

If you have a computerized press mailing list, organize it according to type and reach of the media organization (i.e., local, national, religious, women, etc.), so that you can target specific areas when necessary. For instance, your story may be strictly a local story, and sending a press release to all of the national media outlets is inappropriate.

Every area of the country falls into a media market. Large cities and the surrounding suburbs make up their own media markets, while rural areas may contain a vast geographic area. For instance, the Washington market includes Washington, D.C., and the areas immediately surrounding the beltway. It does not include Baltimore, which is its own market. Find out the geographic area that your media market covers.

Media markets are usually served by more than one television, radio, or wire service, or "news feed." When local stations are small they can rarely afford to have crews or reporters traveling to cover stories, so they contract with a larger service to get stories for them in other cities. For instance Cox Broadcasting serves Dayton, Atlanta, and Pittsburgh. Capitol Broadcast covers stories for the Hartford, Atlanta, and Philadelphia areas.

Learn about these media services in your area. Also find out which other areas they serve. Add them to your press lists. Your story may have interest in another area where a similar problem is being addressed. If there is some way you can tie your story into a story in another city, it is all the better.

A press call list is also essential. Always keep it handy. Your call list will be considerably smaller than your mailing list. CCNV maintains a mailing list of 1,800, but has a call list of just about 100.

Also organize your call list by category of media organization. Break down this list even further than the mailing list (i.e., wire services, local newspapers, local television, radio stations, network news, etc.). Again, this facilitates the press call process. Call lists should include the agency name, phone number, fax number, assignment desk names, reporters' names, special news areas they cover, and individual direct dial and home numbers when available.

Always keep press mailing lists and call lists up to date. Add new names as you meet new people. Your media coordinator should take names of producers and reporters at press events and make sure those names get added to your lists.

PRESS RELEASES AND CALLS

Timing the Press Release and Call

A press release can serve a number of purposes. It is usually used to announce an event but can be used as a handout, can become a position paper, or can be used to educate the media about a topic. In any case, it is always important to have something in writing.

Timing the release is important. If your event is planned well in advance it is good to mail it out at least a week ahead to ensure its inclusion on calendars. Sometimes, however, this is not possible. If a short lead time is all you have, faxing the release works just as well. When you must fax the release, be sure to target the person most

likely to be interested in the event, since it is difficult to send to everyone on your list.

In some cases, there is no time for a press release at all. If you plan a clandestine action, or if something develops quickly and unpredictably, there may be only enough time for a press call as you walk out the door.

On occasions when we wanted to surprise someone, and could not release the information early, we took lots of quarters and a press list with us and called from a pay phone as our action was in progress. Sometimes, if we have been working with a particular reporter we feel we can trust, we release the information in advance to that person only, with the understanding that it must not be leaked to others. On other occasions we have called the media in advance and suggested that they would get a good story and picture if they appeared at a certain corner at a certain time. Because we have enough credibility with our local media, and because we don't use that tactic often, they usually show up.

A good validation of that strategy happened when we announced a march on City Hall. I called my friends in the media and told them that there would be something else that they would not want to miss -- a surprise. When everyone was in place, two members of CCNV climbed out the 12th floor window of the hotel across the street and rappelled off the side of the building with a 100 foot banner. Nobody was disappointed. In situations like that it is critical that a media coordinator be on hand to direct the cameras in the right direction. Don't forget, nobody knows what they are looking for, or what to expect.

All press releases should be followed with a press call. Be thorough with your calls. This is when your past dealings with producers and assignment desk personnel are important. Always ask for the person you know best. Be persistent. Just because your story was not covered after your last call, or even the last ten calls, does not mean that it will not be covered this time. Sometimes it depends on what else newsworthy is going on at the time, but good, persistent press work tends to have a cumulative effect.

Writing the Release

Press releases are the first encounter a media outlet will have with your event. While you want to be thorough and include all the information, and the underlying data, you also need to be succinct. In some large media markets, hundreds of press releases can cross an assignment desk each day. If your release is too wordy, it will likely be ignored.

The first paragraph should include the "five W's" -- who, what, where, when, and why. Don't forget, your first goal is to get them to come to your event. If you have a high-profile person who will attract media, include his name in this first paragraph.

The next paragraphs should include an expansion on the purpose of the event, and some history of what led up to it. Don't assume that the person who will be reading the release will necessarily be up to date on recent developments in your issue. If the location of your event is significant, include a discussion of its importance. It is also important to include some brief background material on any special people who will be in attendance.

The release should include a quote from the spokesperson for your organization. Try to be pithy, clear, and to the point. This will very often be the quote used in the print media. Make it count.

Finally, include a brief description of your organization. This is particularly important if you are a new organization, a re-formed organization, or as yet unknown to the media.

Before you write your release, sit down and list the points you wish to make. Be clear. Don't ramble. While you need to include enough background information to educate, you don't need to say everything in the release. That is the purpose of the press event.

The form of the press release can vary. There are, however, a few elements common to all press releases. Always begin with the date the information can be released. Somewhere at the top of the page type "PRESS RELEASE" several times. All press

releases end with "# # #" or "-30-" typed in the middle of the page toward the bottom of the release. Be sure to include contact names (it is best to have two names) and their phone numbers. Press releases should always be printed on your letterhead.

Press Calls

In many ways the press calls you make are more important than the press release. Although it is critical to have a written press statement that can be delivered or faxed upon request, it is during the call that you have the opportunity to really sell your story. In addition, press calls give the assignment desk person or the reporter the opportunity to ask questions, clarify the issue, and develop the "background" information that will be necessary to give depth to your story. It is during press calls that important relationships begin to be forged with the media outlet.

Be sensitive to the people on the other end of the telephone. If they seem rushed, don't keep them any longer than you need to. If they seem to have more time, chat them up.

Think through what you have to say very carefully before you ever lift the receiver. Write it down or rehearse it if necessary. Start with the less important calls in order to smooth and develop your "rap."

Be succinct and clear, yet prepared to go into details if there is an opportunity. Always get the "who," "what," "where," and "when" out first. While the "why" is important, your first purpose is to get the news crew to the event.

Learn the names of assignment desk editors, and always keep them updated on your press list. When developing your list it may be useful to call the news outlets and get the names of these important people (weekend assignment editors are often different than weekday editors). Ask for them by name. You are less likely to get shuffled off to an intern if you can ask for a specific person. Always try to work with the same person -- this is how relationships develop.

