



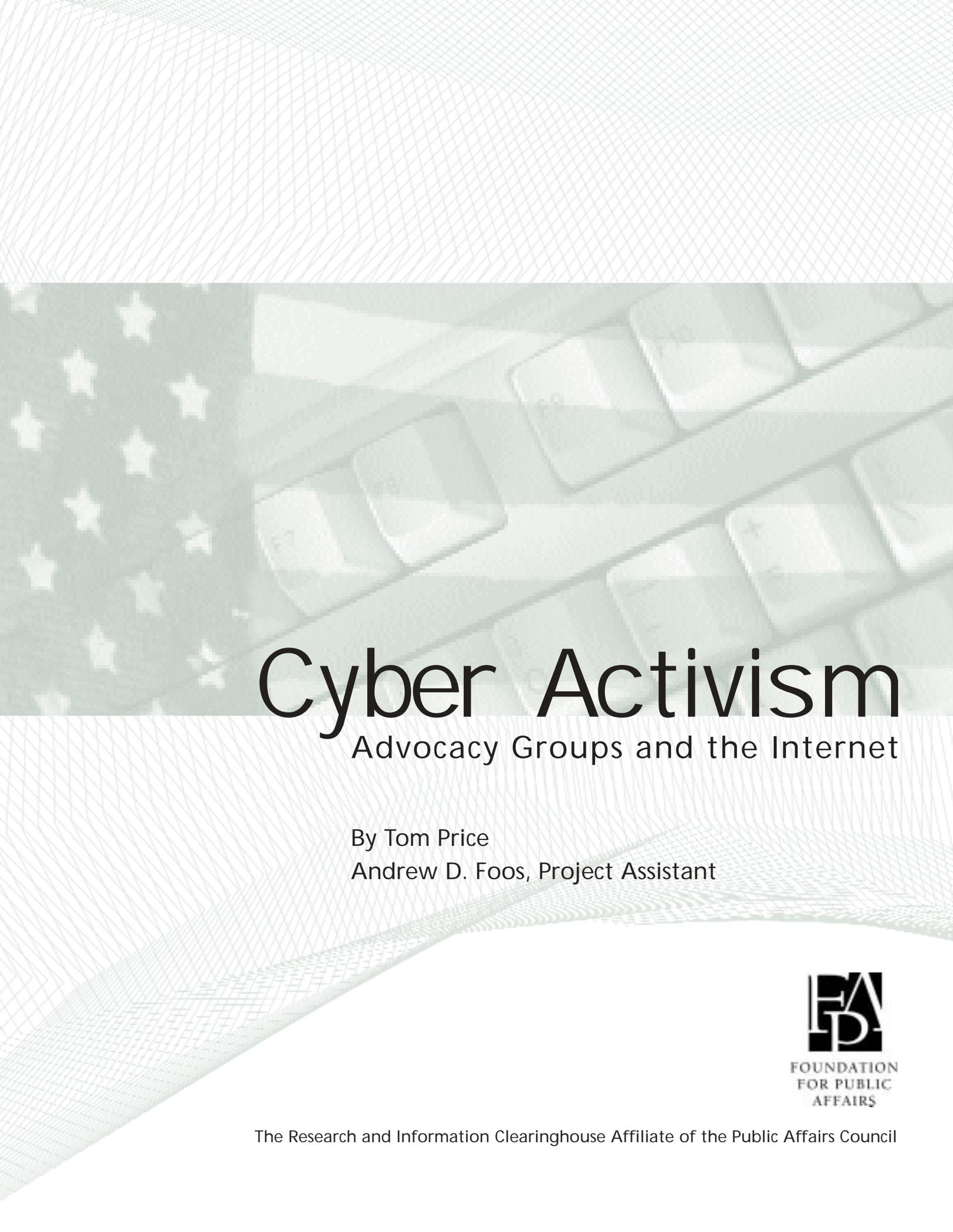
Cyber Activism

Advocacy Groups and the Internet

By Tom Price



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Andrew D. Foos, Project Assistant



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The Research and Information Clearinghouse Affiliate of the Public Affairs Council

With each passing week we are gaining insights about the Internet's potential to revolutionize the way public policy is developed. In 1999, when the Foundation for Public Affairs published *Creating a Digital Democracy: The Impact of the Internet on Public Policy-Making*, we believe we added substantially to public understanding about what the Net can and cannot do in this arena.

Among other conclusions, we noted that the Internet increases the transparency of both public and private institutions, gives the media new tools to report the news, facilitates access to raw information and misinformation, and provides activists of all stripes with the most effective tool ever created for organizing people.

It was this last attribute that seemed to be the most striking – and worthy of further study. If, in fact, the Internet were able to change the balance of power in this country and around the world, then it truly would have done something revolutionary.

This report is designed to profile many of the most innovative applications of information technology to influence public policy, turn up the pressure on corporations and other large institutions, and sway public opinion to support various causes. These formidable techniques include:

- Customized issue tracking and voter guides
- Interactive databases
- Consumer and education resource files
- Electronic news services
- Public policy mobilization
- Campaigns to target corporate reputations
- Web-based recruiting and fundraising

Each chapter highlights specific advocacy groups and the specific Internet strategies they use to achieve their objectives. While many of the examples are drawn from the left side of the political spectrum, it should be noted that most of these techniques could be employed by any advocacy group – conservative or liberal.

For organizations whose core business is not advocacy – such as corporations – this report should serve as a reminder of both the opportunities and the threats presented by the development of the Internet. Some of these practices could be implemented by companies to mobilize employees and build support in their communities. Other practices, however, are useful only if your job is to take the offensive in a debate over public policy or reputation. Nevertheless, it's always useful to understand the tactics available to both allies and opponents.

This study is sponsored by the Foundation for Public Affairs, the research and information clearinghouse affiliate of the Public Affairs Council. The Council is the leading professional association for public affairs executives and managers. It provides unique information, training and other resources to its members to support their effective participation in government, community and public relations activities at all levels. Its 600 corporate, association and consultant members work together to enhance the value and professionalism of the public affairs practice and to provide thoughtful leadership as corporate citizens.



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Activists Lead the Way

When the “**Million Mom March**” occupied Washington’s National Mall on Mother’s Day 2000, the scene looked much like the massive demonstrations of the past.

From a high stage in the shadow of the Capitol, speakers and musicians roused and entertained the demonstrators, who appeared to number in the hundreds of thousands. Down on the grass, the marchers carried signs, wore buttons and proclaimed their cause on hats and tee shirts.

In the middle of the crowd stood a tent, again reminiscent of demonstrations past. But inside this tent was something new – a cluster of personal computers at which demonstrators could e-mail pro-gun-control Mother’s Day cards to their senators and representatives.

The first things Donna Dees-Thomases did, after conceiving the march, were to apply for a demonstration permit, register the domain name www.millionmommarch.com and initiate work on the Web site. The Internet was crucial to organizing and implementing the march, and now it is central in the effort to turn the march into a permanent organization.

“It makes it easier to build coalitions and maintain your grassroots cheaply. It makes it easier to monitor the government and then communicate what government is doing.”

James Thurber
Director
Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies
American University

But the pro-gun-control moms did not have Washington to themselves on Mother’s Day; a smaller group – calling itself the **Second Amendment Sisters** – rallied in favor of the right to bear arms. And the Million Moms aren’t alone on the Internet; a very different perspective on gun control is offered at the **National Rifle Association’s** Web site.

In fact, it’s hard to find a serious advocacy group that doesn’t have an on-line presence today. That’s because the Internet is fundamentally changing the way activist organizations operate, and it’s boosting their abilities to compete on the public policy battleground. It enables even small and poorly funded groups to organize their compatriots, publicize their arguments and communicate with government officials at higher speed and lower cost than they ever could in the past.

It transforms what used to be insider information into on-line documents that can be viewed instantly anywhere in the world. It lets inexpensive e-mail do much of the work that traditionally required telephones, postage stamps and shoe leather.

“It makes government more transparent,” said political scientist James Thurber, director of American University’s Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies. “It makes it easier to build coalitions and maintain your grassroots cheaply. It makes it easier to monitor the government and then communicate what government is doing.”

In the past, noted Pam Fielding, who once held the title “cyberadvocacy coordinator” at the National Education Association, “the person who controlled the printing press controlled the issues.” Now, said Fielding, an Internet advocacy consultant, “all of us control the printing press, if you will, when we’re on-line.”

E-mail activism, such as the e-cards sent from the Million Mom March tent, is commonplace today. Advocacy groups broadcast e-mail alerts that ask supporters to telephone, mail, fax or e-mail public officials about a hot issue of the day. Groups deploy tools that enable supporters to identify their legislators and send e-mail from the Web.

“It’s the strongest tool for re-invigorating democracy of anything we’ve ever seen.”

Larry Makinson
Executive Director
Center for Responsive Politics

But adopting commonplace tactics doesn’t create a winning strategy on the Internet’s political battlefields. Advocacy groups constantly are adding weapons to their on-line arsenals as they explore the as-yet-un-counted ways the Net can be applied to influencing public policy.

This report takes a look at many of the groups that are deploying some of the most innovative on-line techniques.

- The Million Mom March, for instance, provides a case study of multiple ways the Internet can be applied across the life-cycle of an advocacy group. The March’s history underscores the importance of integrating on-line and off-line efforts.
- Elsewhere on the Net, American Civil Liberties Union organizers are recruiting supporters by canvassing the on-line world in the same manner organizers traditionally work telephones and knock on doors.
- The Center for Responsive Politics has transformed a book of campaign finance statistics that sold 1,000 copies annually into an interactive on-line database that enables hundreds of thousands of visitors a month to find out almost anything about money in elections.
- Other groups are deploying interactive databases that distribute information about sources of pollution in individual communities, demonize the pay scales of corporate executives and show how specific communities might be vulnerable to international missile attack.
- SatelliteReform.org created a “dynamic briefing book” on-line that targeted a very select audience of congressional aides.

