Informing Democracy: Local Leadership and the Changing Information Needs of Communities

2010 League of California Cities' Annual Conference

Peter M. Shane

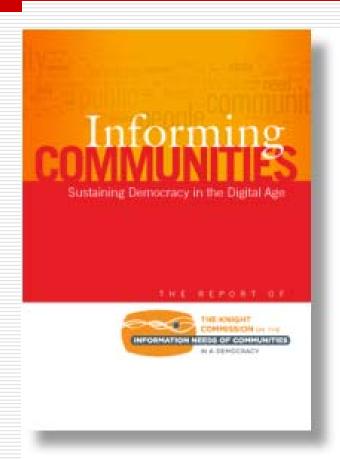
Jacob E. Davis & Jacob E. Davis Chair in Law The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law September 16, 2010

Government Information Initiatives

- Why? (A Framework)
- ☐ How? (Examples)

Recommended Source of Ideas

Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age (2009). www.knightcomm.org



Why Do Communities Need Information?

Coordination



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Problem-Solving



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Accountability



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Connection



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Our complex media environment

Good News

- Unprecedented avenues for infosharing
- People look at government websites
- Progress in addressing digital divide

Bad News

- Shrinking local reportorial resources
- Many places have no news to speak of
- Local websites have tiny audiences and little original reportial content
- □ Literacy/access issues

No Golden Age to Be Nostalgic For

- □ 2007: NAA count of daily U.S. Newspapers = 1,422
- □ 2004 Survey: 6,704 community weeklies
- Legal jurisdictions in the United States
 - 3,248 counties
 - 19,000 incorporated places
 - 30,000+ "minor civil divisions" having legal status, such as towns and villages.
- "It follows that hundreds, if not thousands of American communities receive only scant journalistic attention on a daily basis, and many have none."

What's in it for us?

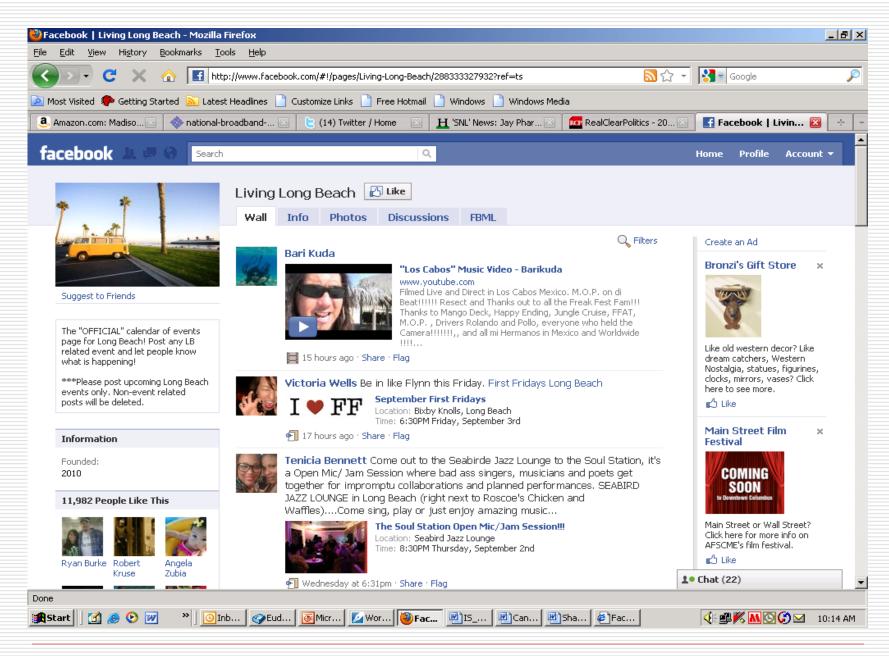
- □ Remember the four community information needs!
- Information builds support!
- Information builds identity!
- Information promotes engagement!
- Information promotes success!

So what should you do?