A typical press call should begin like this: "Hello, this is Carol Fennelly at the Community for Creative Non-Violence. I'm calling to be sure you received the press release we sent about the rally to oppose the closing of city shelters scheduled for Monday, December 2 at 12 noon at the District Building." Be sure to leave your telephone number so you can be reached for follow-up questions.

If you can go into greater detail, go for it. But again, be sensitive to the person on the other end of the line. If the reporter seems to be rushing, don't irritate him/her with more verbiage. Your message is out, and they will call back when they have more time.

If your press release has been lost among the hundreds that have crossed their desk, fax or deliver another immediately. Have an assistant ready to get it out quickly, while you are still on their mind.

Once you have made a few initial practice calls, follow this procedure. Start with the wire services (i.e., Associated Press and United Press International) since they can rapidly get the news out to everybody else. Follow those calls with television stations, since they have more staff to try to get to the location of your media function. Those contacts should be followed with calls to newspapers next, then radio stations. Don't forget those independent news feeds mentioned earlier.

Calls should always be made the morning of the event. You can generally get a good sense of who to expect to show up. If you have enough time, calls should also be made one or two days before as well. If we have a large event scheduled, and know well in advance that it is going to occur, we send out a press release the week before, make calls two days prior, and the morning of the event.

Be thorough. What does not get a response the first time, only builds for your next call. No call is a wasted call. Each one helps keep your cause in the forefront.

Community for Creative Non-Violence

December 20, 1991
For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

CCNV HOSTS TENTH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS EVE
PARTY FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

The Community for Creative Non-Violence is hosting two parties for homeless people on December 24. The first a party for homeless families, will be held at The Great Hall of the Hubert Humphrey Building at 3rd and Independence from 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. The second party is for the single residents of CCNV's Federal City Shelter, 425 Second Street, NW, and is scheduled for 5:00 7:00 p.m.

Boxing great Sugar Ray Leonard, Senator Jesse Jackson, and Washington Redskins Darrell Green, Ron Hiddleton, Raleigh McKenzie, Ed Simmons, George Starke and Ricky Sanders are expected to make appearances at the party for homeless children and their mothers. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly and Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan have been invited to attend as well. Polaroid has contributed film and cameras to allow the children to take away pictures of themselves with their favorite athlete or politician.

In addition, food will be served, gifts will be distributed clowns and magicians will entertain, and performers will present a show for the children. The District Government will provide transportation for the families from the shelters it operates to the HHS building.

At the party for the 1500 single adults housed at CCNV's Federal City Shelter choirs and bands will perform, Senator Jesse Jackson will visit, gifts will be distributed, and a special dinner will be served.

"For those who are homeless, Christmas is a time of enormous emptiness and loneliness and pain. It is a time of memories of better days. A time of hopes and dreams abandoned, just as they themselves, have been abandoned," said CCNV spokesperson Carol Fennelly. " Christmas Eve -- the night of great and joyful expectations -- is particularly difficult for those who little to expect but more of the same. That is why we have had this party for the last ten years."

Over fifty organizations, and businesses, and hundreds of individuals have joined with CCNV to plan this years parties (see attached list).

-30-

For more information contact:
Carol Fennelly or Keith Mitchell -- 202-393-1909 or 202-595-1909
425 second Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20001

THE PSA

The public service announcement serves many purposes. It raises consciousness, educates, announces an event, or generates funds or other material needs. Depending upon the type of PSA you create, a radio or TV station may air it at no cost.

Most stations have an employee assigned to deal with public affairs. That person is responsible for deciding which public service announcements get on the air. When you

have a PSA, contact that person well in advance to find out what kind of lead time they may need. If you are producing a taped PSA find out what format they need (i.e., television stations usually want 3/4" or 1 " tape, while radio stations may want reel-to-reel or cassette). Stations will usually only run 10, 30, or 60 second announcements. Prepare them in all three lengths.

If your public service announcement endorses a candidate, specific legislation, or promotes merchandise, it is considered advertising, and you will be charged a fee. If you are simply educating, you can usually find a station to air it at no cost. In addition, stations often have community billboards to advertise events, volunteer needs, or material needs (although they may not be willing to make fundraising pleas).

Community billboard-type announcements are better submitted in writing for announcers to read on the air. Also, if you do not have the ability to prepare your own taped PSA, write it down (again, in 10, 30 and 60 second versions) and submit it. Be sure to read it out loud to verify the length of each version.

Here is an example:

60 second: The Community for Creative Non-Violence is holding a fundraising party and auction at the Hard Rock Cafe on Tuesday, November 12, from 8 p.m. until midnight. Live music will be provided by Bo Diddley, Jr. and Jennifer Ferguson. A delicious free buffet, cash bar, and a live and silent auction are also planned. Actors Armand Asante and Michael O'Keefe, Channel 7's Paul Berry, and Washington Redskin's Darrell Green and George Stark will be guest auctioneers. Auction items include a dress worn by former Supreme Mary Wilson, a jacket worn by Sugar Ray Leonard during the third Duran fight, and articles of clothing from the entire cast of "L.A. Law." The Hard Rock Cafe is located at 10th and E Streets, NW. Tickets are $ 15 and available at the door or at Ticket Master. For more information contact CCNV at 202-393-1909.

30 second: The Community for Creative Non-Violence is holding a fundraising party and auction at the Hard Rock Cafe on Tuesday, November 12, from 8 p.m. until midnight. Live music, a free buffet, cash bar, and a live and silent auction are planned. Armand Asante, Michael O'Keefe, Paul Berry, Darrell Green, and George Stark will be guest auctioneers. The Hard Rock Cafe is located at 10th and E Streets, NW. Tickets are $ 15. Contact CCNV at 393-1909.

10 second: The Community for Creative Non-Violence is holding a fundraising party and auction at the Hard Rock Cafe on Tuesday, November 12, from 8 p.m. until midnight. The Hard Rock Cafe is located at 10th and E Streets, NW.

Creating a public service announcement that educates or raises consciousness is a little more difficult and requires a more thoughtful approach. These are best pre-taped in order to get the desired effect.

First, you must identify the particular audience you wish to reach. Is it middle America? Working people? Women? Parents? It is important to frame your message in a way that will reach that population? What are their concerns in relation to your issue? What myths or misconceptions do you need to overcome? What action do you hope to get them to take?

Here is an example of a PSA we prepared to educate people about homelessness. We were targeting middle-class people, and trying to overcome the image that homeless people do not want to work. It was used in a paid political campaign to stop D.C. City Counsel action that rolled back a right-to-shelter law then effective in the District.

