



The Knight Commission on the Information Needs of
Communities in a Democracy

MEETING MINUTES

Chicago, Illinois • November 17, 2008

*A project of the Aspen Institute and the John S. and
James L. Knight Foundation*

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Commissioners Present: boyd, Carroll, Iburgüen (ex officio), Jealous, Mayer (Co-Chair), McCallum, Mooney, Nicely, Olson (Co-Chair), Powell, Ramsey, Sagan

Staff Present: Durkee, Shane, Silliman

Executive Director Peter Shane welcomed everyone to the fourth Commission meeting and told the Commission that Mayor Michael Coleman felt it necessary to resign the Commission for lack of time. He introduced Rey Ramsey from One Economy as a new Commissioner, who would add additional perspective on the information needs of communities. Mr. Ramsey offered a short introduction, explaining that One Economy is an NGO focusing on the creation and distribution of online content and the critical information that low and moderate income people need.

Mr. Shane and Michael Fancher, retired editor of the Seattle Times, then offered a report on the three community forums sponsored this fall by the Commission. Mr. Fancher began his presentation on the three community forums by reminding the Commissioners that he acted as an independent observer and that the thoughts he would present are his own take on the situation. Three main themes arose from these forums: the need for access to meaningful information, engagement in civic life, and the shortcomings of traditional news media. In all three sites, it was clear that youth, disadvantaged groups and marginalized peoples especially, faced barriers to accessing and fully utilizing all the information available. In Silicon Valley, immigrant communities faced language and class barriers to information; in Philadelphia, low literacy rates and digital disparities were obstacles; and in Missoula, physical disparities and constraints of internet and cell reception, especially for Native Americans, were significant barriers to information.

Mr. Fancher continued by identifying some of the main problems mentioned in the community forums: coverage of communities is episodic, not endemic; traditional media do not move beyond creating one message to many; there is a lack of diversity in ownership and content; news coverage has played a fracturing role, partially through emphasizing conflict; and complex problems are being oversimplified. Some of these problems, Mr. Fancher observed, are getting worse because of, though not necessarily caused by, cuts in newsroom resources and staff.

There was, however, good news as well. Mr. Fancher expressed his surprise at an astounding breadth and creativity of various community innovations in information and civic engagement and trends evident from all three forums. He went on to mention some promising examples: radio stations are innovating with blogs; Albany Today is an online community news site started by a student at Berkeley's journalism school; the Committee of

Seventy in Philadelphia is an online effort looking to improve the Philadelphia region; PlanPhilly.com employs citizen journalists; the Notebook engages in nonprofit school reporting; AllVoices.com is an open medium for reporting from all over the world; and Horizons is an effort to foster blogging across rural communities in Montana.

Interestingly, Mr. Fancher noted, local commercial TV wasn't brought up except in derision—coverage of “the 400-pound cat story”, for example--yet local TV news is the dominant news source for the majority of the public. In contrast, local radio was often mentioned as a solution to problems--in Philadelphia, literacy rates; in Silicon Valley, minority communities; in Missoula, long travel times--with getting information. However, local radio stations are rare and endangered. And local newspapers were described as declining in staff, resources, and ability to cover important community issues.

Mr. Fancher then remarked about the role of journalism, in these community forums and in the information environment at large. While many journalists are most concerned about economic conditions, it is up to the Commissioners, Mr. Fancher remarked, to decide where journalism fits in the information needs of local communities. It is not about the industry, but about the central role that journalism, especially investigative, watchdog and beat reporting according to standard journalistic values, serves in fulfilling information needs. As Tom Rosenstiel wrote, in order to oppress freedom, one need only oppress the press, not capitalism.

In closing, Mr. Fancher made some recommendations to the Commission based on his observations including rethinking the relationship between people, government and information, making information available with the knowledge that people will find innovative ways to utilize that information, promoting public understanding of the value of watchdog journalism and reinforcing the importance of journalistic training, and teaching journalism and communications in high schools focusing on the question of how to pursue truth and fairness in the digital age.