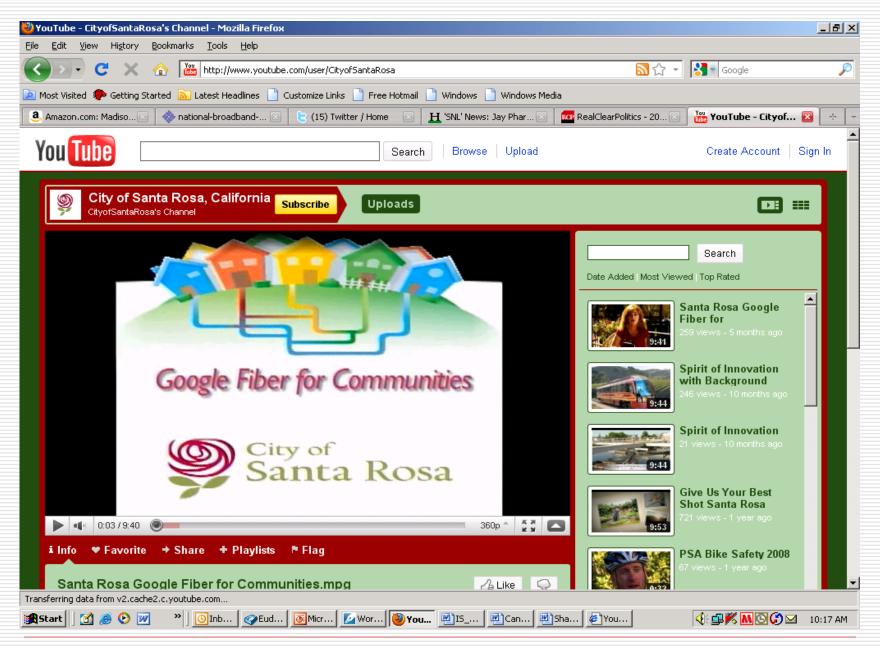
- □ Communication: Tell Your Story Better
- □ Data/Records: Open Your File Cabinets
- □ Participation: Invite Dialogue

Communication

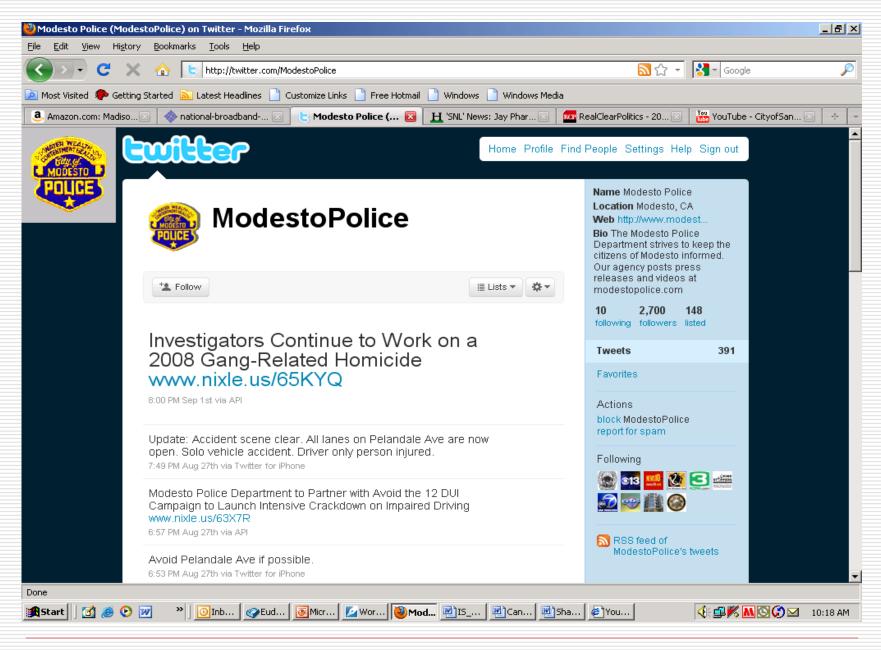
- Connect to social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
- Enable RSS feeds
- Start streaming and archiving meetings, speeches and workshops (www.fcc.gov/live)
- Created subject-centered portals on key issues
- □ Blog



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Open the File Cabinets – Public Records

- Every state (like US) has a public records law that sounds great in principle
- Actually acquiring records often difficult, time consuming
 - Resistance
 - Lack of training
 - Under-resourced

SunshineReview.Org Checklist

- Current budget
- Notices of public meetings
- Roster of elected officials with contact info
- Roster of administrators with contact info
- Ability to track zoning, building permits

- Performance audits
- Contracting info (including campaign contributions)
- Membership in lobbying organizations
- Who is in charge of fulfilling open records requests + contact info
- Taxation information

Implications for Internal Processes

- Do your work processes foster ease of sharing?
 - .Pdf's searchable?
 - Forms filled out online?