Female Voice: My name is Charlotte Banks. I used to be homeless. But now I'm back on my feet. I used to be a nurse's assistant. Then my hospital had to lay some of us off, and I couldn't find a decent job. I have two boys, three and five. From night to night we didn't know where we were going to sleep. Then we got a spot in a shelter. It wasn't home, but it was safe and it was clean. The shelter counselor told me about a program where I could get a nursing degree. I graduated this summer. Now I have a full time job and a place of my own. Without the shelter I would still be homeless.

Male Voice: D.C. may be closing the book on stories like Charlotte's. The City Council wants to roll back the law that provides overnight shelter. You can help homeless people turn their lives around. Vote for Referendum 5 on November 6.

This did not cost us any money to create. A public relations firm wrote the scripts and supervised production. A local audio visual firm donated use of equipment, and the players donated their time. While we paid for air time, had we replaced the reference to the political campaign with a plea for volunteers it would have been aired free of charge.

PSAs are a great way to advertise events, educate the public, get volunteers, and raise awareness of your issue. Don't overlook them as effective media too.

A VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE

This final chapter is an interview with a long-time friend of the Community for Creative Non-Violence. He is a well respected newsman in the Washington area, having practiced his craft for over twenty years. He wishes to remain anonymous.

CAROL: What do you look for when deciding whether or not to cover a media event or press conference? If you have 10 media events, what makes you choose the three that you cover?

REPORTER: We look for high visibility in terms of interest (high interest in the story and the people that are affected by it); how unique or different the story may be; and the availability of getting the elements that we want for the story. In other words we don't expect the story to be easy, but it is better if the parties that are generating the story understand what our needs are in terms of making people available, making the story visual as opposed to talking head.

For instance, if there is a news conference, it is helpful if there is some visual support. Case in point: If you're talking about a particular subject, instead of having your press conference in a room which has nothing to do with the subject, have it at a location where you could demonstrate the issue. What you give to the television station is a "two-for." You're giving them the information, but you're also giving them the visual. You visualize the story, so for the reporter it's a matter of turning from you to the sight.

Or it may be that the person who is doing the news conference is also the person involved in some visual aspect of the story. A prime example is the J.W. Marriott story. [To protest the closing of 800 city-funded shelter beds, on August 12, 1991, two members of CCNV rappelled from the 12th floor of the J.W. Marriott Hotel, which is located directly across the street from the office of the mayor.] The news conference was held by a guy hanging from the side of a building. I think that you executed a story in a way that provided you with great coverage and you disposed of the issue in a very forthright manner. How bad is it? It's bad enough for me to hang over the side of this building. And you had a very articulate person there, you had somebody that the people, the movers and shakers could identify with. Young, white, upscale looking fellow, who obviously wasn't homeless but there he hung! He was not my idea of a homeless person. So you had a number of elements in that story that argued well for the purpose

Every television station had it as a lead story. You can't do that every day, you don't hit a home run every day. The best hitters in baseball usually get a hit every three or four times, the best. Your ratio's not even going to be that good, but if you can do that on occasion and gain a kind of attention, you're ahead.

CAROL: One of the things we struggled with right after that was everyone was so high off of all the press that they wanted to go back and do it again. I said no, because it becomes "gimmicky."

REPORTER: Not only that, you also start to discredit yourselves. One likes to believe, even though we know better, that this was a spontaneous reaction to frustration and/or anger, which is much easier to deal with than if it is the contrived thought from Carol's mind.

Reporters are human beings who work for a living, who make money, have houses, babies. They feel about the homeless the same way that maybe 80% of Americans feel about the homeless or would like to feel about the homeless. Hell, if I can work, why can't they? Why are the bums out there? So don't think of the reporters as journalists, or as cameramen, or as your friends. They're not. And the truth be known, some of them probably don't like you. Whatever information that is distilled, will be distilled through that silo. So you have to keep that in mind and keep your efforts in a way that are above reproach -- above criticism for being redundant. You don't want to do everything radically. Because then you destroy the effectiveness of it.

Grade your successes based on what you think is important. What you think is important may not be important to the rest of the city. Sure, every day we'd like to be on the front page of the Washington Post or with a lead story on a television station. Well, that's just not the way it's going to be. Look at what you think an event is worth. Decide where you think a story ought to play, and then do enough to get that -- to have that impact. Ask these questions: What is the purpose of publicity and what is the purpose in doing this? Who do we want to get to? If we're trying to impress Ward 3 residents would a story on page three of the Post do that? If we're trying to impress the citywide press do we need to be front page? What do we need to do to generate and put forth that effort? It's a skill.

One of the organizations that comes to mind in this city is a hotel and a lady who works there. She sends out all kinds of crap, all the time. I mean she fires it out. The Germans are coming to town and they own the hotel. They're going to have a bed-making contest (we covered it) -- the fastest bed-making in the world. Her idea is that she knows she's not going to hit a home run every day. But it's out there. She also understands another important element. That element is the element of guilt on the part of the reporter and the editors and everybody else. I'm sitting here as a reporter I get ten press releases from you and I don't cover any of them. Eleven of them and I feel really guilty. That's something that no one ever thinks about. One-to-one contact is important. At every station have a contact person, whether it's an assignment editor or a reporter. If he says no, you say, "okay, I just wanted to let you know about this but I understand." "Well, I'll send you the next one."

CAROL: Which leads me to one of my questions. How important is it to develop friendly relationships with reporters, producers, cameramen and assignment desk personnel?

REPORTER: I think that's a good point. It is very important. It can't hurt. You may find that there's resistance on the part of various reporters and/or assignment editors and producers. But relationships are useful. Just like the other day you called me and said, "Are you doing this story?" If I weren't, I'd be able to say to you, "Hey, I may or may not be." And I can do that. Our relationship is that it doesn't violate my ethics or you. And I'll say, "Carol, I can't talk to you about this, but yeah we're taking a look. We've got some calls and reports, and all I'm going to tell you is I'm going to be fair. And that's all I'm going to do." And you'll press me, and when I have had enough I'll say, "Carol, I'm not going to talk to you about that." You know, and you'll stop. When I'm on the beat, however, I may be a lot less willing to develop a relationship with anyone, other than the fact that I'm approachable. It doesn't make any difference, it's not personal. And sometimes it is. But it cannot be personal to your people; it has to be your job, it has to be a part of what you do. As Colleen at the hotel does, she is willing to take "No" and laugh and smile and say, "I'll see you next time." She may get off of the phone and say, "That lowdown son of a bitch! He just never does anything for me." But I don't hear that. What I hear is okay. Because she knows that sooner or later there's going to be something that she's going to hit me with.