Mr. Shane offered his own reflections on the community forums. In Missoula, Mr. Shane was impressed by the mix of information sources used, as related by Senator Jerry Black, and the remarkable innovation available to fill in gaps in information access in rural areas. In Philadelphia, he was struck by Professor Kaniss' recommendations for institutions to step in and support the investigative journalism communities need and her view that the public does not lack the stomach for information about government, especially when people are given information in a way that makes clear how this information affects people's everyday lives. And in Mountain View, Mr. Shane remarked that Raj Jayadev's comments on youth media and the importance of an inclusive media landscape produced on citizens' own terms are important for understanding the need to connect with youth and minority populations and to create an information system that affects people and communities in multiple ways.

Mr. Shane then offered some general themes and needs that arose from all three community forums. These included: the importance of journalists having ties to the communities they are serving; there is an under-coverage of local news, even when people like their local papers (in Missoula, someone remarked that just because the community is smaller, don't think that a greater proportion of local news is being covered); many people's stories are being left out or not fully covered, often due to a perceived pro-conflict media bias; there is a need for leadership and innovation; the media is central to the lives of every kind of community; and there is anxiety about barriers between sub-communities and a sense that the tools and channels of sharing news and communication between sub-communities--especially radio--are not being utilized as effectively as they could be.

Mr. Sagan asked if there is an overarching narrative arising from these forums. Mr. Fancher

replied that one narrative is that there is simultaneous disappointment with mainstream media and deep concern with the loss of that resource. Mr. Shane offered that there seems to be a story of yearning, but not nostalgia, saying that everyone he spoke to was yearning for a situation in which they felt strong connections to their communities, yearning for participation and the capacity to share their experiences, and a yearning for stronger bridging between communities and sub-communities. Mr. Fancher agreed with Mr. Shane and added that information is as much a public health issue as health care, clean streets and infrastructure but he does not think that most citizens and governments see information that way. There was a creation of community throughout the day at these forums, he continued, and any way to help communities figure out what is working and what's not would be tremendously healthy.

Mr. Ibarгүйen then asked about Mr. Fancher's definition of journalism and if he thinks it should be a central concern of the Commission. Mr. Fancher replied that he didn't think it should be a central concern and that journalism is traditionally defined by what it does (e.g. gather, produce, disseminate information) and where it's done (e.g. newsrooms). However, he said, personally he thinks journalism will be defined in the future more by the motivation and the methods than by anything else, e.g. a desire to serve the public, a desire to seek and tell the truth, a desire to minimize harm that is inherent in news-gathering, and a desire to be socially responsible. There's a notion, Mr. Fancher continued, that technology allows anyone to be a journalist but he thinks there are legal questions involved in allowing people who are not journalists the same kinds of access and privileges. While Mr. Fancher thinks everyone should be able to act as information gatherers, true journalists need to be bound by socially responsible and social dialogue-oriented values.

Ms. boyd remarked that the distinctions we're facing are not simply technology versus traditional, not simply journalism versus non-journalism. Instead, she continued, there needs to be a focus on organization, distribution and especially aggregation. Who is playing the role of aggregator and who is giving the tools that allow us, both citizens and professionals, to slice aggregated news and information in a meaningful way? Mr. Shane replied to this thought by saying it is difficult to distinguish where people get their news and information as they often do not differentiate between newspapers, coworkers, aggregation tools, local organizations, watchdog journalism, weather reports, social networks, etc.

Mr. Powell then added that he feels the Commission is in danger of collapsing "information needs" to mean "news" saying that this is not only a tired debate but also that the information needs of local communities are not things that the Commission has talked much about, for example government services, municipal needs, arts, culture, leisure, etc. Mr. Powell urged the Commission to shift from supply side thinking (news provided) to the demand side ("I have a family in this community and I need this specific information."). Mr. Ibarгүйen agreed saying that this question of supply or demand side is critical and Mr. Shane also agreed saying that the Commission's interest in evaluating the current information and news product is to be able to better identify the demand side.

Mr. Shane then introduced a morning panel, focusing on "**Information, Engagement, and Democracy at the Community Level.**" The leadoff speaker was **Mary Dempsey, Chicago Public Library Commissioner:** Ms. Dempsey began her remarks by saying she was very excited to be having the Commission meeting in the public library which has been serving the public for 135 years, regardless of the format--print, microfilm, online, in-person. It is through the library, Ms. Dempsey claimed, that citizens have the ability to access information needed to fully participate in their communities. The library is a gateway to rich information resources and a place where people meet around information and ideas. Citing Robert Putnam's description of libraries as a "third place" between home and school,

Ms. Dempsey remarked that the library does indeed host emergent literacy programs, after-school homework help, lectures by authors and environmental programs as well as being a resource for citizens to print out free tickets to museums and classical concerts, and learn about what they saw and heard.