- Similarly, the Rainforest Action Network uses the Internet to focus its supporters’ activism on a small group of corporate executives whose environmental practices the network wants to change.
- The conservative Town Hall and the left-leaning Electronic Policy Network have created Internet portals with points of view.
- Free-Market.net, a libertarian portal, has invented an “Intellectual Matchmaker” that introduces Web surfers to information, organizations and other individuals according to their interests.
- Two alliances – Save Our Environment Action Center and the Action Network – are building organizations of organizations that help groups cooperate in on-line advocacy projects.
- Many environmental organizations are trying to grow future environmentalists by making education materials available to teachers on-line and by speaking to children directly through the Net.

Meanwhile, others are adding their own contributions to what has become a continuous process of Internet innovation.

“It’s the strongest tool for re-invigorating democracy of anything we’ve ever seen,” said Larry Makinson, executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics.

The Million Mom March

Rene Thompson doesn't remember the name of the television news program on which she watched Donna Dees-Thomases announce her dream for a Million Mom March to promote more effective gun control. But Thompson, a stay-at-home Kentucky mom, does remember how she reacted.

"Everything (Dees-Thomases) said had been things we had discussed in our house," Thompson recalled. "That this (killing of children) is hideous. That something needs to be done.

"So here's Donna saying we've got to stop expecting other people to do it for us, and I'm saying this woman is absolutely right."

When the television interview ended, Thompson rushed to the family computer and punched in the address of the Million Mom March Internet site that Dees-Thomases had mentioned. "The Web site had an e-mail address where you could write to her," Thompson explained. "I e-mailed her and said: 'I'm in Kentucky. How may I serve? What do you need?'"

"She e-mailed me back and said, 'Write a letter to Congress. Write a letter to the editor.' Then she called me up, so we could do some brainstorming about what could be done."

Thompson realized quickly that, in September 1999, the Million Mom March consisted essentially of "Donna and a Web site."

Thompson promptly wrote letters to *The Louisville Courier-Journal* and *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. Soon she was writing and editing speeches for march leaders and promotional copy for the march. She became the march's coordinator for Kentucky. She was made responsible for overseeing the Web site's "Tapestry of Woven Words" – testimonials from mothers explaining why they cared about the gun-control issue – and for reviewing the negative e-mail the site received.

If a negative message seemed to contain a threat to Dees-Thomases, Thompson would forward it to a security expert who was helping the organization. If it seemed to threaten the march itself, she sent it to the U.S. Park Police, who protect the real estate where the march would occur.

"The Internet has been absolutely invaluable for us," Thompson said. "With Donna's faith and the Internet, everything seemed possible." That's the consensus of the march's leaders.

The march's triumph – mobilizing several hundred thousand demonstrators on Washington's National Mall on Mothers Day 2000, plus tens of thousands more in dozens of communities around the nation – was not attributable solely to the Internet. (It didn't hurt to have supporters like Rosie O'Donnell promoting the event on national television.)

But the demonstration could not have succeeded to the extent it did without the Internet. And the Internet is continuing to play a key role in the effort to transform the march into a permanent advocacy group.

The march initially lived solely in Dees-Thomases' home and on the Internet site created by Abstract Edge, a Web development firm whose three male principals were christened "honorary moms."



Created almost entirely through the Internet, the Million Mom March continues to utilize the Net to spread its message through features such as the "Tapestry of Woven Words."

“We wanted to connect emotionally and remove the barriers to participation that are inherent in any grassroots political organization,” Abstract Edge president Eric Paley explained.

The result was a site that was tinted in lavender and pink, hinted at children’s crayon drawings, and contained such features as the Tapestry, a “Time-Out Chair” for gun-control opponents and a “Mom’s Apple Pie Award” for supporters.

Behind this image – described as “warm and fuzzy” by *The New York Times* and “cleverly innocent” by *Newsweek* – stood the nitty-gritty tools of grassroots organizing on-line.

“When people heard about this thing and came to the Web site, we wanted to get them the information they needed to become involved and we wanted to create a database of people who wanted to be involved,” Paley said.

From the beginning, site visitors could register for the march. As the march date neared, they could check transportation and housing options.

The Web designers created 50 state pages and linked to 20 locally created pages where visitors could obtain detailed information about organizing activities near home.

There was a coordinators’ area where organizers could exchange information and download handbooks on organizing and public relations. Visitors could buy tee shirts at the site. They could also download high-resolution graphics for printing their own tee shirts, hats, posters and advertisements.

The computer tent was erected on the Mall on the day of the march. Web operators set up shop in a Washington hotel room, where they continually updated the site with march information and photographs. The site that day recorded more than a million hits.

“We can’t imagine using snail mail and telephone to accomplish what we did as we organized,” said Kathy Moore, the March’s communications director. “Because many of the people involved were mothers, much of our work was late at night after the kids were in bed and e-mails went flying.”

Moore recalls “great moments” in Washington, when “moms were arriving from all over the country and squealing with delight as they met their long-time late-night e-mail pals in person.”

The March accepted donations on the Web and raised funds through the tee shirt sales. Future fundraising is expected to be augmented by sales of two books Thompson is editing and the William Morris agency is shopping to publishers. One is based on the Tapestry. The other is a compilation of the negative e-mail, tentatively titled *When They Pry It From My Cold Dead Hands: Love Letters From the Other Side of Gun Control*.

Visitors to the Web site now are told how they can join or start a local chapter of the Million Mom March organization. The chapters are creating Web sites, and e-mail continues to be a key means of communication.

“We’ve got an awful lot of work left to do,” said Thompson, “and we’re not going to stop till we get it finished.”

The American Civil Liberties Union

Penny Crawley was the first **American Civil Liberties Union** (ACLU) employee to carry the title “cyber organizer.”

“The goal was to integrate the Internet with the legislative affairs program and to further integrate that with building the membership base,” Crawley recalled. “My job was to set up new ways to get people engaged in the various issues and then go out and mine the Internet for where we could find potential supporters.”

ACLU legislative communications director Phil Gutis and field coordinator Bob Kearney had recognized the Internet could be a powerful lobbying and organizing tool. They also understood that “people weren’t going to automatically, mysteriously appear out of nowhere,” Gutis explained.

“We knew we had to go out and apply the traditional lessons of organizing to the Internet,” said Gutis, who heads communication and organizing activities from the ACLU’s Washington office. “Organizing is finding the right people. So we’re knocking on doors and making phone calls. But we’re now knocking on cyber doors as well, and it’s proving wildly successful.”

Crawley began cyber organizing in 1998 with a list of some 3,000 individuals who had agreed to receive e-mailed action alerts. She spent much of her time trolling Internet discussion areas – newsgroups, message boards, listservs – looking for groups that might support ACLU positions. Then she customized a message for each group with interests that meshed with an ACLU campaign.

The message advised the targeted group of the issue and referred to the ACLU Web page where an action alert was posted. The visitor was asked to act – usually by sending a letter, fax or e-mail to a government official – and to register to receive additional alerts in the future. An invitation to become a full-fledged ACLU member was included.

For a campaign against racial profiling in law enforcement, for example, Crawley looked for discussion sites frequented by blacks. In a campaign against organized prayer in public schools, she searched for members of small religious organizations – picking up

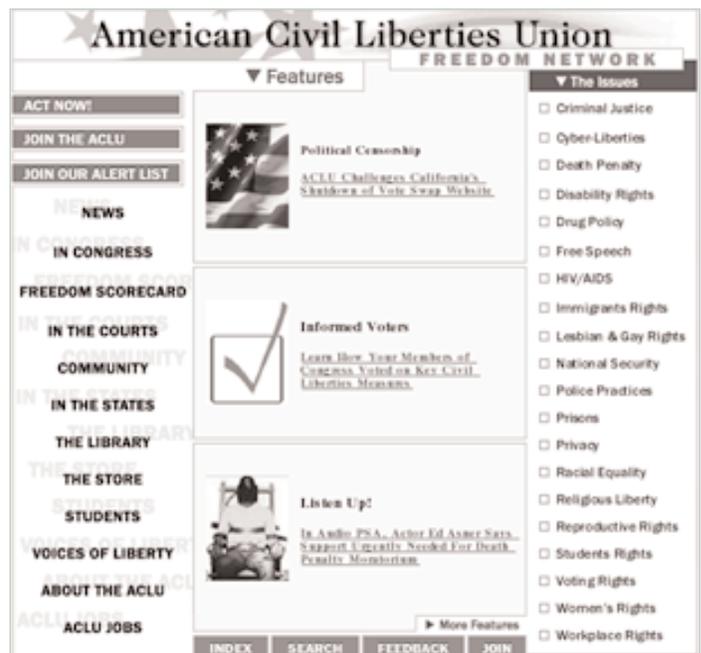
supporters from a group of pagans, among others.

In the campaign against the proposed flag-protection constitutional amendment, she visited veterans’ discussion groups – especially anti-war groups – and recruited nearly 1,000 members for a pro-free-speech group called Veterans Defending the Bill of Rights.

By the time Crawley left the ACLU to join the Issue Dynamics Inc. consulting firm in 1999, the e-mail alert list had grown to 32,000 recipients who each week were sending about 4,000 messages to lawmakers and regulators. By mid-2000, the list had topped 45,000, the Web site was welcoming 15,000 visitors a day, and the ACLU was recruiting more than 10 percent of its new dues-paying members on-line.

Recognizing that one person cannot organize the entire Internet at the grassroots level, the ACLU now is cultivating what it calls “cyber grasstops.”