She also laughs about the stuff that she knows is bullshit. Don't sell chicken shit as chicken soup when you know it's chicken shit. If it's chicken shit, say it's chicken shit. You reach in there and say, "But look, there is a piece of chicken in there, there's a gem in there." A reporter appreciates it. You sit up there talking about how important this event is and he says, "I know it's chicken shit, you know it's chicken shit, the world knows it's chicken shit, so who are you insulting?" Instead, approach it this way. "Look, this is not huge, but I think there's a gem in this, can you pull something out of it for me? We really need to get this to the people." Don't be afraid to have that kind of relationship.

You need the media. You can do all the rabble-rousing you want to do, but unless you have the voice to carry that, it doesn't make any difference. You can go down and tear up the street. But if we don't take pictures of the street or the Post doesn't report it, it's just one street torn up. You may piss-off the people on that street, but nobody else knows about it. So it is a love-hate relationship. You can't live with us, and you can't live without us. We don't do what you want; we do exactly what you want. We don't cover it; we give you too much. We jump when you don't expect us to; we don't jump when you expect us to. You sit down and you think of something that is going to be great and you can't get a nibble out of it.

CAROL: Is there such a thing as "off the record," and how honest should one be with the media?

REPORTER: "Off the record" is a noble idea. "Off the record" is as off the record as the reporter is on target with his honesty and character. It is very difficult for any human being to know information that is a great story on or off the record. Ben Bradlee is a prime example. He knows stories that he's never told. The important thing is to know the person you're dealing with.

I can tell you to be very careful about that. I have worked with reporters who have said this is off the record to get the information, but then have used it. Or given it to somebody else to use, and then have claimed that they knew nothing about it. I have worked with reporters who say "off the record" and it is off the record. So I think it's really a matter of knowing the person you are dealing with.

It is also important to point out that you should never say something is off the record when what you really want to do is get it reported. That's very dangerous. This is a very important point. If you mean it to be off the record, then make sure you mean it to be off the record. Don't tease with off the record, when you really want it to come out.

If what you're saying is that you don't want it attributed to you, that's different. You've got to watch out, "Take care of me, but here's some information." That's different than saying, "Look, this is purely off the record. This is for background to make you understand."

Finally, the third point is, if it is off the record, make sure it is off the record. Make sure it means something. Don't use off the record when what your giving is crap! Trying to endear yourself to the reporter by telling him, "Let me tell you something off the record," when you know it's bullshit or it's already out there, or you know he can find it out elsewhere. The reporter is sitting there saying you've got to be kidding. Why the hell is that off the record? What's the game here? You're trying to make me feel that we're big buddies? Come on, I can see through that. I'm going to burn you every time you do that. If it's off the record, make sure it is.

CAROL: The next question has to do with framing the story. How do you get a reporter to ask the right questions?

REPORTER: You don't. You give the reporter the right answers. What I mean by that is, you turn questions. How do you turn questions? What you want to get out to me is the facts. For instance, if I say to you, "The shelter is out of money, so you must not be providing services." Your response is, that is not the way it really is. As a matter of fact, we have fed "x" number of people and our plan for the future is to do so and so. We've got this grant that's just come in. Turning my question.

If you get angry, I've got a great story. If you respond instead, "How dare you say that. That's not true, who said that?" That doesn't get the point across. Give them a direct answer to the question. If it's not true, say it's not true. If you're not sure or don't have an answer, say so. Say, "What do you mean? Explain your question," giving you a chance to think about the answer that you want to give. But you can only do that once, you can't do it every time. Or you can say, "We're doing the very best that we can. How would you suggest that we do it?" Now, I'm not going to answer, and you've got to be careful with this.

The most important thing is to understand the questions that you get. There are only so

many different types of questions. Turn those questions. You're never going to get the reporter to ask the questions that you want asked. But you can give the reporter the answer that you want to give. As an example. Why are you fighting with the Mayor when the Mayor is doing everything she can? What you want to talk about is the fact that there are no buses picking up your people. You'd say, "I'm sure that the Mayor is doing all that she can do or that she thinks she is, and we applaud that, but there are some little things. Let me give you an example of a small thing that we think the Mayor could be effective with, that our people need." Now this has nothing to do with my question. I don't even know your people want to talk about buses. And you drop the gem! Getting a reporter to ask the right questions is the easiest part of your job. Getting them to where you can talk to them is the hard part. I watch people who say, "God we had this whole press corps there, but they didn't ask us the right questions." We were all there! But you didn't give the right answers!

CAROL: What is the best way to deal with a question you don't want to answer?

REPORTER: Have a direction. It's called verbal fencing -- if I really want an answer from you on something and you don't want to answer. It's a very thin line between whether you are evading the question or the reporter is badgering you. But you can turn it and say, "You know, that's a very personal thing and I guess I haven't really come to grips with it. But when I do, I'll be glad to give you an answer to that." Now you've disarmed me. Now if I come back and ask you again, my conscience is saying, "Hey asshole, she told you!" You see, you are putting me on the defensive in a nice way because I can't come back to that issue. That's one way to do it. You may answer a question within a question by not answering. You're giving an answer that you want the audience to know. If the reporter persists, you look at him, "I don't think you are really hearing what I'm saying." But you've got to be careful. You have to be sure that your response is such that you don't give the reporter the advantage. You are not going to keep up with them. They know ways of asking you things that you haven't thought of. You must keep that in mind. Remember that they are professional questioners. That's what they do. Don't compete with them, don't fence with them. Get your point across, turn the question. When they say that you're not answering the question, say, "I am, I'm answering the question, I'm just not giving you the answer that you probably want. But I am answering your question."

CAROL: How do you deal with a hostile reporter?

REPORTER: You remember the bottom line here. That if you wrestle with a pig, you will get dirty. Don't wrestle with pigs. If a person has an intent on getting you dirty, the only way you're going to stay away is to stay away. Don't wrestle with a hostile reporter. You may speak of the hostility. You may say, " I'm sorry, I don't understand your anger and frustrations here. I'm trying to respond." But you don't wrestle with a pig.

CAROL: One of the things you have talked about is remaining cool. Don't go off and look like a maniac.