Ms. Dempsey also mentioned that she relies on branch librarians to give her a sense of what is going on in the different libraries. She encourages librarians to be an active part of the neighborhood in order to best serve the ever-changing communities and their ever-changing needs. Libraries are also polling places, with 27 Chicago library branches acting as early polling places and 40 as polling places on election day.

As the economy continues in free-fall, Ms. Dempsey continued, libraries are seeing an increase in visits with 78% of Americans visiting in the past year, up from 60% the year before and visits up 28% now from this time last year. Furthermore, libraries are an important internet resource for many Americans and help bridge and conquer the digital divide: in 78% of areas nationwide and 83% of rural areas, libraries are the only free sites for internet access. In addition, the Chicago public library helps connect citizens to the global, digital society by teaching them--using one-on-one tutorials taught by college students--how to use the internet, set up email and apply for jobs online.

Public libraries also serve as aggregators of reliable information on the web, gathering and organizing reputable websites for research purposes as well as subscribing to databases to provide free access to reliable information and media from around the world. The website is content-based and is designed by librarians in order to reflect the catalogue, to make available downloadable media, and to highlight events news. There is also a constantly changing "popular topics" section that relates to key community issues like the elections and the financial crisis. And students use their databases for research at all hours of the day and night.

Ms. Dempsey then suggested that the Commission make recommendations for increased state and federal funding for public libraries, emphasizing that public libraries serve an essential role in education and deserves government support in that regard.

The next speaker was **Patrick Barry, Chicago journalist and content manager for LISC/Chicago's New Communities Program**. LISC examines the information flow--the lifeblood of the neighborhood--of 16 Chicago neighborhoods that are underserved by the news media and underserved by the information that is available. One of things LISC does to make these communities stronger, Mr. Barry said, is to focus on information flow and to put good information resources on the ground.

LISC works by first employing scribes and reporters to tell the story of local communities in cooperation with the neighborhoods. As soon as the projects went online, community members were finding the sites. They responded dramatically to information and started saying that they wanted their own websites, not a single site serving all 16 neighborhoods. And so, Mr. Barry continued, LISC created a website for each neighborhood oriented around community needs as well as teaching citizens how to use websites and report news. Soon, they told LISC what they wanted--e-newsletters, video, online radio--and LISC taught them how to do these things.

Mr. Barry described these sites as "hyperlocal" sites remarking that such community sites bridge the digital divide by providing relevant, timely information that is refined for the local audience. Such sites provide local voices and local leaders emerge. Traffic for these sites--16,000 visits per month; 65,000 page views; 132,000 unique visitors this year--depends on content that is relevant to people and updated often. People often come to these pages from

Google searches.

Mr. Barry concluded his remarks by saying that a healthy ecosystem of information sources is not enough, and there needs to be a shift to the Chicago Neighborhood News Bureau. What LISC wants, he continued, is to have more groups that are providing information and more outlets for the information with small print newspapers, radio stations, and news media sources including video and photos. The News Bureau needs to rely on professional partnerships with communities that focus on underserved markets, provide a training component, and produce a professional news desk to gather, edit and distribute materials. Mr. Barry's revised thesis is therefore that high-quality and timely information is the lifeblood of the neighborhood that will drive community development--such information is good for the community and good for democracy.

The third speaker was **Jim Capraro, Executive Director, Greater Southwest Development Corporation**. Mr. Capraro, a lifelong community organizer from the South Side of Chicago, told the Commission that the order of information, engagement and democracy on a community level in the Commission's title is incorrect and that the order should be engagement, information and democracy. Mr. Capraro focuses his organizing efforts on individuals as transmitters, not merely receivers, of information, saying that if one wants to engage folks with information, one needs to engage and listen to them and bring them into an organizing campaign: "We don't want to create armies based in values," Mr. Capraro said; "We want to create organizations based in engagement." Fighting home foreclosures, Mr. Capraro continued, for example, needs a mix of human interaction and technology support. The bottom-line, he concluded, is that technology doesn't lead, technology supports, and if there aren't leaders in the community, technology can't accomplish anything for the community. Mr. Capraro concluded by saying that he often gets people to talk to each other through common interest groups and that, if one can engage people, the use of information can be the lifeblood to make things work really well. If one engages people and uses information and technology to support their efforts, our democracy can be revitalized.

