

# The Future of Broadband and Community Communications

# Problem: crisis in old media models

- Economic downturn: Bankruptcies, layoffs, cuts in ad content
- Egs. San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago, NY
- Impact: Is ad-driven mass media model viable?
- Serious cuts in public service news and content necessary for democratic discussion

# Crisis in US broadband

- Way behind other countries in speed and cost
- Private networks, controlled by incumbent players whose goals are not creation of public service, or circulation of information for the growth of democracy
- Creativity and Innovation limited ...
- Lack of support for communications as public good, with communications corridors as public utilities

# Best Practices elsewhere

- Starts with National Goal of “knowledge society”
- Recognition of communications as a public good
- Options range from public ownership to public infrastructure/private ISP to public right of way/private management to non-profit operation

# New opportunities - public content

- State and county content and e-services
- Schools, colleges, film festival, music producers...
- Growing citizen production of digital content and services

# New opportunities -national government support

- US Government shift in policy towards supporting broadband infrastructure
- Net Neutrality --open and free of discrimination
- American Recovery & Investment Act
- \$7.2 B for broadband deployment via
- \$B's via programs targeting energy efficiency, education, health care...

# Broadband Stimulus Programs

- \$4.7 B for National Telecommunications and Administration (NTIA)
- “Technology Opportunities Program”
- \$2.5 for US Dept of Agriculture
- “Rural Utilities Service”

# New technological opportunities

- Cheaper, easier-to-use technologies
- Many to many distribution
- Possible to receive and to send...
- Millions can now comment/add to content, produce their own content, and circulate it
- Fewer gate-keepers of information

# New opportunities - public content

- State and county content and e-services
- Schools, colleges, Film festival
- Growing citizen production of digital content and services (youtube, facebook etc.)

# Digital Divide

- Under-served communities of Marin City and Canal District
- Older populations
- Under-served rural communities

# Infrastructure is only one part of the answer

- Extend broadband lines
- Computer Access
- Digital Training
- Ongoing support for content production
- Strengthen distribution possibilities
- Networking with other centers in CA and US and internationally

# Building community

- Building community is a necessary precursor to building a successful community network (18)...
- Those sites with the greatest traffic, and that were the most effective in terms of creating new content, and community-oriented content, were ones where the communities were prepared to provide training, make sites public and accessible and provide staff support. (Sharon Strover\*, Gary Chapman, Jody Waters)

# Best Practices--South Korea

- National Policy of “knowledge-based society” in mid-1990s
- Communications key to development
- Infrastructure a “public good”
- Built backbone network in 144 cities
- Provided grants & loans for ISPs and service providers
- Infrastructure \$ for rural areas and small cities

# Best practices - Korea

- Not just technical infrastructure but social and educational
- Recognition to housing developers for high-speed broadband & rankings
- Promotion --- IT literacy programs
- Targeted groups that might be left out, including older people, disabled people
- Set up media centers

# Mediact Seoul

- Multi-media information centre
- Training for young people
- Training for under-served groups  
...women, poor communities, minority groups, disabled
- Follow-up to support new kinds of content

# Media Production Center

- Provides production equipment
- Cooperates with other media centers to support content production, for eg. Film festivals

# Media Forums

- Organizes local, national and international public forum for discussion of media and communications issues
- Media Literacy
- Communications Policy
- Best practices from other countries

# Media Network

- Actively works with media centers throughout Korea and internationally

# Next Steps

- Adopt “knowledge society” or similar goals
- Recognize communications as public good
- Strengthen media production center
- Survey & link with other centers
- Access infrastructure support from stimulus program
- Link with other state & national centers

# Resources:

- Virginia Government Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance Tool-Kit

[http://www.otpba.vi.virginia.gov/roundtable\\_toolkit.shtml](http://www.otpba.vi.virginia.gov/roundtable_toolkit.shtml)

# Virginia Government Tool-Kit

1. What does your community need?
2. How do you do it?
3. Business Case Analysis
4. How do you pay for it?
5. How do you execute the process in a timely manner?

# Freepress.net

- Benefits of Community Internet
- <http://www.freepress.net/communityinternet/benefits>