REPORTER: Because that's going to be the story. And that's what I mean here. Ask yourself these questions: "Why is this reporter upset? Is it because they've been forced to cover a story they don't want to cover? Is it because they had a bad day at home? Or is it because they're out to try to see if they can't provide a little spark on the air here?" You may know the reporter and there is some history that would explain, or justify at least, or give you some idea why the person is feeling what he's feeling. If a person is just a hostile reporter, he's probably looking to try to agitate you, to get you to say something, to be animated, to go off. I love it when I get in and ask a question and someone goes off into one of those routines. You can be sure that it is going to be a lead story in the newscast. Look at this idiot go off. You don't want to do that, unless there's a reason.

CAROL: What kind of advice can you give for creating a good camera presence?

REPORTER: That's a very important element to always be considered. Everybody is not camera pretty. I mean male and female. I'm not just talking about looks. I'm talking about approaches. If someone stutters, don't make them your spokesperson. If you've got someone who obviously has winks and blinks, don't make them a spokesperson.

You put your best foot forward. People know they have other strengths that may not be in front of the camera. Everyone likes to bring themselves up to the point of being that spokesperson -- "I can do it!" "No you can't do it!" You determine who really ought to be up front, who ought to be the spokesperson. The reporters are going to ask for that person. People ought to understand that and be happy with it. If the spokesperson can't do it, it's important they talk to the reporter. "I can't do it but I'm going to have so and so." Then he doesn't feel like he's being shuffled off. The reporter may think "She's too good to talk to me? Okay, I'll show them." Then you've got a negative story even though it could be positive because the reporter feels like she's being shuffled all over the place. They won't deal with you. Those people that are selected should be selected on the basis of their compassion and knowledge of the given subject. Certainly to be considered is their camera presence. Their look -- the image they portray and whether they are the best person to be doing the job. Simple as that. If all those things don't work, then the person that is the most identified ought to be in the role. You're going to have to appear to be a real camera hog. That's okay, that's just the way it is.

CAROL: What do you look for in a sound bite?

REPORTER: Thirty seconds. Tight, right and on the money. What I'm looking at is something that gets the message across with some feeling, some compassion, not dramatics. I'm looking for a piece that my audience is going to say, "whoa!" I'm looking for that piece that says in 30 seconds, "We are still fighting the same kind of frustration and discrimination that we have fought for years. People don't have houses. People are sleeping on the streets. People are cold. People are going to die out here unless something is done. Whoa, jeez, damn." You talked about discrimination, and you talked about what the problem is. If you're going to make that point in three minutes, you're not going to get it on the air. If you make your point in 25 or 30 seconds, you're going to see that tape.

CAROL: If you had one piece of advice for people dealing with the media, what would it be?

REPORTER: Be honest. You get caught in a lie every time. Again, your dealing with a professional questioner, a journalist. Chances are, when be comes there he already has the answer to what he's asking you. He just wants to see what your answer is. And always remember that there are all kinds of sides to every story. The only side to be on is the right side. That is, to say what is factual. That way you can't get caught. If there are 200 people that need beds, don't say 500. You get caught. The story will be CCNV, in an effort to try to blackmail money out of the city has inflated the numbers of people. No matter what else you say, you first have to deal with your inaccuracy. Be honest with the media.

Understand and realize that you're dealing with people, just like you. They probably know less about what you are doing than you think. They have a job to do. The product I produce is on the air. I need a story as badly as you need it covered. Now, when I come there I come there with an idea on doing a story. I'm not coming over there to do a nice little tapioca piece on you. Put your best face on it.

The other thing is to listen carefully to the story. So often because it's not exactly the story that you want told, the way you want it, with all the plus's in it, you'll say, "Hey, that son of a bitch!" But wait a minute, what did the audience hear? How did they perceive it? Was it a win? If it was half good, mark it up as a win.

CAROL: It's very hard to be objective about your story on the air.

REPORTER: You know all of this backwards. Here you're talking about a lifetime, a week, or a month, an activity, or whatever. I'm giving you a minute-thirty. Damn right! How the hell can I tell everything you are working on and all you have been doing in a minute-thirty.

CAROL: And many people don't understand that. Unless it was exactly the spin we want, and exactly the words we want, we are disappointed. I learned a long time ago that out of every 30-minute news show, only 17 minutes are actually news.

REPORTER: No, no not even that! No it's not news it's weather, it's sports, it's entertainment. It's more like eight minutes.

CAROL: Getting a piece of that is difficult, especially in this city, with all that is happening.

REPORTER: Competition, you are competing for time. You are competing, so a minute and a half if a hell of a lot of time. Today we're going to tell you everything you need to know about Maryland layoffs in a two-minute package. Two minutes is what we have, to talk about the biggest story of the day. We gave the D.C. layoff's a minute-forty. So how much time am I gonna give the CCNV today? If the major story of the day is a minute-forty, what is CCNV going to get? These are things people just have to understand. Understanding this makes professionalism on your part even more critical.

<div align="center">###</div>

Media Alliance

Raising Our Voices Training Program

A Project of Media Alliance, *Poor Magazine, Street Sheet and Street Spirit*

Raising Our Voices is a creative writing, graphic arts, journalism and publishing training program for homeless and low income people. In collaboration with *Street Spirit, Street Sheet* and *Poor Magazine*, Media Alliance teaches participants graphic arts creative writing, investigative journalism and electronic publishing.

Raising Our Voices breaks through media myths and distortions about poverty by training poor people to strengthen existing radical publications, create their own media, and inject new voices into the public discourse. Training includes basic skills, hard-hitting investigations generated by participants and performances.

What We Require

Some writing or computer experience, a commitment to exploring ways to build the movement for justice through media work, and a strong commitment to participate for the entire program.

For more information, call (415) 546-6334 x 310

Current class offerings

Application form

The class publication is TrashTalk .

Terry Messman On Dissenting Voices of the Street --in Volume 18-3 of MediaFile

For information on how to help or how to register call:

(415) 546-6334 ext 310.

Comments? Questions? Use our form, or e-mail us at voices@media-alliance.org.

MA Index | **Classes** | **Media File** | **Advocacy** | **Sevices** | **History** | **Links**

NetAction Notes

Published by NetAction	**Issue No. 20**	**June 12, 1997**

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IN THIS ISSUE:

[Media Online](#)
[A Tool Kit of Media Tips](#)
[Freedom of Information in Cyberspace](#)
[About NetAction Notes](#)

Media Online

One of the reasons the Internet is such a powerful tool for organizing and advocacy is that it provides an unfiltered means of communication. Whether the issue is air pollution or overpopulation, human rights or union fights, cyberspace is a forum in which activists can communicate their concerns directly to the cyber-public. But Internet outreach is best regarded as a supplement to, not a substitute for, outreach through the media.