The next speaker was **Alan C. Miller, Founder, News Literacy Project and former investigative reporter, Los Angeles Times**. Mr. Miller said a major question is how to give young people the tools to navigate in the digital age. Many students think that if something is on the internet, it is verified information; many ask if mainstream media is okay to trust, and in one high school not a single student had heard of the financial meltdown. Many young people, Mr. Miller continued, view Google as their primary source of information, Wikipedia as a mark of truth, and all sources as created equal. Standardized testing drives out civics and current events; neither media nor news literacy is taught in schools, and without such educational guidance in this era of loud voices and short attention spans, Mr. Miller continued, how will young people know what to believe?

Mr. Miller identified two tasks for the News Literacy Project: to excite young people about information with public purposes and to differentiate facts from fiction. Young people are fixated on social networking and are learning a lot through these networks because as they text, email and blog they are engaging in the participatory media landscape. However, Mr. Miller warned, this digital landscape gives young people the daunting task of differentiating verified news from misinformation. His task is not to advocate for specific news or information sources (the encyclopedia over Wikipedia for example) but to teach critical reading skills and to ask questions about "what is bias?" and "is this opinion?" Mr. Miller's project is creating a compelling curriculum for all ages, to get journalists and retired journalists involved with students to help them use the tools of journalism and to spark critical thinking about the world around them, especially in topics outside of journalism like English and history. News organizations, Mr. Miller concluded, focus on the supply side;

the News Literacy Project is focusing on the demand side with news literacy.

The panel's fifth speaker was **Hon. Toni Preckwinkle, Alderman, Ward 4**. Ms. Preckwinkle – a former high school social studies teacher -- began her remarks by saying that, when she talks to young people, she tells them that democracy is the best and the most fragile form of government on earth because it depends on an informed and involved citizenry. According to Ms. Preckwinkle, citizens can expect the following three things: 1) government officials need to be visible; 2) government workings need to be transparent; 3) government needs to be honest. In order to ensure that her constituents are well-informed, Ms. Preckwinkle works with and creates community institutions that inform and work with citizens, for example, a community conservation council that works to organize community functions to rebuild communities as well as having a series of workshops to talk about housing density and to look at housing prospects.

The panel's intended final speaker, **Keith Hampton, Assistant Professor, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania**, missed the meeting due to flight cancellation. Peter Shane showed several slides Professor Hampton had forwarded for the presentation. The slides depicted an intermixing of social networks, mass media and urban public spaces as the combined means to foster interpersonal communication, to expose people to new ideas and opinions, and to increase deliberation and participatory democracy. The key imperative in using social networks, mass media and public spaces is to maximize exposure to diverse neighborhoods and diverse others. Part of Mr. Hampton's work is in response to anxieties about online interactions replacing face-to-face interactions; he has found that neighborhood-based internet use does not reduce the creation of face-to-face ties, does not reduce the likelihood of knowing one's neighbors, and may even increase the willingness to help neighbors.

Commissioner Nicely remarked on the importance of libraries in bridging the digital divide and the importance of media literacy combined with the innovation and creativity of people that has been seen in these community forums. She suggested that, instead of worrying about specific questions to which people need answers, the Commission should make sure that people know how to utilize all the information and communication tools and avenues that are available to them as these technologies relate to their communities.

Mr. Olson then asked if radio is an important medium for community information, to which Mr. Barry responded, yes, and mentioned that a radio neighborhood news bureau is being created by a local public radio station in a very conscious attempt to create neighborhood-relevant content. Ms. Dempsey agreed, adding that local TV is often too expensive to be used for distributing community-relevant information and that conventional media often overlook the library's events and resources and so they seize on alternative means of communication.

Mr. Capraro mentioned that having a sense of communities within geographically-defined areas is difficult and that technology can be useful in binding already existing neighborhoods. Mr. Barry agreed, saying that LISC creates neighborhood websites according to what people say their neighborhoods are--the social, cultural and ethnic boundaries--and not what is set up by government jurisdiction. Mr. Miller added that his literacy project is intent on using the tools of new media to bridge classrooms and he plans to put up instructive videos of seven to ten minutes on YouTube to be available not only to students, but to the population at large of all ages.