“Grasstops,” in traditional organizing, refers to individuals who “have something more to offer than a traditional grassroots person,” Gutis explained. “It could be a religious leader in a community, or the president



Individuals targeted by the ACLU for “cyber organizing” can find a variety of resources available to them at the ACLU’s Web site.

of a local chamber of commerce.” Cyber grasstops activists are able to exercise some leadership on-line and, in this case, to “work with us to take our message and feed it into discussion groups and message boards.”

“We’re going to say to them: We want to send you our information, and you take the information and get it out on the message board where you’re talking, and find new boards and put our message out there, too.”

The ACLU also is broadening its cyber focus from the specialized lists that Crawley explored to community-wide discussion groups, “like those run by newspapers,” Gutis said.

“Organizing is finding the right people. So we’re knocking on doors and making phone calls. But we’re now knocking on cyber doors as well, and it’s proving wildly successful.”

Phil Gutis
Director, Legislative Communications
American Civil Liberties Union

“If we know that Sen. (Diane) Feinstein in California is a key vote on something,” Gutis said, “then we’re going to try to go out there to discussion groups in California and generate letters in California. If Rep. (Albert) Wynn in Maryland is a key vote, we want to identify the newspapers in his district that have message boards and try to get people sending him messages from there.”

This cyber organizing pays “multiple benefits,” Gutis said.

“First, you get the message sent. You engage people, get them to the Web site, get them to sign up for the alert list to encourage them to come back and ultimately, hopefully, they will join.”

Members of the alert list often become cyber organizers themselves without being asked.

“When we send out an alert,” said Gutis, “the next day we see a bump in our action alert list (of new activists), which says to me that people are forwarding the alert to other people who have not previously taken action.”

from elite boutique to mass retailer

The Center for Responsive Politics

It's nearly impossible to overstate how much the Internet has extended the reach of the **Center for Responsive Politics**, an organization devoted to publicizing the role of money in elections and government.

Traditionally, the center's flagship project was *Open Secrets*, a book containing a campaign-finance profile of every member of Congress and additional information about congressional committees, campaign contributors and political action committees (PACs).

Although *Open Secrets* was more than 1,300 pages thick and weighed more than six pounds, it could hold just two pages of data about each of the 535 representatives and senators plus additional abbreviated information on the committees, contributors and PACs. Gathering and organizing the data was such a complex undertaking that the book wasn't published until about 18 months following the election it covered. It sold for nearly \$200 per copy. Only 1,000 copies or so were purchased each year – mostly by political professionals, academic institutions and news organizations. It served essentially as a limited-circulation history book.

Today, "Open Secrets" is a Web site that is beating down the barriers of space, time and cost.

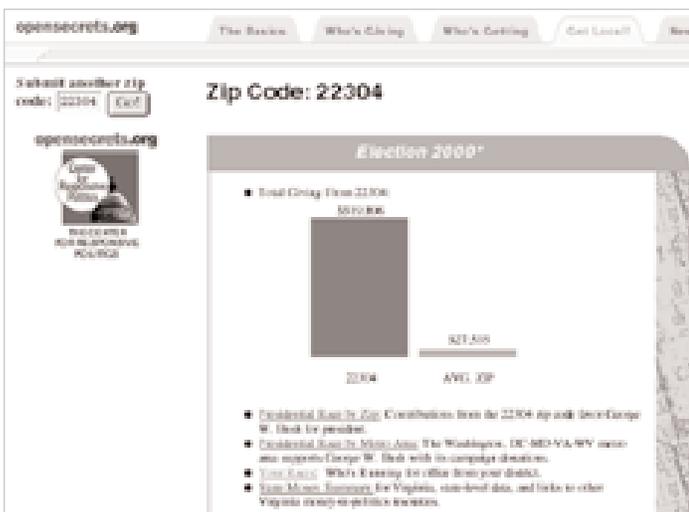
Because there is "a lot more real estate on the Web," as Center executive director Larry Makinson put it, the

"Open Secrets" Internet site does not have to condense information to conserve paper. Because the Center collects and publishes the information electronically, data can be displayed on the Web shortly after a candidate files a report with the Federal Election Commission. Because the center doesn't incur any printing cost when it posts information, it's able to give access to the site for free.

As a result, distribution of the information is soaring – from 1,000 books sold a year in the early 1990s to 31,000 user sessions at the Web site in the month of April 1998 to 95,000 in April 1999 and 270,000 in April 2000.

"The Web site let us go retail," Makinson explained. "The Web gave us a global audience for this stuff."

Punch in your ZIP code at the "Open Secrets" home page and you quickly can find out who's running for Congress in your community. Just as quickly, you can view abbreviated campaign finance reports for those races and click through for details about whom the candidates are getting their donations from. The same information is available about presidential candidates. You can even find out who among your neighbors are donating how much to which federal candidates and political organizations.



The Center for Responsive Politics' Web site demonstrates the power and versatility of interactive databases.



The Center's Web site provides detailed information on every federal election over the past several election cycles – at no cost to the user.

“Open Secrets” interactive database also includes searchable information about lobbyists, PACs, foreign agents, congressional travel and contributors to specific campaigns. “Industry Profiles” enable visitors to look at patterns of aggregated political giving over time by

“We want to raise the standard of what people expect to know about the candidates before they vote, and to raise their expectations for what they read in the local newspaper.”

Larry Makinson
Executive Director
Center for Responsive Politics

specific industries – tobacco companies or motor vehicle manufacturers, for example. You can view the personal financial disclosure statements filed by members of Congress, and find information about a few state elections as well.

All of this marks a start on the Center’s plan to create what Makinson terms a “do-it-yourself investigation kit.” By developing the right search facilities for databases that are accessed at the Web site, he said, “we can start giving people the tools to connect the dots themselves – not just to read something, but to look at the data and connect it with other information that might give them a better idea of where the money is coming from and what effect it is having.”

In the future “Open Secrets” will add information about the legislation members introduce and how they vote. Links to campaign finance reports will enable constituents to check for correlations between campaign contributions and a lawmaker’s legislative record.

The center works from the assumption that money exerts inordinate influence on American government today in part because it’s essentially invisible to the average voter.

“Right now, if you’re a member of Congress and you get a \$10,000 contribution from a corporation, you can vote (in the corporation’s favor) on any issue the corporation cares about without fear your voters will even know what you did and why you did it,” Makinson said. “We can make sure that, when a favor is done for a cash constituent, the voting constituents find out about it. If members of Congress thought that their constituents looked at the money they are getting and were really paying attention to it, the politicians would act differently.”

“Open Secrets” doesn’t have to attract enormous numbers of voters in order to put the information into wide circulation. As Makinson noted, “We have a lot of journalists who come to our Web site.” They not only write stories based on financial data they obtain at the site; they also use the site to prepare better questions for the politicians they cover.

“This is a huge leveler for reporters who are outside Washington,” he said. “We want to raise the standard of what people expect to know about the candidates before they vote, and to raise their expectations for what they read in the local newspaper.”

click here for more information

ACU, ADA, AFL-CIO and Others

If you're a conservative voter from Toledo and want to make your views known to Congress, the **American Conservative Union** (ACU) would love to help you out. Just go to the ACU Internet site, click on "Rating of Congress" and – when the map of the United States pops up – click on Ohio. The next thing you'll see is a grid that tells you that Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur of Toledo voted the ACU's way just four percent of the time in 1999, while Republican Sens. Mike DeWine and George Voinovich agreed with the conservative organization on more than 80 percent of their votes. Click on any or all of their names, and you'll get help in sending them e-mail.

If you're a liberal, **Americans for Democratic Action** (ADA) is happy to provide you the same type of service. At the ADA Web site, you'll find that Kaptur gets an 85-percent approval rating, while DeWine and

Voinovich are counted as being wrong at least 80 percent of the time.

This kind of interactive database is now commonplace on the Internet. Large numbers of advocacy groups offer Web pages that enable supporters to identify public officials, check their records and send messages.

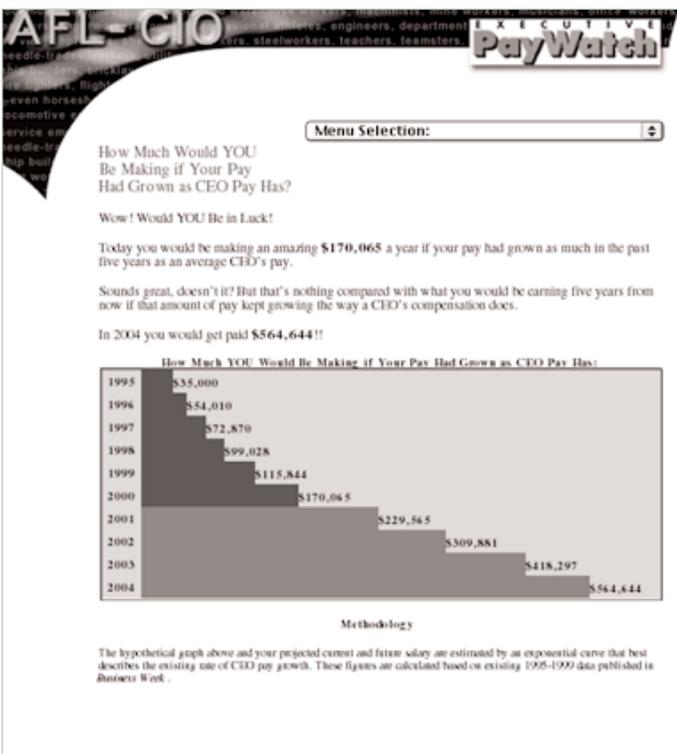
A growing number of organizations – such as the Center for Responsive Politics – are pushing beyond those basic techniques to create new ways of deploying their databases to advance their causes.

The **AFL-CIO "Executive PayWatch,"** for example, seeks to expose the "excessive salaries, bonuses and perks in CEO compensation packages."