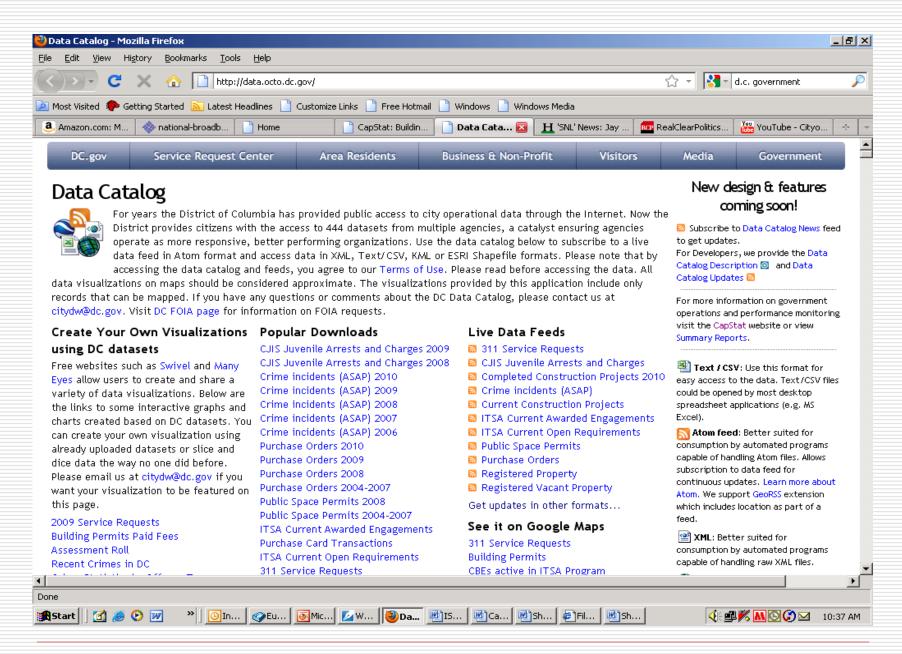
Open the File Cabinets: Data

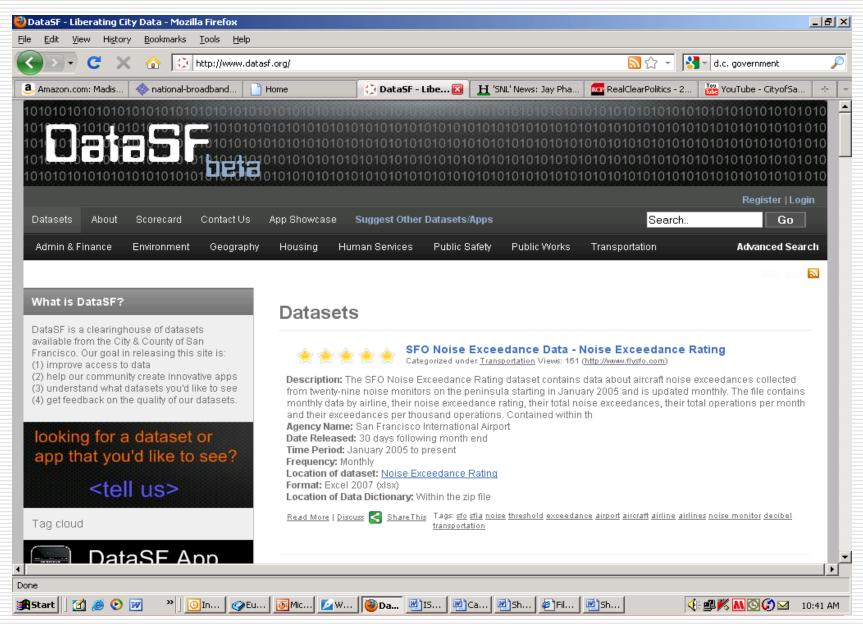


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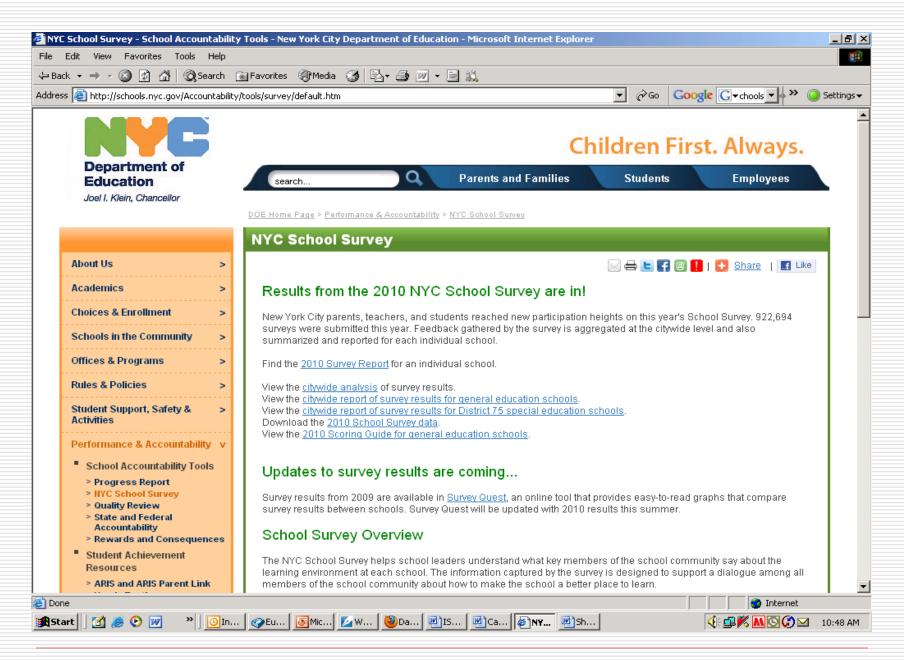




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Why Do This?

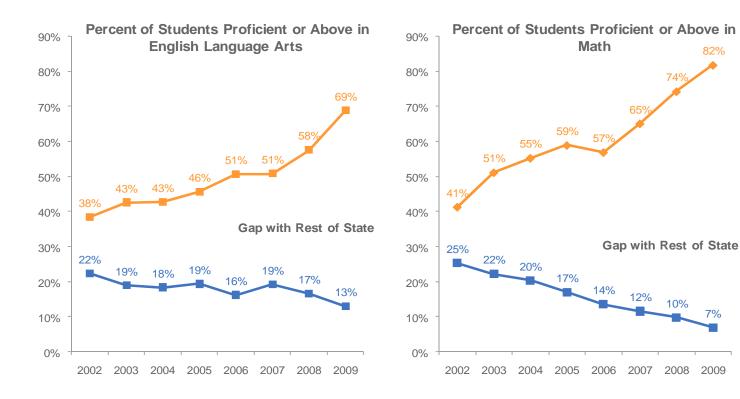
- What is visible to the public becomes visible to you!
- Provides the basis for privately developed apps
- People look for this stuff!
- Improves performance



