Informing Communities
Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age

A project of
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
and the
Aspen Institute Communications & Society Program
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- Rey Ramsey, CEO, One Economy
- Paul Sagan, CEO, Akamai
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Approach

• As we face a news media crisis, what are the news and information needs of local communities? What should be done to meet them?

• The Commission looked at the local geographical community as that is still the focus of political decisions and community life.

• Vision of “informed communities.”
Informed Communities

• Communities need information to *coordinate*, *solve problems*, *establish public accountability*, and develop a sense of *connectedness*.

• “Information is as vital to the healthy functioning of communities as clean air, safe streets, good schools and public health.”

• Information ecologies serve *personal* as well as *civic* information needs.
Objective I

Maximizing the Availability of Relevant and Credible Information

• **Recommendation 1:** Direct media policy toward innovation, competition, and support for business models that provide marketplace incentives for quality journalism.

• **Recommendation 2:** Increase support for public service media aimed at meeting community information needs.
Objective I

Maximizing the Availability of Relevant and Credible Information

- **Recommendation 3**: Increase the role of higher education, community and nonprofit institutions as hubs of journalistic activity and other information-sharing for local communities.

- **Recommendation 4**: Require government at all levels to operate transparently, facilitate easy and low-cost access to public records, and make civic and social data available in standardized formats that support productive public use of such data.
Objective I

Maximizing the Availability of Relevant and Credible Information

• **Recommendation 5:** Develop systematic quality measures of community information ecologies, and study how they affect social outcomes.
Objective II  Findings
Enhancing the Information Capacity of Individuals

People need tools, skills, and understanding to use information effectively.

- All people have a right to be fully informed.
  - “There need be no second-class citizens in informed communities.”

- Funding to meet this goal is an investment in the nation’s future.

- Americans cannot compete globally without new public policies and investment in technology.
Objective II
Enhancing the Information Capacity of Individuals

- **Recommendation 6**: Integrate digital and media literacy as critical elements for education at all levels through collaboration among federal, state, and local education officials.

- **Recommendation 7**: Fund and support public libraries and other community institutions as centers of digital and media training, especially for adults.
Objective II
Enhancing the Information Capacity of Individuals

• **Recommendation 8**: Set ambitious standards for nationwide broadband availability and adopt public policies encouraging consumer demand for broadband services.

• **Recommendation 9**: Maintain the national commitment to open networks as a core objective of Internet policy.
Objective II
Enhancing the Information Capacity of Individuals

- **Recommendation 10**: Support the activities of information providers to reach local audiences with quality content through all appropriate media, such as mobile phones, radio, public access cable, and new platforms.
Objective III

Promoting Public Engagement

• **Recommendation 11**: Expand local media initiatives to reflect the full reality of the communities they represent.

• **Recommendation 12**: Engage young people in developing the digital information and communication capacities of local communities.
Objective III

Promoting Public Engagement

• **Recommendation 13**: Empower all citizens to participate actively in community self-governance, including local “community summits” to address community affairs and pursue common goals.

• **Recommendation 14**: Emphasize community information flow in the design and enhancement of a local community’s public spaces.
Objective III

Promoting Public Engagement

- ** Recommendation 15**: Ensure that every local community has at least one high-quality online hub.
any society and economy depends upon widespread, secure, and very cheap public goods for healthy communities and sustainable economic growth

- Ubiquitous, secure and very low priced broadband (measured in ever increasing bits/second per dollar: the broadband value metric) is the platform for critical public goods

- The five key public goods that should be available for near-zero price to everyone all the time everywhere through ubiquitous broadband are (1) health care, (2) energy efficiency measures, (3) education, (4) democracy, and (5) security. (HEEDS)

- The Knight Commission report in detail explains how democracy would be promoted by all-inclusive, localized, very cheap, and secure access to information – meaning over a very high bits/second per dollar broadband network.
Conclusion

“The information issue is everyone’s issue.”

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