During the lunch hour, **Professors Michele Bitoun and Jack Doppelt of the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, offered a presentation on, "Medill Chicago Storefronts -- Immersing Journalism Students in Chicago"**

Neighborhoods."

Ms. Bitoun told the Commission that journalism can provide information that can help citizens become better informed and lead better lives as citizens and that connection and engagement are becoming more important to this end. At Medill, audience understanding is a key concept underpinning new media curriculum and the Chicago Storefronts project works to teach students to research audiences in relevant neighborhoods in order to create engaging, relevant and meaningful stories for people in these areas.

The Storefronts project, Ms. Bitoun continued, has forced Medill faculty to rethink and explore some of their core principles and to reexamine the role for journalists asking questions--especially as media relies on pull as well as push journalism--about the extent to which journalists should engage with the community rather than simply report on the community.

There are two Chicago Storefronts location, one in Edgewater and the other in Ravenswood, which are both neighborhoods of approximately five square miles and rich in economic and ethnic diversity. Students spend the beginning of the quarter doing research about the people who live in the neighborhoods, what the major schools and community institutions are, listening to issues and challenges that are important to people, and determining how people get their news. Students then spend the rest of the quarter reporting on important stories for the communities. Also, Ms. Bitoun continued, students are using Google Maps to map all of these stories as well as archiving all of the stories they are producing.

Mr. Doppelt began his remarks by saying that the title of the Commission expresses exactly what Medill faculty and students are looking into-- what is the community being served and what are its information needs? Medill's notion of journalism is three-legged, he continued: 1) Asking who is the audience?; 2) Pursuing "multimedia storytelling" as a much more elaborate, sophisticated and interactive way of telling stories and of connecting to people in ways not usually thought of as distribution channels; and 3) Exploring the need to engage people and asking what such engagement means. This three-legged stool, Mr. Doppelt concluded, is content-neutral though it is approached from the standpoint of civic engagement and of serving people who are marginalized from forces larger than a lack of information.

Mr. Doppelt then spoke about the role of technology in the Storefronts project and journalism more generally, mentioning that the question is how to use technology in an optimal way to connect with and engage citizens and communities. Medill's task is to figure out how to engage and serve the population with technology in innovative ways and to use technology to really sustain journalists in the local communities. The aim is not have journalists going to local communities and telling them what they need but going out and engaging with the community and community institutions so that residents and their organizations are telling the journalists what they need.

In order to accomplish this, Mr. Doppelt continued, Medill uses websites but also taps into the geographically-based community that already exists -- for example, going to meet people in the geographic places they use and gather in on a daily basis. Also, Medill looks to partner with community business and institutions to contribute to the goals of engagement and serving community information needs through connective outlets. Libraries, adult education, schools and churches are examples of such institutions that engage with communities for a sustained time and are institutions that Medill, as a university, can collaborate with to teach and train them to do storytelling, to create video and audio, to do interviews and to create a place where people are putting out news and

information themselves in a fairly focused way.

Mr. Doppelt concluded by mentioning two sets of key questions: 1) how do we figure out what community really means, how do we help create and identify it, and how does this fit into democracy; and 2) what do people need in a democracy, the answer to which is more complex than simply that which makes them good citizens.

Mr. Shane asked how Medill discusses the ethical and professional stances of journalism with its students, especially given the apparent intentionality behind the Storefronts project. Mr. Doppelt replied that the traditional journalism model is not only telling people what they ought to know, but is doing so without collaborating with community organizations or government to get to that end. He acknowledged that there can be a breach of trust between journalists and institutions when there is collaboration and that it is tricky, but not impossible, to maintain a healthy divide between information flow that journalists report on and that which could undermine the integrity of that choice. Ms. Bitoun then added that there are ethical issues entailed in the Storefronts project but that they are hoping to teach their students about identifying the boundaries between journalism and the partnerships that may create conflicts of interest.