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More NYC Students Are Meeting or Exceeding State Standards, and NYC Has Closed the Gap Considerably with the Rest of the State

(NYC is 73% Black/ Hispanic, 84% low income; Rest of State is 23% Black/ Hispanic, 31% low income*)



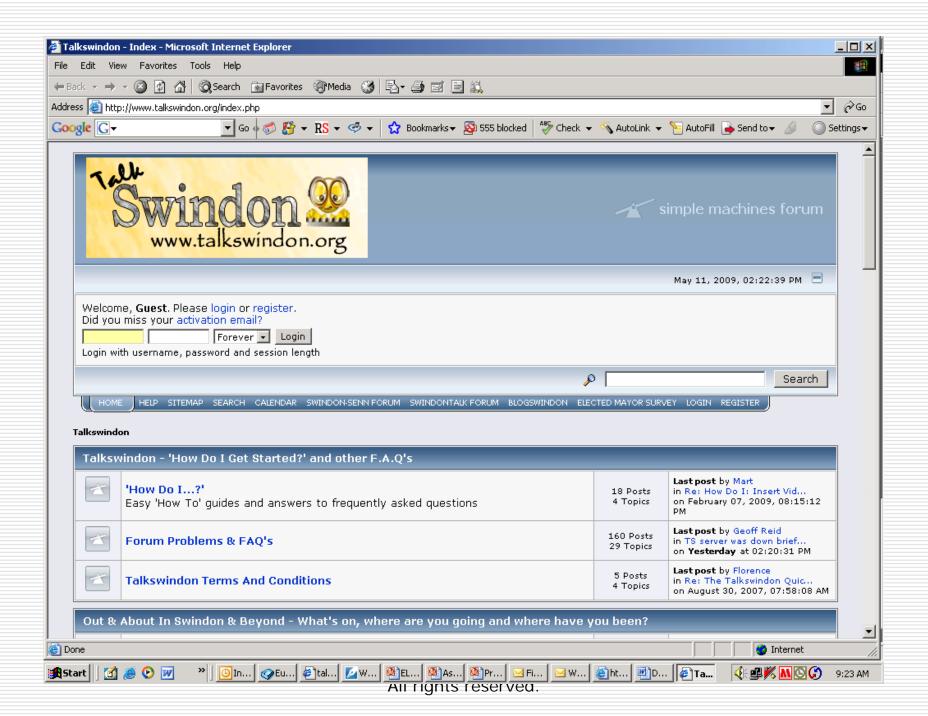
Note: Results reflect State tests in grades 4 and 8 from 2002-2005 and grades 3-8 from 2006-09. State tests were rescaled in 2005/06 as well as expanded to include all grades 3-8. State testing policy changed in 2006/07 to include more ELL students in the English Language Arts test.