An "Executive PayWatch" visitor can click on the name of a corporation – General Electric, say – and be told that in 1999 CEO Jack F. Welch Jr. earned \$44,650,000 in salary, bonus and other compensation, plus \$46,931,250 in stock options. Clicking on a button labeled "Show Me How I Compare," takes you to a table where you can fill in the value of your own salary, bonus, stock compensation, country club membership, luxury car, chauffeur service, no-interest loans, use of the company resort home or penthouse suite, and company-provided financial and tax-planning services. A visitor whose salary is the national median of \$35,000 – and who doesn't enjoy any of the perks implied to be commonly available to corporate executives – is informed that he "would have to work 2,616 years to equal Jack F. Welch Jr.'s 1999 compensation."

At another calculator on the "PayWatch" Web site, you would be told that if you earned \$35,000 in 1995, you would be making \$170,065 today "if your pay had grown as much in the past five years as an average CEO's pay." If your compensation kept growing at the CEO's rate for the next five years, the calculator reports, you would be earning \$564,644 in 2004.

At a different point on the political spectrum – and using a very different database – the **Coalition to Protect Americans Now** invites you to enter your ZIP code in order to find out "how vulnerable you are to missile attack."



The AFL-CIO's "Executive PayWatch" site features the kind of customization that makes the Internet such a powerful tool in issue advocacy.

Toledo, according to the Coalition, is in range of at least four types of intercontinental missiles from China, nine from Russia and one that could be launched from ships at sea.

After providing this information – an estimate based on “publicly available data from a variety of sources” – the coalition asks you to add your name to an on-line petition that calls for deployment of a missile defense system. The Web site also can help you send e-mails to Kaptur, Voinovich and DeWine.

Rivalling the Center for Responsive Politics’ “Open Secrets” site for comprehensiveness and creativity – although more difficult to use – is the pollution “Scorecard” devised by **Environmental Defense**. “Scorecard” applies a variety of interactive tools to federal and other scientific databases to generate information about local sources of pollution and to encourage political action.

Punching in a ZIP code produces reports about local Superfund sites, toxic chemical releases from specific manufacturing facilities, air pollution releases, farm waste, health risks from pollutants and how local air quality stands up to Clean Air Act standards.

The site helps visitors send faxes to companies listed as top-ranked polluters in the area and to send e-mails to government officials. It provides links to local environment-oriented organizations. And it hosts localized on-line forums where visitors can discuss specific pollution concerns and plan actions.

“The idea is to give people information and documentation and the kinds of tools they need to take action,” said Environmental Defense outreach coordinator Benjamin Smith.

The forums comprise a unique feature of the “Scorecard” Web site. Each of the many forums is built around a specific local pollution issue – four in Toledo’s Lucas County alone, for instance.

One purpose is to provide a vehicle for local discussion that could lead to action. Staffers monitor the forums and respond to visitors’ questions when they’re able.

“Sometimes it’s an open-ended question, like: ‘Does

The Coalition to Protect Americans Now

News Update | Online Petition | Letter to the Editor | Contact Congress | General Information

General Information

Customized Missile Threat Profile
For Zip Code 43001 based on publicly available data. You can customize this report to show or hide all threats to the following countries:

China
• C802 - H600 - J-20
• View all threats to the U.S.

Russia
• R302 - R303 - R304 - U202 - R307 - R308 - R309 - R310 - R311 - R312 - R313 - R314 - R315 - R316 - R317 - R318 - R319 - R320 - R321 - R322 - R323 - R324 - R325 - R326 - R327 - R328 - R329 - R330 - R331 - R332 - R333 - R334 - R335 - R336 - R337 - R338 - R339 - R340 - R341 - R342 - R343 - R344 - R345 - R346 - R347 - R348 - R349 - R350 - R351 - R352 - R353 - R354 - R355 - R356 - R357 - R358 - R359 - R360 - R361 - R362 - R363 - R364 - R365 - R366 - R367 - R368 - R369 - R370 - R371 - R372 - R373 - R374 - R375 - R376 - R377 - R378 - R379 - R380 - R381 - R382 - R383 - R384 - R385 - R386 - R387 - R388 - R389 - R390 - R391 - R392 - R393 - R394 - R395 - R396 - R397 - R398 - R399 - R400 - R401 - R402 - R403 - R404 - R405 - R406 - R407 - R408 - R409 - R410 - R411 - R412 - R413 - R414 - R415 - R416 - R417 - R418 - R419 - R420 - R421 - R422 - R423 - R424 - R425 - R426 - R427 - R428 - R429 - R430 - R431 - R432 - R433 - R434 - R435 - R436 - R437 - R438 - R439 - R440 - R441 - R442 - R443 - R444 - R445 - 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anybody know anything about this specific facility?'" said Smith.

Some visitors pose scientific questions. Others need help navigating the "Scorecard" site in search of a particular kind of information. Still others seek guidance for taking action against a particular source of pollution or want to know how to join the environmental movement. Some even call attention to a source of pollution that Environmental Defense hadn't been aware of previously.



Visitors to the "Environmental Scorecard" Web site gain access to a detailed analysis of the environmental quality of their neighborhoods by simply providing their ZIP code.

Environmental Defense's "Environmental Scorecard" provides visitors with information on a variety of environmental issues at both the national and local levels.

SatelliteReform.org

When Richard Cook and Robert Arena began planning the **SatelliteReform.org** Internet site in late 1998, they aimed it at a limited audience: fewer than 100 congressional aides, agency staff and journalists.

The site was part of a lobbying campaign by a coalition of businesses that included their primary client, the PanAmSat satellite company. The issue was privatization of the government-dominated international communications satellite industry. Few Americans – and few members of Congress – paid much attention to the debate.

Cook, a veteran lobbyist, and Arena, a young consultant who had been Internet strategy director for the 1996 Bob Dole presidential campaign, figured a handful of lawmakers would determine what the final legislation looked like. They set out to influence the targeted congressional aides who would influence the lawmakers.

They created what Arena called a “dynamic briefing book.” It was low on graphics, high on speed – quick to download and packed with frequently updated information that was intended to cover every aspect of the issue as concisely as possible.

“The first thing that strikes you today about these aides – these kids in their 20s and 30s – is that they don’t read (printed publications) anymore,” said Cook,

who has been a lobbyist, congressional aide or White House staffer for much of the last 40 years. “The position paper, *National Journal*, *Congressional Quarterly* – our bibles – they don’t have time to read them.

“They get in the office and – bam! – they’re right in front of the PC most of the day. So, if you’re a lobbyist, you have to go to the venue of the people you’re targeting. If you aren’t in that venue, you aren’t going to get your word across.”

The Cook-Arena goal was to make the site a primary source of information that the aides would visit regularly as they prepared their bosses for deciding the issue. For that to happen, the site had to be credible as well as easy to use.

To make it fast, Cook and Arena provided digests of much of the information, with links or citations to the original documents. These included press releases, company statements, legislation, hearing testimony, hearing transcripts, floor debates, *Congressional Record* inserts and news reports.

They argued their case. But, to bolster credibility, they posted news coverage that was unfavorable to their side, arguments made by their opponents and links to their opponents’ Web sites. When the House passed legislation that PanAmSat and its allies liked, for instance, there was a link to a PanAmSat statement of praise for the action beside a link to an expression of concern by Lockheed Martin, PanAmSat’s chief competitor in the lobbying battle.

To draw the aides to the site in the first place, Cook visited their offices, explained what the site was about and asked them to check it out right then.

“I said, ‘You can trust this site,’” Cook said. “‘Everything’s going to be on here -- the good stories and the bad stories. You can rely on the accuracy and the timeliness of this site.’”

SatelliteReform.org also established an e-mail alert list to notify recipients when new information was posted to the Web site. The list started with a bit fewer than 100 recipients and grew to about 250 by the time President Clinton signed the final legislation into law in March 2000.



SatelliteReform.org provides an example of how the Internet can be used to influence a highly targeted audience.

“The first thing that strikes you today about these aides — these kids in their 20s and 30s — is that they don’t read (printed publications) anymore.... They get in the office and — bam! — they’re right in front of the PC most of the day.”

Richard Cook

Lobbyist and consultant to SatelliteReform.org

Arena said he believes this technique could be applied to any legislative issue.

“I can’t envision a lobbying campaign during which you would not have to provide a member and his staff with information,” he said, “and this is a great way to do that.”

“At some time, every member’s staff has to write the one-page paper about the issue. And this site was built with that in mind.”

Cook agreed it would work most of the time, because “what you’re doing is organizing a complex issue — you’re doing somebody else’s grunt work.”

You can’t afford to publicize your opponents’ arguments unless you clearly “wear the white hat,” however, Cook pointed out. Because SatelliteReform.org was advocating maximum privatization and maximum competition, he was confident that he had a white-hat argument.

Organizations also have to realize that employing the Internet in this way augments, but does not replace, traditional lobbying tactics, he added.

“It doesn’t displace wearing the shoe leather out. In fact, it adds another thing you have to do with shoe leather. You have to go to the target aides and convince them face to face to plug in the address and get them to understand what you’re trying to do.”

The Rainforest Action Network

The home page of the **Rainforest Action Network's** Internet site conveys the image you would expect from the environmental advocacy group. The graphics suggest wild animals, wilderness and threats to nature.

Click on the "Action Alert" button, however, and you may be a bit surprised by what happens next. Instead of being urged to contact a senator, representative or other government official, you're asked to write to Margaret Hardy Magerko, president of the 84 Lumber Co. Click on the home page's biggest button – with the teasing question: "It's 10 p.m. Do you know where your money is?" – and you're asked to sign up for a campaign to transform the business practices of financial giant Citigroup. Click on the button for the "Old Growth Campaign," and you'll be told of home builders and do-it-yourself mega-stores that have agreed to quit using timber from endangered forests.

The Rainforest Action Network (RAN) has not abandoned all attempts to influence government officials.