Media advocacy remains a powerful way for activists to draw attention to a cause, influence decisions by public agencies and elected officials, or put pressure on a private corporation to change its ways. Activists who use the media effectively have an advantage over those who don't. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to get the media's attention.

The good news is that the Internet has generated a whole new sub-category of media, from flashy Web-based newspapers and magazines to simple electronic newsletters. This means there are more potential outlets to carry your message.

And with E-mail, it's much easier -- and far less costly -- to send press releases to reporters and editors. This is the case whether they work for a cyberspace publication, or a traditional media outlet.

If you already have a media list, ask the reporters on your list for their E-mail addresses. If they have E-mail, chances are they'll be willing to give you the address.

If you're just developing a media list, start by checking the Web sites of the media outlets you want to reach. There are a number of Web sites with media directories. Three that are fairly comprehensive are:

AJR News Link:
  http://ajr.newslink.org/
Chaplin News:
  http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/2308/
Felix Kramer's Grand Link Page:
  http://www.users.interport.net/~pbrooks/felix2.html

Once you're compiled an E-mail media list, it's easy to distribute press releases and media advisories at virtually no cost. Whether your community of interest is local, national, or international, online distribution of press releases can be effective.

While list software like Majordomo is helpful, it's not essential. With simple-to-use E-mail software like Eudora and Pegasus, you can create a "media" nickname in the mailbox directory. Since the nickname can include multiple E-mail addresses, one "media" nickname is all you'll need to send E-mail to all the reporters and editors you want to reach.

Remember to type the "media" nickname in the "bcc" field of the message header, rather than in the "to" or "cc" field. That way, the press release will be distributed simultaneously to multiple recipients without disclosing any of the recipients' E-mail addresses.

Yes, this **is** a type of spam. But in my experience, very few reporters complain about receiving unsolicited E-mail press releases. Of course, it's important to send the press release to the right reporter or editor. Someone assigned to the education beat is not going to appreciate receiving a press release about a rally to save the Redwoods.

Getting your press release to the right reporters is just the first step in effective media advocacy. The release itself must be timely, compelling, and concisely written. But that's another subject, which I'll address in another issue of NetAction Notes.

A Tool Kit of Media Tips

One aspect of media advocacy that is often overlooked by activists is talk radio. In addition to a number of syndicated national talk radio programs, many communities have local call-in shows focused on public affairs. These programs offer activists an excellent opportunity to shape public opinion on a wide range of issues.

Chris Roth has compiled a Tool Kit for activists who want to participate in radio and television talk show discussions about free speech. Chris publishes the First Amendment Update, an electronic newsletter that focuses on issues of free speech, artist's rights, and the separation of church and state.

In a recent issue of the First Amendment Update, Chris published an Action Kit of tips for talking to the media. Although the media contact information in the Tool Kit is specific to Wisconsin, where Chris is located, the Tool Kit is an excellent model for activists in other communities. And the tips for talking to the media are applicable anywhere.

The First Amendment Update is available only by E-mail, but Chris gave permission to NetAction to post the Tool Kit to the NetAction Web site. You will find it at: http://www.netaction.org/action-kit.html.

In the Tool Kit, Chris has taken the rhetoric of the political right and turned it around. For example, he recommends that First Amendment advocates use words like "snooping," "intolerant," and "extremist" to describe those who favor censorship, while associating support for the First Amendment with words such as "freedom," "liberties," and "Founding Fathers."

To subscribe to the First Amendment Update and receive the Action Kits, send an e-mail message to: listproc@listproc.bgsu.edu IN the body of the message write: `subscribe fau` (Please use your actual first and last name; not your e-mail address.)

Freedom of Information in Cyberspace

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is an advocacy tool that the media frequently uses, but activists often overlook. FOIA requests to government agencies can turn up all sorts of interesting documents, but patience is required because there are often long delays before documents requested under FOIA rules are provided by government agencies.

Activists interested in filing FOIA requests may find it useful to subscribe to FOI-L, an E-mail list that was started as a service to the National Freedom of Information Coalition. NFOIC is an alliance of nonprofit state FOI and First Amendment organizations, and academic centers working on First Amendment-related issues.

FOI-L list moderator Barbara C. Fought recently provided subscribers with a list of FOIA-related Web sites. Here are a few of those sites:

- **The National FOI Coalition** (http://www.reporters.net/nfoic) includes links to each state with contacts, legal citations, resources, and publications.
- **Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press** (http://www.rcfp.org/foi.html) includes a FOI guide, fill-in-the-blank FOIA letter generator for federal requests, and publications.
- **Society of Professional Journalists** (http://www.spj.org/foia/index.htm) includes articles from the Quill FOI issue, a primer on FOI, sample letters, state news and contacts.
- **University of Missouri** (http://www.missouri.edu/~foiwww/laws.html) includes the federal act, information on state laws, sample

letters, a citizen's guide, and information on the university's FOI library.

- **Student Press Law Center** (http://www.splc.org/ltr_sample.html) has a fill-in-the-blanks form that generates state FOI request letters, and information for student reporters.

To subscribe to FOI-L, send an email message to: LISTSERV@listserv.syr.edu In the body of the message, type: `SUB FOI-L`

About NetAction Notes

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To unsubscribe at any time, send a message to: majordomo@netaction.org . The body of the message should state: `unsubscribe netaction`

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, visit the [NetAction Web site](http://netaction.org) or write to:

NetAction * P.O. Box 6739* Santa Barbara, CA 93160

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NetAction Notes

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Virtual Public Relations](#)
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Virtual Public Relations

Whether you call it media advocacy, marketing and communications, or public relations, getting media attention for your cause can be helpful.

It's one way of letting people know your organization exists. Policy makers pay more attention to issues that make the news. Some may even be persuaded to get involved with an issue because of its potential for generating media exposure. If your organization is supported by members, media attention tells them that you're effective, and may even help bring new members in.

Technology isn't going to replace your existing media efforts, but it's a low-cost way of expanding and enhancing what you're already doing. In this issue of NetAction Notes, we offer some tips for using technology to expand and enhance an organization's marketing and communications.