2008

2009

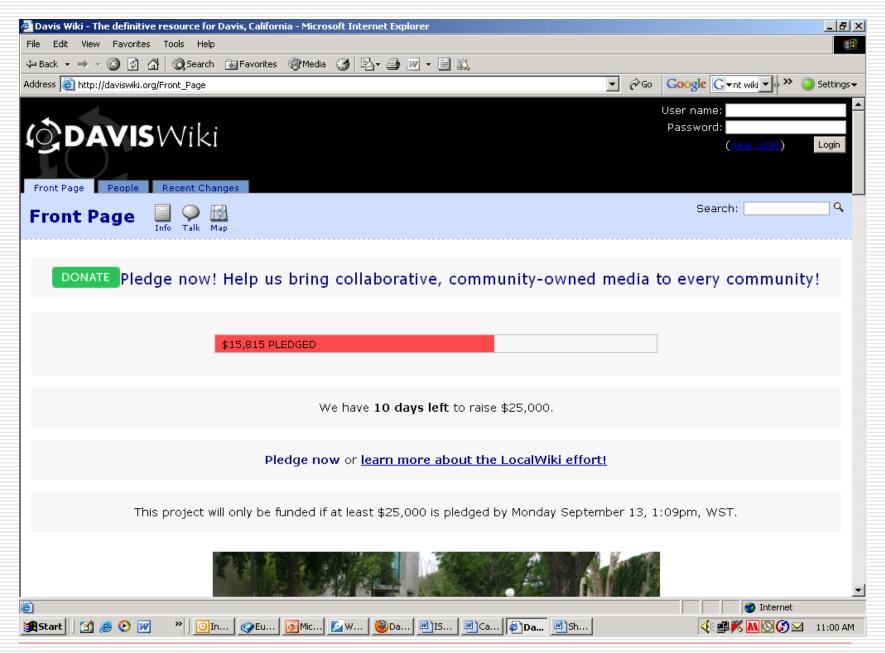
Participation

- Conversation
- □ Reporting and Feedback
- Citizen deliberation





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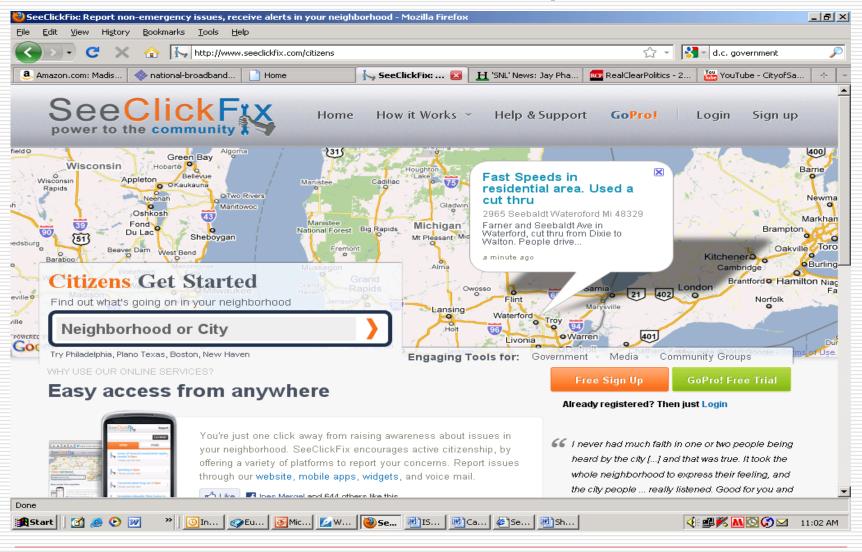