But its leaders have concluded that, when it comes to environmental protection, corporations are more important than governments. Consumers can exercise more power with their dollars than citizens can with their votes, RAN believes, so it now employs e-mailed and Web-based alerts to generate faxes to corporate executives.

"We have found that companies are much more accountable than public officials," said Michael Brune, who heads the organization's old growth forest campaign. "We could try to work through Congress or the administration to pass a bill or sign an executive order to eliminate the use of wood from old growth forests. But the chances of them doing that are slim, so we go to Home Depot and convince them to establish a model of responsible consumption."

The organization claims the do-it-yourself and homebuilding industries as noteworthy success stories. In August 1999, following a two-year campaign by RAN and other environmental groups, Home Depot – the world's largest lumber retailer – announced that it would stop selling wood products from endangered forests. Other retailers have announced similar policies, as have major home builders.

In the Spring of 2000, RAN targeted 84 Lumber, the nation's fifth largest home improvement retailer. It launched a campaign directed at Citigroup, North America's largest financial institution, that summer. The 84 Lumber effort is a continuation of the campaign to get retailers to stop selling lumber from old growth forests. Citigroup is targeted for financing projects that RAN considers detrimental to the environment.

"One of the things we do is target a company's brand image," Brune said. "We pick companies that have a fairly well established brand name, and we attempt to link that with destructive practices."

"So if people think of (a well-known lumber retailer), they think of wood being ripped from the Amazon. Each company head is looking at these e-mails as coming from customers or potential customers."

Model letters to the targeted executives are posted on the RAN Web site, and alerts are e-mailed to a



Unlike most other advocacy groups, the Rainforest Action Network utilizes Internet technologies to aim their issue campaigns directly at corporations.

growing list of electronic activists who numbered about 3,500 in mid-2000.

By tapping into a worldwide network of free fax servers, RAN is able to deliver faxes to the targeted executives at essentially no cost. The messages are forwarded as e-mail to fax servers within the local calling area of the targeted executive. The fax then is sent to its final destination as a toll-free telephone call.

The organization believes faxes are more effective than e-mail because “faxes have far more of a visual impact,” RAN Web producer Genevieve Raymond said.

RAN activists also work hard to find “the perfect point to send the fax to,” Brune said. They try to find the phone number for the fax machine that sits closest to the CEO’s desk, he said.

The electronic activism is integrated into a broad campaign that includes mass-media advertising, publications, conferences, boycotts and demonstrations.

“An action alert is always strategically timed within a campaign,” Raymond emphasized. “Frequently we’ll do an action alert when it looks like a company is on the verge of taking an action which we’re pressuring them to take and they need an extra push. Or we’ll send one when it’s clear a company doesn’t know who they’re dealing with when we send out these armies of grassroots activists to their stores.”

“We have found that companies are much more accountable than public officials.... One of the things we do is target a company’s brand image. We pick companies that have a fairly well established brand name, and we attempt to link that with destructive practices.”

Michael Brune
Old Growth Campaign Director
Rainforest Action Network

ideological Yahoos!

Town Hall and the Electronic Policy Network

You could call them “Ideological Yahoos,” and not be disparaging.

Like the prominent commercial Internet portal – Yahoo! – these Web sites offer help in navigating the ever more cluttered on-line world. But their purpose is to advance a point of view – by providing easy access to information, and easy links to like-minded educational and activist groups.

Two of the most prominent – “**Town Hall**” on the right and the “**Electronic Policy Network**” on the left – sprang from traditional print magazines. “Town Hall,” started as a joint project of the Heritage Foundation and William F. Buckley’s *National Review*, is now run by Heritage’s Online Communications Department. The “Electronic Policy Network” (EPN) is a product of *The American Prospect*.

The portals’ operating techniques are quite similar. “Town Hall” describes itself as a “one-stop mall of ideas...from the conservative movement.” EPN says it is “the front door to progressive policy on the Web.”

Their common goals are to provide greater exposure to their affiliates’ work and to offer venues for like-minded thinkers, activists, politicians, elected officials and government staff to interact.

Both sites’ home pages feature links to organizations, columnists, magazine articles and scholarly studies. The contents of those links are quite different, of course.

One day in mid-2000, for instance, EPN featured an *American Prospect* critique of Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush’s “Risky Plan to Privatize Social Security,” while Town Hall supplied a link to a Council for Government Reform commentary about “Bush’s Sound Investment.” “Town Hall” served up columns by the likes of Jack Kemp, Phyllis Schlafly and George Will, while EPN featured Ralph Nader, Marian Wright Edelman and Robert Reich. EPN offered connections to more than 60 organizations, including the Children’s Defense Fund, People for the American Way and Public Citizen. Among “Town Hall’s” similar number of affiliated organizations were the American Conservative Union, National Right to Work and

the Traditional Values Coalition.

“Town Hall” was born in the early ‘90s as a dial-up bulletin board and moved onto CompuServe’s proprietary on-line service in 1993. The nation’s highest-ranking conservative Republicans – Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and House Speaker Newt Gingrich – helped launch “Town Hall” onto the World Wide Web in mid-1995. EPN hit the Web about the same time, created largely to be a “progressive alternative” to what *American Prospect* coeditor and EPN founder Paul Starr viewed as conservatives’ head start on-line.

While the men and women who run the two portals stand far apart on the political spectrum, they speak almost in unison about their sites’ roles in public policy and the Internet.

“The policy organizations have historically had a huge problem in communication because they produce reports that are typically longer than

The screenshot shows the townhall.com website interface. At the top left is a search bar. Below it is a navigation menu with links for Home, What's New, The Right/Left, and About Us. The main content area is titled 'Conservative Columnists' and lists over 60 columnists. Below that is a section for 'Today's Featured Articles' with several article titles and authors. At the bottom left, there is a large graphic that says 'Click to learn how to STOP THE IRS'. The page is dated 'Updated Monday, November 6, 2000 (6:42 AM)'.

Web sites such as townhall.com help users to break through the clutter on the Net by providing links to think tanks, columnists and other sources of information.

magazine articles but shorter than books, and how do you distribute that?" Starr said. "It doesn't go in book stores. It doesn't go in magazines."

An Internet portal creates "a tremendous opportunity to make the work available and to find readership," he said. It also fosters new alliances and relationships by enabling organizations to "interact with other organizations that are interested in the same problems but otherwise are unaware of each other – around the country, and even internationally."

"Unless you're a media conglomerate," said Jonathan Garthwaite, the Heritage Foundation's online communications director, "it's very difficult to get the kind of attention that you need to really get the message out." By channeling visitors through a portal, "we can start sharing constituencies and grow them all together."

All of "Town Hall's" members provide links back to the "Town Hall" site, and many link to each other. A smaller number of organization-to-organization links are found among the EPN affiliates.

"Town Hall" hosts live chats with advocates and policy experts as well as a multi-topic bulletin board discussion service. It helps visitors to identify and write to their members of Congress and area newspapers. Both sites also offer e-mailed "what's new" services and allow their affiliates to announce jobs, internships and events.

The portals expect to become more important as the Internet becomes more crowded – not just because more people will be on-line, but because the growing number of Web sites will increase the need for guides who can help Web surfers find their way.

"The challenge now isn't getting on-line so much as it's searching through what's on-line to find what you're looking for," said Joanna Mareth, EPN's director. Garthwaite put it this way: "You have Web sites fighting for attention from more people than actually exist. Getting the conservative message out in a consolidated manner is a lot more effective than if every individual think tank is out there trying to go it alone."

"You have Web sites fighting for attention from more people than actually exist. Getting the conservative message out in a consolidated manner is a lot more effective than if every individual think tank is out there trying to go it alone."

Jonathan Garthwaite
Online Communications Director
Heritage Foundation/Town Hall

Free-Market.net

Free-Market.net's "Intellectual Matchmaker" service was conceived at a gathering of students who had romance on their minds.

"We were looking for ways to attract college students" to the libertarian Internet site, Free-Market.net executive director Chris Whitten explained, so he convened a focus group.

"A student threw out the idea of having a matchmaker," Whitten said, "and he meant a dating service. We kept the name. But what we try to match are people and ideas."

A visitor to the "Intellectual Matchmaker" page first notices a cartoon of two anthropomorphic computers that are shaking hands while sparks fly from their networking cables. The visitor is invited to fill out a questionnaire to kick off the matchmaking process.

The first questions are the kind Dolly Levi might ask – age, place of residence, how do you like to spend your free time? (With friends and family? Watching movies or TV? Reading a book? Reading a newspaper or magazine? On the Internet?)

The queries that follow, however, aren't likely to be broached very often at dormitory mixers or singles bars:

- Which from a list of 60 people "have most influenced your ideas and opinions?" Lord Acton, perhaps? Edmund Burke? Ayn Rand?
- Which of 34 topics are you most interested in? Libertarianism, for example? Anarchism? Austrian economics?

Submitting the completed questionnaire generates Internet links, reading recommendations, upcoming events and e-mail addresses of some Free-Market.net members who share your interests. If you agree, your special Free-Market.net e-mail address will be sent to members who match up well with you. Initial contacts are made anonymously through the Free-Market.net e-mail system. Individuals can decide whether to make their true identities known to their correspondents.