For a comprehensive guide to media advocacy, see "**Managing the Media, A Guide for Activists**," published by The Community for Creative Non-Violence, at: http://tenant.net/Organize/media.html. Another good resource is "**Raising Our Voices**," a Tool Kit for Activists, published by Media Alliance, at: http://www.media-alliance.org/voices/index.html.

Media Alliance also has a good list of links to media organizations at: http://www.media-alliance.org/medialinks.html#mediaorgs. Links to thousands of online publications are at: http://ajr.newslink.org/.

You will find more suggestions, along with another tool kit, in NetAction Notes No. 20, at: http://www.netaction.org/notes/notes20.html.

NetAction's Tips for Virtual Public Relations:

Post media contact information on your organization's web site, and make it easy to locate. Make the link something simple, like "Contact for Reporters," or "Media Contact Information." Put it in or very near the first screen visitors see when they visit your site. Don't bury it on an inside page!

Make sure the **contact information is comprehensive and up-to-date**. Don't just post an email address. Most daily media outlets are staffed seven days a week, in some cases 24 hours a day. So include phone numbers that reporters can use to reach your organization outside normal work hours, as well as the number to call when your office is open.

Respond to email inquiries from reporters on a timely basis. You don't wait a week to return a reporter's telephone call, so don't delay in responding to email questions, either.

Provide information on **how reporters can get their names on your email distribution list**. This can be done by providing the email address to write to in order to be added to the list, or by creating an online mail form.

Post the press releases your organization distributes on your web site. Put new releases in a prominent location on the home page for a day or two. Once interest in the release had diminished (usually within a few days to a week), move the release to an inside archive page.

Be sure to date the releases so reporters will know if they are reading something timely.

Archive old releases by date, with the most recent at the top of the list. If releases cover multiple subjects, consider organizing the archive by subject, as well as by date.

Be sure to **update the media contact information** on the archive page so reporters will always be contacting the person currently handling media inquiries.

If your organization is featured in a news story, be sure to **link to the online version**, if there is one.

If you periodically update your media list -- *and you should* -- be sure to ask for email addresses. **Most reporters and editors will accept electronic versions of press releases**, and sending releases by email will reduce the cost of your media outreach.

Create your own online media list by using the "Nicknames" or "Address Book" feature of your email browser. **Avoid sending email with a long list of addresses** in the "To" field by using the "BCC" field for your list. (Put your own email address in the "To" field.)

Pay attention to online media and add new publications to your media list.

In addition to sending press releases to individual reporters, **post copies to *relevant* news groups and email discussion lists**.

If your Internet service provider offers an **Intranet for members**, find out if you can post press releases to Intranet news groups or discussion lists. Again, be sure the release is relevant to the topic.

Include the URL for your web site on all press releases, along with the contact person's email address.

Remember that expanding distribution of press releases isn't a substitute for **following up by phone**. It's especially important to call reporters who regularly cover the issues you are working on. Even if they don't do a story, occasional personal contact increases the likelihood that a reporter will contact you when he or she does decide to do a story.

Finally, we offer a few general tips for making the most of media advocacy.

Timing is important. Try to avoid sending out press releases, or scheduling press conferences, on the same day your local City Council meets. Also, when possible, avoid days and times when significant local events or activities are taking place. You're much more likely to get the media's attention on a "slow news day." Holiday weekends, and the annual Christmas-New Year's period, are particularly good since government agencies and many businesses are closed.

The time of day is also important. If you'd like to see your issue covered on the evening news, send releases by email or fax as early in the day as possible. If you're holding a press conference, try to schedule it before 11 a.m.

Keep it brief. Press releases should be as short as possible, and should stick to a single point. If the issue is complex, have additional background material available, but keep it separate from the press release.

Brevity is also important when you're answering reporters' questions. **Anticipate questions in advance** and be prepared with one-sentence answers. This applies to interviews with print media as well as broadcast. You can expand on a point in more detail once you've made the point.

Talking About Technology

The Nonprofits' Policy and Technology Project, a program of OMB Watch, has published two reports on the use of technology for public policy advocacy.

"**Speaking Up in the Internet Age: Use and Value of Constituent E-mail and Congressional Web Sites**," is a survey of congressional office attitudes towards constituent e-mail, and a concurrent review of the effectiveness of individual House and Senate member websites for disseminating substantive policy information.

"**Democracy At Work: Nonprofit Use of Internet Technology for Public Policy Purposes**," describes the state of nonprofit technology

use for public policy work and civic engagement, and identifies the tools that work.

Both reports can be downloaded as PDF files from: http://www.ombwatch.org/npt/resource/.

OMB Watch has also established a moderated email list in connection with the NPT Project to discuss nonprofits' use of technology for public policy advocacy. NPTALK was created as an online forum for professionals, experts, researchers, and advocates, as well as a vehicle for discussion and dialogue concerning the NPT Project. The list will be moderated and distributed in digest form no more than once per day.

To Subscribe

Send a message to lyris@ombwatch.org with the following text in the body of the message:
`subscribe nptalk Your Name`

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Our Writing: < Broadband Briefings >< NetAction Notes >< Archives >
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Media Alliance

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Classes
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Computer Class Schedule
Media Class Schedule

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Member sign-up
JobFile Info

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Archives
Other Pubs.

Activism
Special Events
Raising Our Voices|
Artsonline
Pacifica

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History
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Staff & Board
Directions to Office

Resources and Links
Media
Bilingual Education
Mexico

Links to media related sites

Media Organizations and Media Activism

Media Alliance Fiscally Sponsored Projects

Mexico activist resources

Miscelleneous Links

Media Organizations and Media Activism

AlterNet Journalism. Great links. The alternative wire/syndication service of the Institute for Alternative Journalism

MediaChannel is a media issues supersite, featuring criticism, breaking news, and investigative reporting from hundreds of organizations worldwide.

FAIR A New York based media watchdog organization

Media Watchdog A collection of on-line media-watch resources.

NetAction Great links for Internet activists of all stripes.

Organization of News Ombudsmen An organization which monitors news and feature columns, photos and other forms of media for fairness, accuracy and balance.

Freedom Archives

Investigative reporters and editors

Center for Investigative Reporting

Bay Area Black Journalists Association

Asian American Journalists Association

Society of Professional Journalists (Bay Area Local)

National Writers Union

National Radio Project / Making Contact

Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism

Independent Press Association

Institute for Alternative Journalism/ Independent Media Institute

Fired Fox reporters' website

Miscelleneous Resources

Writer's Block, a project by former *San Francisco Chronicle* assistant city editor Sheryl Oring, is a physical commemoration of the infamous May 10, 1933 Bebelplatz book-burning by Nazi youth in Berlin.

