An Internet for the Common Good - Engagement, Empowerment, and Justice for All--A Community Informatics Declaration

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- Entitled by: Michael Gurstein
- Region: Canada
- Organization: Centre for Community Informatics Research, Development and Training
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Abstract

A community informatics approach to Internet governance supports equal distribution of Internet benefits and addresses longstanding social, economic, cultural and political injustices in this environment. Questions of social justice and equity through the Internet are central to how the Internet and society will evolve. People in different communities must be empowered to develop and adapt the Internet infrastructure to reflect their core values and ways of knowing

Document

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This document was prepared by a group of Community Informatics activists and endorsed by consensus of the Community Informatics community 21.12.13 (a version edited for style and grammar and not content was re-endorsed 28.12.13.)

http://tinyurl.com/InternetfortheCommonGood

Current endorsements may be found at:

Individuals: **http://tinyurl.com/l9pn3bw**

Organizations: **http://tinyurl.com/lslcrd2**

Effective use of the Internet will benefit everyone. Currently the benefits of the Internet are distributed unequally: some people gain power, wealth and influence from using the Internet while others struggle for basic access. In our vision, people in their communities and everywhere - including the poor and marginalized in developing and developed countries, women and youth, indigenous peoples, older persons, those with disabilities -- will use the Internet to develop and exercise their civic intelligence and work together to address collective challenges.

More than a technology or a marketplace, the Internet is a social environment, a community space for people to interact with the expectation that principles of equity, fairness and justice will prevail. Internet governance must ensure that this online social space functions effectively for the well-being of all.

A community informatics approach to Internet governance supports equal distribution of Internet benefits and addresses longstanding social, economic, cultural and political injustices in this environment. Questions of social justice and equity through the Internet are central to how the Internet and society will evolve. People in different communities must be empowered to develop and adapt the Internet infrastructure to reflect their core values and ways of knowing.

We support development of an Internet in which communities are the "first mile" and not the "last mile." We believe the primary purpose of the Internet is not to mine data and make knowledge a commodity for purchase and sale but rather to advance community goals equally and fairly within these distributed infrastructures.

We aspire to an Internet effectively owned and controlled by the communities that use it and to Internet ownership that evolves through communities federated regionally, nationally and globally. The Internet's role as a community asset, a public good and a local community utility is more important than its role as a site for profit-making or as a

global artifact. The access layer and the higher layers of applications and content should be community owned and controlled in a way that supports a rich ecology of commercial enterprises subject to and serving community and public interests.

As citizens and community members in an Internet-enabled world we have a collective interest in how the Internet is governed. Our collective interests need to be expressed and affirmed in all fora discussing the future of the Internet. As a collective, and as members of civil society, we have developed a declaration for Internet governance based on principles of community informatics. We appreciate your interest and welcome your support.

A just and equitable Internet provides:

1. Fair and equitable means to access and use the Internet: affordable by all and designed and deployed so that all may realize the benefits of effective use. The poor and marginalized, women, youth, indigenous peoples, older persons, those with disabilities, Internet users and non-users alike; no one, from any community globally, should be without Internet access.
2. Equitable access within communities to the benefits of the Internet, including information, opportunities to communicate, increased effectiveness of communications and information management, and opportunities to participate in system development and content creation. Everyone, within all communities, should have the right, the means and the opportunity to use the Internet to share the full intellectual heritage of humankind without undue cost or hindrance.
3. Respect for privacy -- people must be able to conveniently use the Internet in a way that is credibly protected against large-scale surveillance or interference by government authorities or corporate interests.
4. Infrastructure that ensures the maximum level of personal security and reliability.
5. Opportunities for all within all communities to build, manage, and own Internet infrastructure as and when it is needed.
6. Internet governance by democratic principles and processes - including privileging input from communities affected by decisions and ensuring inclusion of the widest possible perspectives supporting the development of our digital environments.
7. A peer-to-peer architecture with equal power and privilege for each node or end point and complete neutrality of the architecture and medium for all users and all applications.
8. Recognition that the local is a fundamental building block of all information and communications and the "global" is a "federation of locals."

9. Equal opportunity for all to connect and communicate in a language and culture of their choice.
10. Recognition and equal privileging of many types of knowledge and ways of knowing, building from the capacities of each individual, community and knowledge society.
11. The means for information freely provided on and through the Internet to be freely available for the use and benefit of all.
12. Support for collaboration, engagement, education, solidarity, and problem-solving as the stepping stones to civic intelligence and the capacity of communities, civil society, and all people to equitably and effectively engage in informed self-governance.