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Simulator-Based Surveys

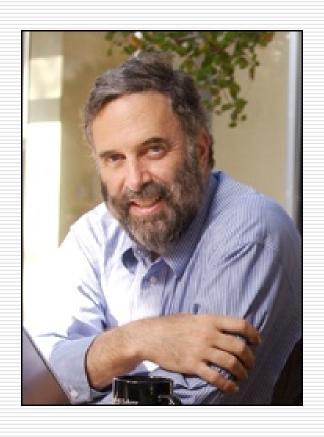


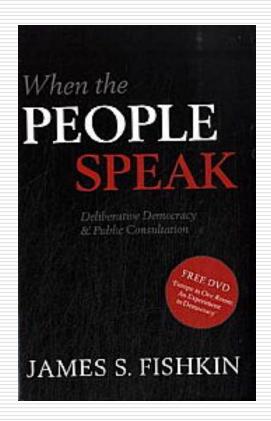
Turn the Public Into Reporters



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Invite Citizens to Deliberate







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Other Models

- AmericaSpeaks
- CitizenJuries/Panels
- ParticipatoryBudgeting



Many Online Resources!

- Institute for Local Government (California) http://www.ca-ilg.org/ilgpubs -lots on engagement, collaborativer governance
- National Coalition for Deliberation and Dialogue http://www.ncdd.org/
- Involve http://www.involve.org.uk/
- □ GSA Intergovernmental Solutions Newsletters http://www.usaservices.gov/events_news/ISnewsarchive.php
- Report on "Building Democracy Through Online Citizen Deliberation" from Ohio State http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/pldd/docs/building_democracy.pdf

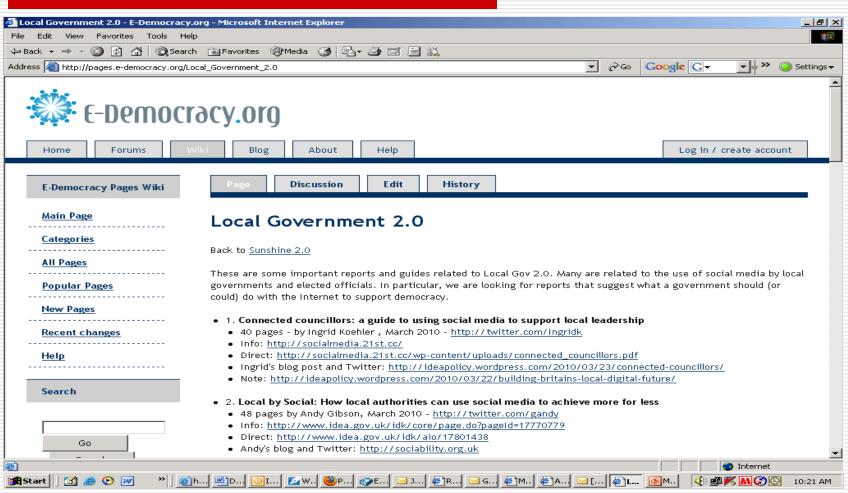
And even more . . .

- ☐ Penn Fels Institute of Government

 Making the Most of Social Media

 https://www.fels.upenn.edu/news/making-most-social-media
- Center for Technology in Government at SUNY Albany http://www.ctg.albany.edu/
- Steve Clift's listserv www.edemocracy.org

http://pages.e-democracy.org/Local_Government_2.0



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For many examples. . .

□ Konga, Jury and Proudlock, Michael.
 "Municipal Open Government
 Framework: A Work in Progress."
 (June 14, 2010).
 http://www.slideshare.net/jkonga/municipal-open-gov-framework-work-in-progress (accessed Sept. 5, 2010).

Knight Commission Conclusion

☐ The Commission, however, understands "informed communities," like democracy itself, as a vision always to be pursued, not as a final state of perfection ever likely to be achieved. In that spirit, our first call is for an outpouring of additional ideas, dialogue, and action in communities throughout the United States. The "information issue" is everyone's issue.

Thank You!

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