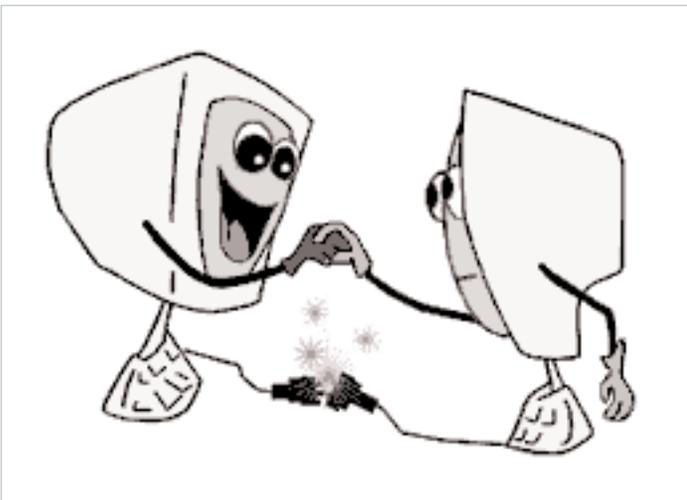
Members can request daily or weekly e-mail updates and a personal Web page on which updated links will be posted.

"It's the spirit of networking and communication and cooperation," Whitten said. "What we try to do is encourage connections. We want people to connect with people, organizations, ideas and resources. We want to help people find what interests them."

The site makes it easy for users to tell friends about the "Matchmaker." And the e-mail contacts can lead to additional connections.

"A lot of the benefit that we see happening is that people who are interested in these ideas find out about other organizations," Whitten said. "They might go on to become a Cato Institute supporter or find out about a think tank in their state that they might never have known about otherwise."

One member who allows "Matchmaker" to share his identity refers his correspondents to an on-line campaign called Project Net, through which libertarians troll the Internet in search of likely converts to their cause. These libertarians look for Internet discussions by opponents of government restrictions – on smoking or gambling, say – and post links to libertarian information on



Through Free-Market.net's "Intellectual Matchmaker," libertarians can link together to form a global Internet-based community.

that topic. Through “Matchmaker,” this one libertarian is recruiting libertarians to go out and recruit more libertarians.

Free-Market.net fosters decentralized communication. In addition to sending its matchmaker clients off to deal with each other as they choose, it hosts more than 30 discussion sites. Many are sponsored in partnership with other libertarian organizations. Except for attempts to delete obscenity and spam, the discussions are rarely moderated.

In addition to being in keeping with libertarian philosophy, this laissez-faire approach is key to the site’s long-term success, Whitten believes. “You never know what’s going to happen when people start communicating one on one. There’s no way we could set that up. It has to bubble up. We just help them do it.”

“Matchmaker” had about 7,000 individuals in its database in mid-2000. Free-Market.net was recording more than 130,000 unique visits each month, a 75-percent increase from the year before.

Whitten hopes to encourage that growth by enhancing personalization. He plans to add an item to the “Matchmaker” questionnaire so college students can be hooked up with others on the same campus. The site is developing a “control panel” to make it easier for members to revise their “Matchmaker” interests lists and manage their membership in discussion groups. The number of forums, focused on specific topics, will be expanded.

“You want to let people control their own experience,” Whitten said. “You want them to be able to get what they’re after, not just what you want to give them.”

“We want people to connect with people, organizations, ideas and resources. We want to help people find what interests them.... You want to let people control their own experience. You want them to be able to get what they’re after, not just what you want to give them.”

Chris Whitten
Executive Director
Free-Market.net, The Henry Hazlitt Foundation

Save Our Environment Action Center and the Action Network

Advocacy groups are discovering the Internet can do more than enhance their communication with individual supporters. It also can foster cooperation among like-minded groups.

Two of the more prominent organizations of organizations are the **Save Our Environment Action Center**, an alliance of 16 major environmental groups, and the **Action Network**, a looser confederation of more than 30 mostly smaller environmental and liberal associations.

Save Our Environment was created in a conscious effort to form a partnership among sometimes-competitive environmental organizations. The Action Network grew serendipitously from smaller groups asking to use an e-mail tool that had been developed by Environmental Defense, a major environmental organization that also participates in Save Our Environment.

"Before these current projects, these organizations were often in competition with each other for donor base and activist base and for credit for achievements," said Stuart Trevelyan, a consultant to Save Our Environment. When the Save Our Environment alliance was suggested, Natural Resources Defense Council program director Greg Wetstone explained, "Many of us thought it would be a good thing but that it also would be a nightmare from a governance standpoint. The idea of 16 groups figuring out the design and content for an Internet site seemed overwhelming." Nevertheless, the initiative turned into a "pleasant surprise."

The groups – strong, high-visibility organizations such as the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society – formed a partnership council with Defenders of Wildlife President Rodger O. Schlickeisen as chairman. Wetstone was appointed to chair an electronic advocacy steering committee.

The groups agree to undertake a few joint campaigns on- and off-line. In mid-2000, the issues were saving the Everglades, preserving wild forests, stopping global warming, and placing more lands and waters under federal protection.

The campaigns are promoted on the alliance's Web site. E-mails are sent to all 16 organizations' members

and supporters, as well as to individuals who have registered to become electronic activists directly with Save Our Environment. Some of the groups may contact their members by telephone or postal mail as well. Supporters are asked to communicate with their members of Congress or other decision-makers.

The e-mailing software strips duplicate names from the combined mailing list, so activists don't receive multiple copies of the same message. The system protects the security of each organization's mailing list, a key to encouraging participation in joint mailings.

That protection also exists in the Action Network, which is managed by Environmental Defense outreach coordinator Benjamin Smith.

"The reality of the nonprofit membership world is that groups like ours are very cautious about how they share their membership database information," Smith said. They fear other groups might lure their members away.

Groups are attracted to the Action Network by a tool that enables recipients of an e-mail alert to send a fax to a public official simply by replying to the e-mail.



The Save Our Environment Action Center demonstrates how advocacy groups can come together on the Internet at one central point in order to amplify their message.

“Successful collaboration builds good will for more collaboration in the future. There’s a snowball effect. When there’s an experience that we can get along, then there’s more tendency to get along.”

Stuart Trevelyan
Co-Principal
Carol/Trevelyan Strategy Group

Initially, the tool was not integrated into a Web site. Environmental Defense used it only to communicate with 3,000 or so of its supporters who had agreed to be e-mail activists.

“We started getting a lot of requests from other groups, either for advice for how they could create the same tool themselves or asking that we ship them a copy of the program so they could send action alerts out to their own members,” Smith recalled.

At first, Environmental Defense sent out copies of the software. Then the organization’s leaders decided it would be more valuable as a shared tool on the Web. Action Network members use the tool to communicate with their own supporters. They also can ask other network organizations to send alerts to their members.

Individual activists who visit the network’s Web site are asked to register with one of the member organizations in order to participate. Member organizations range from well-known national groups such as Zero Population Growth and American Rivers to local and regional groups such as the Hawaiian Environmental Alliance and the (San Francisco) Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition.

At one point in mid-2000, 15 of the member organizations were using the tool to promote 46 separate alerts that had been sent to about 240,000 supporters. Added together, the 30-plus groups in the network have registered nearly 400,000 electronic activists.

The network is creating “a community of like-minded e-mail activists,” Smith said. Between 30 and 40 percent of the electronic activists in the network are

affiliated with more than one advocacy group. Activists who visit the Web site can be introduced to organizations they might not have known existed.

Because activists can join Save Our Environment directly, it is building a new activist database. Consultant Stuart Trevelyan terms it “harvesting unaffiliated people” and says it is one of the most promising aspects of on-line advocacy – especially because finding potential members on-line is so much less expensive than traditional telephone or postal efforts.

“I might say I support saving the whales, but I don’t really consider myself an environmentalist,” added Trevelyan, co-principal of Carol/Trevelyan Strategy Group.

“Because you can create a Web site around one issue and empower people with tools that allow them to take action on that issue, you can build a database of unaffiliated people that we know support saving the whales.”

Such individuals might be convinced to join an environmental advocacy group later. Even those who don’t join strengthen the environmental movement if they continue to respond to requests for action.

Save Our Environment intends to expand its reach by working with additional organizations to address state and regional issues.

The Action Network also wants to add affiliates. And Smith wants to initiate on-line forums for each alert that’s sent out, so activists can ask questions and make suggestions.

Cooperation begets more cooperation, which is good for the organizations involved, Trevelyan said. “Successful collaboration builds good will for more collaboration in the future. There’s a snowball effect. When there’s an experience that we can get along, then there’s more tendency to get along.”

World Wildlife Fund and Others

At the Rainforest Action Network Internet site, child-like drawings of a tropical bird and a butterfly enliven the "Teachers' Resources" section of the "Kids' Corner."

At the Environmental Defense site's "Earth to Kids" section – illustrated with stick-like drawings of children at play – teachers are invited to "bring the environment into your classroom."

At the **World Wildlife Fund** site, the "Windows on the Wild" section features animated games that highlight the importance of biodiversity. Throughout the site, visitors repeatedly encounter the slogan: "Working together, we can leave our children a living planet."

These sites are parts of multi-pronged campaigns by many advocacy groups to harness kid power for the promotion of environmental causes, both now and for the future.

The groups urge adults to preserve the environment

for the sake of their children. They offer educational materials for teachers and on-line games for the kids, in hopes the children will become environmentalists when they become adults. And they encourage the kids to take action now.

"We want to build an environmentally literate society," World Wildlife Fund education specialist Jeffrey England explained. "We want children to grow up having a greater understanding of what [biodiversity] is and its importance, and for them to then make better choices by taking this into account."

There is "documented evidence" that such efforts are effective, according to Rob Stuart, who works with environmental groups through TechRocks, a supporting organization to the Rockefeller Family Fund.

In advocacy campaigns, "kids resonate," Stuart said. "Because so much of what environmental groups are trying to do is in fact preservation for the future, that resonates because it's real. People may not necessarily want to go hiking in a wilderness area next week, but everybody wants their kids to be able to have that experience. Everybody wants to believe that there will be a planet that is healthy for their children and their children's children."

The highest response rate recorded for an advocacy ad on the Juno Internet service featured pictures of children in a forest with a message about the importance of preserving ancient and wild forests for the future, Stuart said.