Mr. Powell then remarked that he doesn't think it is easy to identify what the basic information is that citizens need, but he does think the Commission is making it harder than it needs to be. The role of a citizen, he continued, in a democracy is to responsibly participate in things that are meaningful to their lives. The beauty of democracy is that citizens get agitated and motivated by things that happen in their daily lives and that the government is there to redress their grievances and protect their welfare. He therefore thinks, Mr. Powell concluded, that it is more important to think about what are the information needs of citizens going about their daily lives; from that springs information, public action, and civic engagement.

1:15 Commission Deliberation Time: Mr. Shane began the discussion time by saying that the Commission staff is working on figuring out how to proceed on soliciting public input for the Commission's deliberations. He hoped in the next few hours to begin figuring out the actual points of analysis on which Commissioners agree and disagree.

Mr. Carroll asked if there could be more than one report: one authoritative, complete, and scholarly that might require close reading; another version that would be conversational and concise and would be easy to read for people and which might suggest to people that these are things that are their rights; and perhaps a third that might be more of a "how-to" section of resources. He just wants to make sure, he said, that people will be able to get their hands on and utilize the information the Commission provides in an accessible and meaningful way. Ms. Boyd agreed and suggested solidifying ten major points the Commission wants to say that would feed into the larger report.

After some further preliminary discussion about the report-writing process, co-chairs Mayer and Olsen suggested allowing each Commissioner three minutes to state the main themes they think are important for the Commission report to address.

Ms. Mayer said that she is very concerned about scale, wants scalable solutions for all types and sizes of geographically-defined communities and thinks it is imperative that everyone can participate. She also said that it is important to leverage existing infrastructure. Also, competition is important, be it providing broadband or testing viewpoints, especially in the reduction of bias. Broadband and telephony access are also essential as is the support of libraries.

Ms. Nicely emphasized the need to maximize available community-based avenues for learning and utilizing tools and information.

Mr. Mooney added that the Commission needs to say something in a way that has never been said before. Mr. Mooney also said that in the last paragraph on page 13 of the report not enough is being said about the demand side of the equation, and that media literacy is important because it is not enough to simply put information on the street. Mr. Mooney added that more should be said about low-tech means of what it means to be a citizen in a neighborhood. Finally, he said that there is one thing we need to emphasize more, it would be what does it mean to be a citizen and how should a citizen use information and transport it.

Mr. Jealous said that he is worried that the report jumps from international and national media to media on our block. He is worried that we will continue to get good information about what happens on the block and city and nationwide, but county and regional level government will be missing. Also, he said that the Commission should make sure that all geographic levels are represented and also that a potential recommendation would be having the government care about community publications.

Ms. Nicely said that she was inspired by the innovation and creativity the Commission is seeing, and thinks it is important to support the surge of creativity occurring on the local level.

Mr. Powell said that he thinks it is important to define information needs and to realize that information systems and information flow have joined the list of things that are public goods in terms of the basic operation of communities. Also, he added that it is important to understand what the qualifier "in a democracy" adds.

Ms. MacCallum said that it would be helpful for the Commission to make a strong statement that says information needs are not being met. Also, she said she would love to see the document ordered into supply and demand sides and to emphasize the demand side: simplify my role for me as a citizen so that I can engage; identify the things I should be worried about on a local level. Also, she added the Commission should focus on media literacy, how do we think about communication, and how do we encourage and engage citizens to be effective in participating. She also thinks government transparency is critical, and she would like to see a document that says, "Here are 10 actions for me, for the government, and for the media to sign up for."

Mr. Ibargiuen said that dissemination of information needs to be effective enough so that news and information are meaningfully shared.

Mr. Olson said the Commission needs to make sure that the necessary tools are in the hands of the citizens. We need to promote technology use and literacy, and promote the use of libraries and other government and nonprofit institutions in communities. He mentioned that he is very taken by the potential of radio as an expansive means of communication. He also emphasized the need to protect people's creativity and to give incentives to journalists, activists and artists.

Mr. Ramsey described three basic "buckets" through which he understands the issues facing the Commission: information itself (necessary for civic participation and individual well-being), systems (aggregation and distribution), and capacity (abilities to utilize this information). We need a sort of e-government 2.0 to make this accessible. Also, he said, distribution of high-tech and low-tech and broadband on a personal level are important

themes for the Commission, as is digital literacy.

