



e-Democracy in the US

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Introduction

1. Lack of understanding about what e-democracy looks like beyond theory.
2. The problems facing democracy today include:
 1. *Political apathy*
 2. *Low turnout*
 3. *Uninformed public*
 4. *Extremely large demos*
 5. *Reasonable pluralism*



What this is not...

Does not include examples from:

- Political parties
- NGOs
- Citizen initiated e-tools



Typology

- 1. Increasing Transparency*
- 2. Increasing Participation*
- 3. Increasing Deliberation*



Research Methods

FLORIDA

Population: 17 million (4th)
Population Density: 309/mi² (8th)
Average Income: 42,079 (36th)

MINNESOTA

Population: 4.9 million (21st)
Population Density: 61/mi² (31st)
Average Income: 56,084 (6th)

NEW YORK

Population: 18 million (3rd)
Population Density: 401/mi² (6th)
Average Income: 46,242 (21st)

WASHINGTON

Population: 5.8 million (14th)
Population Density: 88/mi² (25th)
Average Income: 50,885 (14th)

CALIFORNIA

Population: 33 million (1st)
Population Density: 217/mi² (12th)
Average Income: 51,647 (12th)

ALASKA

Population: 626,000 (47th)
Population Density: 1/mi² (50th)
Average Income: 55,935 (7th)



Research Methods

VIRGINIA

Population: 7 million (12th)
Population Density: 178/mi² (14th)
Average Income: 54,301 (9th)

TEXAS

Population: 20.8 million (2nd)
Population Density: 80/mi² (28th)
Average Income: 41,959 (38th)

COLORADO

Population: 4.3 million (22nd)
Population Density: 41/mi² (37th)
Average Income: 52,011 (11th)

WISCONSIN

Population: 5.5 million (18th)
Population Density: 98.8/mi² (24th)
Average Income: 47,004 (19th)

UTAH

Population: 2.2 million (34th)
Population Density: 27/mi² (42nd)
Average Income: 53,226 (10th)

SOURCES:

US Census Bureau and is accurate as of 2005.

Note that population numbers are rounded for ease of use.



US Results

Dimension One: Transparency (70%)

1. *Personalization (5%)*: Tailoring of government website (typically involves username and password)
 1. State of Colorado
 2. Municipality of Delray Beach, Florida

2. *Blog (5%)* Government administrator's weblog
 1. Municipality of Los Angeles, California
 2. Municipality of San Francisco, California



US Results

Dimension One: Transparency (70%)

3. *Track Legislation (12%):* Allow citizens to keep track of certain bills through email notices or simple searches
 1. State of Alaska
 2. Municipality of St. Paul, Minnesota



US Results

Dimension One: Transparency (70%)

4. *Webcasting (48%)*: A stream of data (audio/visual) about the day's congressional activity
 1. *Videocasting (39%)*: A live or archived video of congressional sessions
 1. Municipality of Menlo Park, California
 2. State of Texas
 2. *RSS/PodCasting (9%)*: An automatically transmitted, iPod ready audio accounts of congressional sessions, often pre-sorted by topic
 1. State of Minnesota
 2. Municipality of Alexandria, Virginia



US Results

Dimension Two: Participation (21%)

1. *Online Purchasing (2%)*: Bidding government contracts online
 1. Delray Beach, Florida

2. *E-Initiative (2%)* Launching ballot initiatives online
 1. State of Colorado



US Results

Dimension Two: Participation (21%)

3. *E-Budgeting (5%)*: Citizen input to government budgets
 1. State of Florida
 2. Municipality of Alexandria, Virginia
4. *E-Consultation (12%)* Citizen forums and forms
 1. State of Utah
 2. Municipality of Corpus Christi, Texas



US Results

Dimension Three: Deliberation (9%)

1. *Discussion Forum (5%)*: Citizen-oriented, online forums monitored by governments
 1. Two municipalities in Minnesota
 2. Rebuilding the World Trade Center
2. *Interaction (4%)*: Dialogue with elected officials
 1. California Gov. Schwarzenegger Video Q&A
 2. Virginia Governor PodCasting



Conceptual Map

Table 1.1 Typological Matrix

<i>e-Techniques</i>	<i>Aspects of democracy promoted</i>		
	<i>Increasing Transparency</i>	<i>Increasing Participation</i>	<i>Increasing Deliberation</i>
Blog	x		
Personalization	x		
Track Legislation	x		
Webcasting/RSS/Podcast	x		
e-Budgeting		x	
e-Consultation		x	
e-Initiative		x	
e-Contracting		x	
Discussion Forum (Monitored)			x
Interaction (Audio/Visual)			x

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Transparency

- *Webcasting, podcasts, and RSS subscription*
- *Minimize the costs of becoming politically well-informed*
 - *Passive process*



Transparency

- *Potential:*
 - Citizen-generated content
 - Mashups
- *Danger:*
 - Disconnection and Reinforcement
 - Sunstein's fragmentation problem



Participation

- *E-consultations & e-budgeting*
- *Improve information to public decision-makers*
- *Combat citizen apathy*



Participation

- *Potential:*

- Participation breeds participation
- Target the feeling of alienation from representatives

- *Danger:*

- Eschews the checks of a representative system
- Citizens should not necessarily be so participatory



Deliberation

- *Monitored discussion forum & Interaction*
- *Allows for more inclusion*
- *Exposes the public sphere to new viewpoints*



Deliberation

- *Potential:*

- Enriches the pre-political sphere
 - Socialization of our political views
- Creation of new political communities
- Monitoring and participation by elected officials

- *Danger:*

- Faced with reasonable pluralism, this could encourage a shift toward associative democracy (postmodern point)



Looking Forward

- *Regarding the question as to the dangers of increased participation:*
 - No reason that increased participation replaces representation
 - Worth the risk because informed participation is a cornerstone of representative government
 - Possibility of self-referential participation




Looking Forward

Regarding the disconnection (dimension one) and associative (dimension three) arguments:

- Fundamental balance
- Preventing fragmentation
 - Careful provision of a diversity of inputs
 - Mashups
- Preventing a constellation of communities
 - Politicians must engage them
 - They will naturally engage each other just as they do offline



Looking Forward

-  How can we overcome the tendency toward over-filtering?
- Innovative ways to reinforce participation
- How do ICTs affect the socialization of political identities?
- How can virtual communities be included in a representative democracy?