There also is "no doubt" that "getting to kids and getting to teachers is in fact recruitment of the next generation of environmental supporters and activists," he said. "There have been studies that show, if you ask environmental activists questions about their childhood, there is a direct connection to nature somewhere. My 6-year-old runs around saying 'we can't pollute the planet,' and she'll say that for the rest of her life."

In addition, there are actions "that kids can take collectively – or as they harass their parents – that can have an impact on the environment now," he said. At home, children pressure parents into recycling, for



The Rainforest Action Network's "Kids' Corner" helps the group develop tomorrow's activists through the use of action alerts.

instance. And businesses that depend on kid customers – such as fast-food chains – have responded to child-based campaigns that called for making their packaging more friendly to the environment.

The “Kid’s Stuff” section at the Wildlife Fund Web site includes games, quizzes, maps, fact sheets – even a “homework helper” – on such topics as insects, endangered species and biodiversity.

Teachers who visit the site can read a description of the Fund’s education program and see samples of available materials. They can incorporate some of the program into their classrooms by downloading materials at the Web site. Students can participate in on-line activities in schools that have Internet access.

The classroom materials include wildlife posters, maps, videos and guides for teachers. For the core “Windows on the Wild” biodiversity curriculum, intended for middle schoolers, a teacher can purchase a \$40 kit that contains, among other items, a teacher’s guide and a student book. The fund allows the student book to be photocopied, so a school need purchase only the one kit.

“We want to build an environmentally literate society.”

Jeffrey England
Education Specialist
World Wildlife Fund

The curriculum is intended to be a supplement to a school’s existing class work. Because biodiversity encompasses “the variety of the human landscape,” England said, the materials can be used in social studies as well as in science classes.

The Wildlife Fund’s educational materials also are used outside the classroom by zoos, camps and scout troops. The organization also conducts workshops that teach teachers how to teach biodiversity.

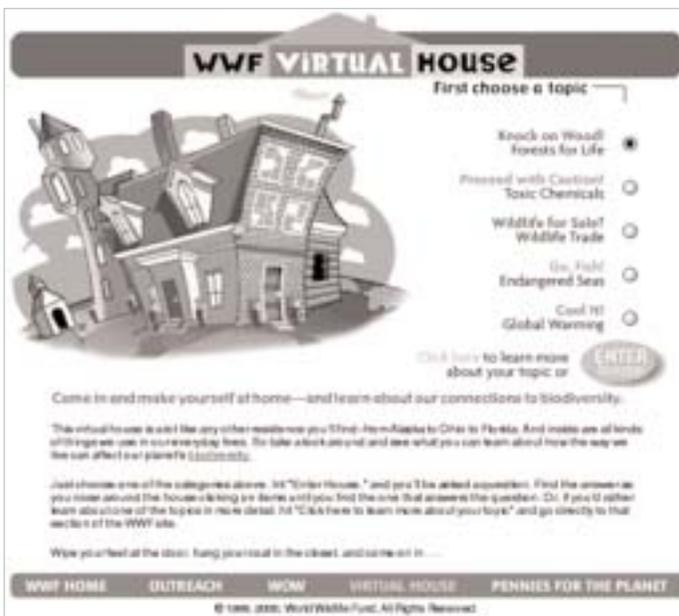
The Internet is an excellent tool for marketing the materials and keeping them up-to-date, England said. The Web site displays information about scheduled teacher workshops. And teachers can register to receive e-mail notification of new materials.

The Rainforest Action Network and Environmental Defense offer similar resources. Environmental Defense also hosts an on-line forum where teachers exchange ideas.

This growth in attention to children is a product of the growth and development of the Internet, Stuart said. “Advocacy groups, who heretofore had to focus most of their attention on dealing with decision makers and running campaigns and dealing with members, can in fact have much broader reach,” he said. “Because of the medium’s low cost and expansive reach, they can afford to provide on-line curricula for teachers and games for kids and make them widely available.”

He is convinced that, without the Web, the groups’ direct appeals to children would be essentially impossible. A child is not likely to respond to an environmental organization’s newsletter, he noted. But a child can find and play an interactive game on a group’s Web site – even without parental involvement.

“That,” he said, “is a direct result of the new technology.”



The World Wildlife Fund spreads its message on biodiversity to children through the use of several on-line games such as the “Virtual House.”

IndyMedia.org, Protest.net and others

The sounds of police sirens blend with rap music as a montage of photographs of purported police misconduct flashes on the computer screen. A young woman then explains the importance of eyewitness testimony in the prosecution of police misconduct charges. Her brief lecture is followed by a filmed dramatization of police abusing a young couple. Finally, the viewer is asked to study instructions for observing and reporting police misconduct and to fill out a complaint form about the incident portrayed in the film.

This is an on-line training program developed by a group calling itself the "Midnight Special Law Collective." Anyone with Internet access and the free RealPlayer and Acrobat Reader software can download the program at, among other places, the **IndyMedia** Web site.

IndyMedia and Midnight Special are examples of how activists are using the Internet to facilitate activism by individuals outside the formal structure of traditional advocacy organizations.

Employing Web sites, listservs, e-mail and the latest on-line technology, these activists are exploiting the Internet's unique capabilities for all styles of communication – one-to-one, many-to-many and points in between. They empower individuals to join actions or to

start their own. They enable collaborations that are not constrained by time or place.

IndyMedia is the ultimate alternative news source, a place where individuals and organizations can post their own reporting and commentary – writing, photographs, audio, video, cartoons and other artwork. It traces its origin to the Seattle Independent Media Center, established to publicize protestors' points of view during the anti-globalism demonstrations at the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. In 2000, IndyMedia was active during protests at the spring World Bank meeting in Washington and during the Republican and Democratic parties' national conventions in August. It displays the Midnight Special training program to help protestors file complaints about alleged police brutality during demonstrations.

Other sites have gone on-line to serve protestors at specific events, taking Internet addresses based on a kind of techy code – **D2KLA.org** for the 2000 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, **r2kphilly.org** for the GOP convention in Philadelphia, **a16.org** for the protests at the World Bank meeting that began on April 16, **s26.org** for protests against the September International Monetary Fund meeting in Prague. These event-specific sites supply practical information for the activists: calendars of activities; how to get housing, food and transportation; tips for dealing with police and warding off the effects of teargas.

Among the most prominent of the ongoing activist sites is **Protest.net**, a kind of global bulletin board for left-of-center activism.

Launched in June 1998 by software developer Evan Henshaw-Plath, Protest.net essentially enables any individual, organization or ad-hoc group to post information, discuss issues, seek supporters, and propose, organize and coordinate actions. Events from around the world are listed on the Web site. They range from attempts to organize massive protests at events such as the national political conventions and international financial gatherings to an appeal for animal rights leafleters at a Flint, Mich., rodeo.



Reminiscent of old-style bulletin boards, Protest.net serves as a global clearinghouse for protests and demonstrations.

“I think this is a promising development for democracy that we can have communities of interest and activism — not just on the individual level or top-down mass lobbying, but this sort of organic group lobbying and deliberating.”

Michael Cornfield
Director of Research

Democracy Online Project, Graduate School of Political Management
The George Washington University

Visitors to Protest.net can sign up for e-mailed announcements of meetings and demonstrations. Visitors also can peruse an “Activists Handbook,” which offers practical advice for building coalitions, communicating, publishing a newsletter, organizing on campus and writing to Congress. The site contains a link to “Progressive Secretary,” an Internet service through which participants can ask each other to put their names on e-mails to public officials.

Protest.net describes itself as part of a “leaderless movement for radical social change” in which “everybody’s an organizer and nobody’s a leader.” To Michael Cornfield, research director for George Washington University’s Democracy Online Project, it’s significant that the Internet can foster such aspirations. “I think this is a promising development for democracy that we can have communities of interest and activism – not just on the individual level or top-down mass lobbying, but this sort of organic group lobbying and deliberating,” he said.

Particularly interesting, Cornfield found, is the development of small “affinity groups” that join with other groups during large events. The small groups may be created in a local community or over the Internet. Either way, they “harness brainpower in small groups that don’t get too big and unwieldy, and the small groups are plugged into the larger movement.”

Speed is a key factor in Information Age competition, and on-line consultant Ken Deutsch noted that “it is easier for an organization that has no bureaucracy to quickly make decisions and mobilize people.”

Despite these Internet sites’ ability to help ad hoc groups mount protests, Deutsch and other on-line communication experts think it’s unlikely that short-lived groups can bring about significant changes in public policy by themselves.

There’s nothing unique about individuals with common concerns gathering in leaderless groups to try to affect public policy, said K. Scott Barker, vice president of the Triad Communication consulting firm. That’s how many advocacy groups got their starts. Typically, however, these individuals eventually determine that they need to create formal organizations to accomplish their goals.

The “leaderless movement,” Barker added, may call attention to issues and give the establishment headaches. But if the activists don’t create ongoing organizations with clear focus – as the organizers of the Million Mom March are trying to do – “I’m not sure what they’re going to accomplish other than disruption.”

Into the Future

Cyber activism has become a significant political force at a speed almost impossible to comprehend.

The World Wide Web – in a form that would be considered prehistorically primitive today – was created less than a decade ago in 1993. As recently as 1996, according to on-line advocacy consultant Oron Strauss, most activists had “no idea” of the Internet’s value as an advocacy tool. Now, every advocacy group worthy of the name is working on-line and striving daily to get better.

“There’s been a rapid transformation [yet] we’re still in the early stage,” said Strauss.