The Progressive Directory @igc The Institute for Global Coummunication's home page. They're our international non-profit internet service provider, who kindly donated space for this page. A great resource for community-based and activist organizations.

The Association for Progressive Communication A worldwide organization of progressive groups.

Nonprofit Organizations on the InternetEllen Spertus' list.

Meta-Index for Non-Profit Organizations An invaluable collection for resources and info.

W3 Search Engines A collection of search engines for the Web.

LISTSERV Home Page A collection of email mailing lists you may want to subscribe to.

C-Net A computer news site.

Expert Rolodex A resource guide from the Institute for Alternative Journalism

Felix Kramer's Grand Link Page A plethora of links for progressives and media activists.

HotWired A magazine packed with information related to the Internet and Net culture.

HyperToad An online zine of technology, media and politics.

Interfaith Alliance Dedicated to protecting America's basic freedoms of speech, press and religion from groups cloaked in religious garb that aspire to pervert these principles.

Mojo Wire Read articles from Mother Jones, investigate the money trees of Congress members, and get great links to other sites.

NetGuide Live A comprehensive guide to what's live, what's new, and what's changing online.

Salon Publishes original materials on culture, politics and personality.

Suck. A fish, a barrel and a smoking gun guide you to the truth about the Web.

Women's Feature ServiceA news and feature service that reports from 40 countries around the globe.

Women's Wire A zine-style wire of women's issues.

WomensNet A nonprofit computer network for activist women and their friends.

Working for Change News from Working Assets, a progressive long-distance telephone provider.

Studentpress Home Page Information for student and professional journalists.

[Government Sponsored Bulletin Boards](#)

[California State Senate Gopher](#) Access to all sorts of info on local legislation.

[Government Documents On-line](#)

[US House of Representatives Gopher](#)

[US Army Area Handbooks](#) Political, cultural, historical, military and economic info on world affairs.

[World Bank gopher server](#)

[The San Francisco Bay Guardian](#) News and resources for the Bay Area.

[Media Mark](#)'s listing of jobs in PR

[Government Sponsored Bulletin Boards](#)

[California State Senate Gopher](#) Access to all sorts of info on local legislation.

[Government Documents On-line](#)

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Let Your Experts
Put Your Best Face Forward

Award Winning White Paper:
Building A National Newswire for the Independent Sector

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"Invaluable stuff!"

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Campaign Calendar

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AE Advance Edition

Peace Movements & Anti-War Protests

On the Livewire Right Now...

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info@ascribe.org

Felix's Grand Links Master Index--
Web Starting Points (as of 1996)
from Kramer Communications

The World Wide Web is a dazzling explosion of creativity. Because it changes so quickly, no one ever has the last word or a complete view of anything. With all pages essentially equally accessible, and the number of sites on the Web doubling every few months, it's impossible to keep track of all the interesting places. Luckily, the links rescue us. We're never stranded.

When I started wandering around, and felt a bit overwhelmed, I decided to organize things according to the ways I think. Here you'll find powerful searching engines; breaking news from everywhere; business information; technical tools; pitches for compelling ideas, causes and projects; and fascinating windows on every human interest.

This is effectively the Grand Links Version 2.0. (It had reached 130K as a single page.) I've broken the pages into four topical parts, with a Master Index on this page that will take you to sections of the four parts. Each Topical Links part has its own Mini-Index. I've designed these pages so you can save them locally (as source or html), keep them open, and them for jumping off.

One final suggestion: If you do save the page on your drive, check back and look at the "last modified date" to see what's new. Or if you want to find out automatically when one is next updated, just register **http://www.nlightning.com/bookmarks.html** at the handy new URL-minder. (You can register all your favorite spots one-by-one with this helpful robot.)

To your pleasure and enlightenment! --*Felix Kramer*

P.S. I'm pleased that *Media and Democracy, a book of readings and resources*, published in February 1996 by The Institute for Alternative Journalism, said of the first version of this page "could be the motherboard of all link pages for progressives and media activists."

This list, with over 1,400 sites in over 60 categories, was created in April 1995, updated on September, 1995, and presented in its current new format in late February 1996.
For the fine print, see the end of the page.

GO TO:

Grand Links Topical List Part 1: Lists, Searches and News (36K)

Hot Lists

- ❍ Announcements (what's new)
- ❍ Announcements (what's new)
- ❍ Biggest and best hotlists and directories
- ❍ Individuals' home pages and hot lists
- ❍ Institutions' hotlists

Search and research/reference

- ❍ Libraries and reference sources
- ❍ Search engines
- ❍ Search engines--people
- ❍ Search engines--experimental and directories

Media and Timely News

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[Grand Links Topical List Part 2: Commercial Resources](#) (16K)

Commercial Resources

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- ❍ [Malls](#)
- ❍ [Management](#)
- ❍ [Online bookstsores](#)
- ❍ [Personal finance](#)
- ❍ [Retail home pages](#)

[Grand Links Topical List Part 3: Computing and Internet Resources](#) (35K)

Computing

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- ❍ [Macintosh info](#)

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- ❍ [Marketing and business on the Internet](#)

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[Grand Links Topical List Part 4: The World at Your Fingertips](#) (50K)

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- ❍ [Humor](#)

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- ❍ [Telecommunications and companies](#)
- ❍ [Technology and science](#)

RETURN TO [KRAMER COMMUNICATIONS HOME PAGE](#)

FINE PRINT: In many cases, I've modified the official names for clarity. The inclusion of a site doesn't in any way imply endorsement of its content--nor does it ensure that it will always be there. (Authors move documents frequently.) If you have trouble accessing a site, try again later to rule out busies and other causes (it could be a glitch anywhere betwen you and the computer at the other end). Don't be too concerned if there's a problem--let us know if you're so moved.

You're welcome to suggest other or better sites to list or even whole new categories--I'm all modems. Send your comments and suggestions for this page to Felix Kramer: <felixk@panix.com>

This page, <http://www.nlightning.com/bookmarks.html>, was last modified 1 March, 1996.

For help with this page, thanks especially to [Larry Aronson](#), author of *HTML 3 Manual of Style*, who's always there when I need advice, [Clay Shirky](#), Author of *Voices from the Net*, who gave me my first bookmarks, HTML ace [Courtney Pulitzer](#), Susan M. Thomas, and of course, Peter Brooks, developer of the [SlipKnot](#) Web browser, who is still having fun.