Blogs and Politics

...local community groups recently became more adapted to interactive and deliberative forms of Internet tools such as blogs, wikis and e-forums. These web technologies, so called web 2.0 applications, increase democratic access to e-government and broaden the opportunity for online political and civic engagement

Towards a model of political participation among young adults: the role of local groups and ICT use

Youtube for government?

- We are open to new ways of communicating, we are watching the digital revolution all the time and developing our own ways in government to communicate."
  - Transformational government, has fewer than 800 views, (from the Guardian): “If the Cabinet Office does want to see how its videos ought to look, it should offer the raw footage for video mashup artists to work with, and laugh when they mock it, which they will”

http://www.buildingdemocracy.co.uk/

- It is all about getting people to think about what the term ‘human rights’ really means, to engage in political debate and to value the importance of our democratic institutions.

- Have discussions with young people aged 16 to 21 involved in the criminal/youth justice system about citizenship and their rights and responsibilities as stake holders in society.

Does YouTube affect campaigns?

- George Allen and macaca reference
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9G7gq7Q71c
  - But YouTube may be changing the political process in more profound ways, for good and perhaps not for the better,... will the last shreds of authenticity be stripped from our public officials? Will candidates be pushed further into a scripted bubble? In short, will YouTube democratize politics, or destroy it? (New York Times, 8/20/2006)

- http://www.expertvoter.org/
We make the mistake of treating the Net as if it were a medium. But it’s more like a world than a medium.

I think it’s fair to say this is the real deal: a piece of voter-generated content, made by a pro but not a political hack—you can call him a pro-am—that is entering the national consciousness via the small-n network called the internet.

Dear Mr. Obama: 6 million views
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG4fe9GjWS8

What is a blog?

- The Power and Politics of Blogs, Drezner and Farrell, 2004
- Weblog, minimal editing, updated, reverse chronological presentation, hyperlinks to other sources
  - How do you create a blog? How many are there?
  - How do you find out about blogs?
- RSS/ATOM
  - Really simple syndication, see also IETF!
  - It’s just text, a protocol, and software

Do blogs change political landscape?

- Economist 2002: “Mainstream media was initially blind to [Lott’s] remarks perhaps because it is used to such comments. But the ‘blogosphere’ – websites of opinion and news, first known as weblogs – denounced the remarks vigorously, and would not let up, finally forcing others to take notice.”
- Dan Rather, CBS, George Bush, National Guard
- Porkbusters: rightwing, leftwing, libertarian
  - Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

Blogs, Culture, Power

- “New technologies, emphatically including the Internet, are dramatically increasing people’s ability to hear echoes of their own voices and to wall themselves off from others”
  Cass Sunstein, republic.com, 2001
- “…the common culture of widely shared values and knowledge that once helped to unite Americans of all creeds, colors, and classes no longer exists. In its place, we now have a “balkanized” group of subcultures whose members pursue their separate, unshared interests in an unprecedented variety of ways.”
  Terry Teachout, Commentary, 2005
What is the Blogosphere?

- Who reads blogs, why do they read them?
  - Political blogs? Professional blogs?
  - What about the Duke lacrosse case?
  - What about lawyers, judges, ...
  - What about Computer Scientists (or ...)

- Do we read things we already agree with? Do we send links/articles etc that:
  - Resonate with our beliefs?
  - Make us happier than we were before?
  - Make us madder than we were before?

Google, Blogger, Pagerank

- Blogging software runs somewhere, where?
  - Google buys blogger.com
  - What about wordpress, typepad, ...

- How do you create a blog? How do you write the blog?
  - How do you make money from the blog?
  - How do you increase the power of the blog?

- Page rank and blogrolls: what’s a googlebomb?
  - Why is Google good at search?

Facebook or Google Adsense/Adwords

- Click through rate of .04%?
  - http://www.socialmediaready.com/2008/04/07/facebook-ad-click-through-rates-are-really-pitiful/

- What is Google Adsense?

- What is Google Adwords?
  - https://adwords.google.com/select/TrafficEstimatorSandbox

Wisdom of crowds, prediction markets

- ... under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them ... when our imperfect judgments are aggregated in the right way, our collective intelligence is often excellent
  - Surowiecki, Wisdom of Crowds, quoted by Munger

- http://www.intrade.com or http://www.biz.uiowa.edu/iem/

- How do these work, legally, socially, technically, ethically?
  - What do they say about ...
Bits represent “stuff”

- With three bits we get eight values
  - Add fourth, leftmost bit, values?
- How many bits to represent 257 values?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># bits</th>
<th># values</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>$2^N$</td>
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</table>

Bits are incredible building blocks

- Files that are .pdf, .doc, .mp3, .wav, .jpg, .gif, ...
  - All information stored as zeros and ones
  - Magnetic field on or..., electricity flows or ...
- How does your computer “know” how to render, play, interpret these different formats?
  - What information needed?
  - How does your browser “know” about mp3s?
  - How do new formats get incorporated?

Why are bits powerful?

Eniac: still about bits, but bigger