That’s a sentiment echoed across the Net. “I think we’re just seeing the beginning of the impact the Internet can have,” according to Rob Stuart of TechRocks. With their Web sites, e-mail, listservs, interactive databases and other Internet tools, advocacy groups today have much greater reach than they had previously. On any given day, they can:

- Conduct research and keep on top of government actions much more efficiently than they could in the past, whether or not they’ve had a sophisticated presence in Washington or state capitals.
- Track the actions of other organizations, both allies and foes, by monitoring their Web sites and joining their listservs.
- Mobilize members and supporters around the world faster and with substantially less expense than when they communicated via postal mail and telephone trees.
- Generate large numbers of communications to government officials and corporate executives at nearly no cost.
- Bypass established media to communicate directly with members, supporters and the general public.
- Pool efforts with other groups by creating ad hoc alliances on-line.
- Even appeal directly to children in the hopes of growing a new generation of activists.

The future of on-line activism, say those on the cutting edge of the present, cannot be foreseen, because it has no known limits.

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Scott Barker
Vice President
Triad Communication

But here is the least they expect:

It will be faster and more inviting to more participants. The most successful organizations will be those that achieve the most seamless integration of on-line and off-line activities. Communication will become ever more personal and interactive.

In future public affairs campaigns, consultant Ken Deutsch said, all aspects will be integrated to the extent that “you’re not going to be able to tell the difference between the Internet piece of it and the rest of it and you’re not going to be able to have a conversation about a public policy campaign without considering the Internet.

“You couldn’t put together a budget for any project that doesn’t include the telephone, and the same thing is happening with the Internet.”

It won’t be enough to simply post information on a Web site, however, consultant Scott Barker said. “The new question isn’t how do you get people to see your message,” he said, “but how do you get people interacting with you. The key advantage of the Web is it’s not just one-way communication. So it’s not just putting your Web site up. It’s providing your Web site as a resource that invites people to participate.”

The importance of interaction and personalization leads Oron Strauss to conclude that “the most compelling, most effective trend is the trend toward really targeted data-mining – really taking advantage of the wealth of information that members, supporters,

advocates, stakeholders are willing to provide to these organizations, and taking that information to really customize and target communication.”

With an automated database that identifies the specific issues that an individual activist cares about, consultant Stuart Trevelyan said, an organization can send requests for action only to supporters who are likely to act. As a result, “you don’t annoy your activist base” by sending them multiple messages that don’t interest them.

Viral marketing – in which an organization asks supporters to pass a message to ever-wider circles of acquaintances – is a promising form of uncontrolled yet targeted and personalized communication, activists say.

As Rob Stuart of TechRocks explained it, “People are more likely to take action on a message that comes from their friends than if it comes from a group – because they trust their friends.”

For his part, Deutsch expects to see an increasing number of non-political Web sites offering to sell targeted advertising to politicians and advocacy groups. “Most people don’t go onto the Web to look for a political Web site. They look for something they’re interested in,” such as sports, fashion, business or food sites.

As these sites gather more personal information from visitors in exchange for the free services they offer, they can better target audiences for political advertisers.

The growing availability of broadband Internet access will also enable organizations to enhance their advertising and make their sites more compelling through the use of high-quality video files.

One major question remains, however. With all the advances in technology, who wins and who loses? Will public interest activists dominate the public policy agenda, or will large institutions – like governments and corporations – throw enough resources at the Internet to squeeze out the little guys?

Conventional wisdom certainly points toward a distinct advantage for the activist community – on both sides of the political spectrum. That’s because its power rests with being able to mobilize supporters to take

political action, and the Internet is a remarkable invention for recruiting and organizing large numbers of individuals. Some business executives also worry they are disadvantaged on-line because they are reluctant to stir the pot of public controversy. The Internet seems to be a natural weapon for those who are in the business of “playing offense.” While it can be used in a defensive mode, the Net is much better at starting a battle than at ending one.

Perhaps the real question is which cyber-activists will gain the most influence. While the Internet has become a tool that belongs in everyone’s toolbox, it is most effective when used in concert with tried-and-true techniques such as political analysis, face-to-face lobbying and grassroots mobilization.

That’s why – for the moment – the on-line advantage still clearly resides with the established, well-funded advocacy groups such as the Sierra Club or Environmental Defense. They are the ones who can develop advanced on-line capabilities while carrying out traditional lobbying activities and rattling the saber of organized voting power. That power, after all, remains the ultimate source of public policy influence.

Nevertheless, these organizations themselves are being challenged through on-line technology, which empowers individuals and ad hoc groups as never before.

In recent years the Sierra Club, for instance, has faced a mutiny of disgruntled members who think the organization has compromised too much and sold out to timber interests. Employing traditional and information-age organizing tools, the “John Muir Sierrans” have drawn national attention to their cause, put supporters in six of the 15 Sierra Club board of directors seats, and won an initiative election that placed the Club officially in opposition to all commercial logging on public lands.

Said Chad Hanson, an insurgency leader who won a seat on the board:

“We couldn’t have done it without the Internet.”

1. **Robert Arena**
Principal, Presage Internet Campaigns and consultant to SatelliteReform.org
2. **K. Scott Barker**
Vice President, Triad Communication
3. **Mary Leigh Blek**
President, Million Mom March
4. **Michael Brune**
Old Growth Campaign Director, Rainforest Action Network
5. **Steve Cochran**
Legislative Director, Environmental Defense
6. **Jennifer Coleman**
Public Information Officer, Environmental Defense
7. **Richard Cook**
Lobbyist and consultant to SatelliteReform.org
8. **Michael Cornfield**
Director of Research, Democracy Online Project, Graduate School of Political Management, The George Washington University
9. **Penny Crawley**
Director of CyberOrganizing, Issue Dynamics Inc.
10. **Ken Deutsch**
Vice President for Internet Strategic Communications, Issue Dynamics Inc.
11. **Jeffrey England**
Education Specialist, World Wildlife Fund
12. **Pam Fielding**
Principal, e-advocates
13. **Jonathan Garthwaite**
Director of Online Communications, Heritage Foundation/Town Hall
14. **Phil Gutis**
Director of Legislative Communications, American Civil Liberties Union
15. **Chad Hanson**
Board of Directors, Sierra Club and leader of the John Muir Sierrans
16. **Bruce Hamilton**
Conservation Director, Sierra Club
17. **Jacquelyn Lendsey**
Vice President for Public Policy, Planned Parenthood Federation of America
18. **Joanna Mareth**
Director, Electronic Policy Network
19. **Larry Makinson**
Executive Director, Center for Responsive Politics
20. **Kathy Moore**
Communications Director, Million Mom March
21. **Eric Paley**
President, Abstract Edge Web Solutions
22. **Genevieve Raymond**
Web Producer, Rainforest Action Network
23. **Benjamin Smith**
Outreach Coordinator, Environmental Defense
24. **Paul Starr**
Founder, Electronic Policy Network and Professor, Princeton University
25. **Rob Stuart**
Principal, TechRocks (a supporting organization to the Rockefeller Family Fund)
26. **Oron Strauss**
Internet consultant
27. **Rene Thompson**
Kentucky Coordinator, Million Mom March
28. **James Thurber**
Director, Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, American University
29. **Stuart Trevelyan**
Co-Principal, Carol/Trevelyan Strategy Group
30. **Steven Weiss**
Communications Director, Center for Responsive Politics
31. **Greg Wetstone,**
Program Director, Natural Resources Defense Council and Chair, Electronic Advocacy Steering Committee, Save Our Environment Action Center
32. **Chris Whitten**
Executive Director, Free-Market.net, The Henry Hazlitt Foundation

Prologue

1. Million Mom March
www.millionmommarch.com
2. National Rifle Association
www.nra.org
3. Second Amendment Sisters
www.sas-aim.org

Door to Door Organizing in Cyberspace

4. American Civil Liberties Union
www.aclu.org

From Elite Boutique to Mass Retailer

5. The Center for Responsive Politics
www.opensecrets.org

Click Here for More Information

6. American Conservative Union "Rating of Congress Archive"
www.conservative.org/ratings1999.htm
7. Americans for Democratic Action
www.adaction.org
8. AFL-CIO "Executive PayWatch"
www.aflcio.org/paywatch/index.htm
9. Coalition to Protect Americans Now
www.protectamericansnow.com
10. Environmental Defense
 - Environmental Defense Scorecard
www.scorecard.org
 - Environmental Defense forums
plaza.edf.org/discussion.nsf

Thinking Small

11. SatelliteReform.org
www.SatelliteReform.org

Fax the Execs

12. Rainforest Action Network "Action Alerts"
www.ran.org/info_center/aa/

Ideological Yahoos!

13. Town Hall
www.townhall.com
14. Electronic Policy Network
www.epn.org

Ideological Matchmaking

15. Free-Market.net "Intellectual Matchmaker"
www.free-market.net/imm

Organizations of Organizations

16. Save Our Environment Action Center
www.saveourevironment.org
17. Action Network
www.actionnetwork.org

Teaching Tomorrow's Environmentalists

18. World Wildlife Fund
 - World Wildlife Fund "Kids Stuff"
www.worldwildlife.org/fun/kids.cfm
 - World Wildlife Fund "Windows on the Wild"
www.worldwildlife.org/windows
 - World Wildlife Fund "Virtual House"
www.virtualhouse.org
19. Rainforest Action Network "Kids' Corner"
www.ran.org/kids_action/index.html
20. Environmental Defense "Earth to Kids"
www.Earth2Kids.org

Rabble-Rousing On-Line

21. Independent Media Center
www.indymedia.org
22. D2KLA.org
www.d2kla.org
23. R2KPhilly.org
www.r2kphilly.org
24. Mobilization for Global Justice
www.a16.org
25. s26.org
www.s26.org
26. Protest.net
www.protest.net

Other Resources

27. TechRocks
www.techrocks.org
28. Benton Foundation "Best Practices Toolkit"
www.benton.org/Practice/Toolkit
29. Corporate Watch
www.corpwatch.org
30. The Virtual Activist
www.netaction.org/training
31. American University's Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies
www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/
32. The George Washington University's Democracy Online Project
www.democracyonline.org