Mr. Carroll asked about how to finance journalism and how to incentivize radio to do community journalism. He continued that in the report, he would love to have an opening passage on the broader background. There is an upheaval that is both a worrisome thing and an opportunity that will change the lives of citizens and will change the relationships of citizens to each other.

Ms. Boyd emphasized the importance of transparency, organization, access (mobile, radio, podcasting, etc.) and engagement. She added that it is important to incentivize production as well as incentivizing the organization of information for user. Also, she urged, it is important to identify modes for citizen engagement besides voting and donating – can there be step-by-step instructions for engaging?

Mr. Sagan suggested that there needs to be support systems for experts and for educational programs.

Mr. Shane noted that no one had yet mentioned what communities need information for, for example, inclusion and bridging between groups that might otherwise not cross information boundaries. The Commission had also heard a great deal about the transformed role of public and nonprofit institutions as publishers of information and the importance of public space. Mr. Shane observed that "journalism" did not come up in the main themes articulated by the Commissioners present.

Mr. Jealous then asked if there was some quantification of the problems, some numbers to give the report weight. Mr. Ramsey added that there are numbers about literacy rates, numbers on resumes needing to be sent by email, data on broadband, expenditures on libraries, etc. The underlying fact, he continued, is that we do live in a digital society and that this is a greater divide than others.

Mr. Mooney then observed that the above themes are not in disagreement with the draft report offered by Mr. Shane, but he sees a different emphasis on citizenship.

There was disagreement expressed on the role of low-tech means of communication and information with Mr. Mooney remarking that we're missing the boat if we don't acknowledge the role of low-tech, on the ground organizing. He worried about saying, as Mr. Olson suggested, that if one is excluded from digital networks, one has been reduced to second-class citizen citizenship.

Mr. Powell asked about the logic behind the organization of the report and wondered if the report should give a narrative about the state of the world first. What if, Mr. Powell suggested, the Commission decided to go from a "first principles" approach that focused on the demand side of the question of citizen's information needs in a democracy and then suggested ways to empower and advance that principle.

Mr. Shane then said he's hearing the Commissioners saying that we shouldn't be thinking exclusively about the information of communities writ large but the needs of individuals within a community. He then suggested that the outline for the report should be: 1) information needs of a democracy that addresses both individual and community levels; 2) description of current conditions; 3) given one and two, the principles that guide us; and 4) recommendations based on these principles. Mr. Mooney then pushed Mr. Shane to start with citizens' needs instead of individual needs to which Ms. Boyd remarked that there are a lot of people who aren't citizens, like illegals and others who can't vote. Mr. Shane shared Ms. Boyd's concern, but did not think he had a word better than "citizen" to describe the

capacity of each person to participate in the public life of the community in which they reside. Most Commissioners present expressed a preference to retain the word “citizen,” but explain in a footnote that the word was not intended in a legal sense, and did not mean to exclude community residents who were technically not citizens.

Mr. Sagan raised the question whether a writer should be found for the final report who could provide an accessible overarching narrative. After a break during which Mr. Shane and Mr. Ibarguen consulted with the co-chairs, Mr. Shane reported that the plan continued to be that he would write a formal report, but that Mr. Fancher, who was already writing a more journalistic narrative based on the community forums, would be asked to provide a similar essay to complement the formal report. There would also be work to produce shorter, punchier, more accessible versions of the Commission’s various ideas.

In talking about potential recommendations, Ms. Mayer mentioned libraries as a community hub and a need for digital literacy. Mr. Ramsey added that the Commission might need more information about libraries because Chicago's system is an impressive system that is not indicative of libraries nationwide. Mr. Mooney added that if libraries are going to part of the recommendations, there needs to be more research, including federal support. Ms. Mayer added that education is another huge area for recommendations to which Mr. Sagan added that he agrees but doesn't know how to recommend anything on that front.

Ms. MacCallum then asked if there are some numbers the Commission can get, for example, civic participation is at 5% in a given community. Mr. Sagan added that it would be interesting if the Commission could create an index that could be followed up and that measured this, if the Commission could provide an index of information needs and how people are acting on them. Mr. Mooney then added that there are groups who are good at creating measuring tools that can make good indices for these things and that over the long term, there could be a way to measure if the Commission's recommendations actually lead to anything. Mr. Shane indicated that he would follow up on these ideas by the February meeting.