New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen

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Introduction: The Hypermedia Campaign

After the 2000 election, exit polls revealed that a third of the electorate had used the internet to learn about the campaigns. After the 2004 election, surveys revealed that over half the electorate had gone online to get news or information about the campaigns.[1] Yet the growing number of citizens who use the internet in their political lives may not realize that they are being fed highly personalized information. In the weeks before the 2000 election, when "Elaine" – a conservative, middle-aged voter living in Clemson, South Carolina – logged onto her favorite Republican Web site, she saw headlines about the commitment of Republican candidates to the Second Amendment right to bear arms and pro-life arguments against abortion. When "Lois," a middle-aged Republican voter living in Manhattan, logged onto the same site, she was never shown those headlines. Designers of the Republican Web site knew that even though Lois was conservative on many issues, their statistical models suggested she would support some form of gun control and a woman's right to choose. The Webmasters were right, but neither Elaine nor Lois suspected that, as members of the same political party, they were receiving significantly different political information during the campaign season. In fact, they assumed the opposite – that everyone in their political party received the same content.

Information technologies have played a role in campaign organization of the major parties since the 1970s, but it is only over the last decade that adopting new technologies also became an occasion for organizational restructuring within political parties and campaigns. The result of this

[1] Exit poll data from 2000 reported in CNN *Election 2000 Exit Polls* CNN, 2000 (cited 2003), available from http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/epolls/US/P000.html. Post-election 2004 figure from author's calculations using data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

restructuring is the *hypermedia campaign*, an agile political organization defined by its capacity for innovatively adopting digital technologies for express political purposes and its capacity for innovatively adapting its organizational structure to conform to new communicative practices. In other words, it is not simply that political campaigns employ digital information technologies in their communications strategies. Integrating such technologies becomes an occasion for organizational adaptation, effecting organizational goals and relationships among professional staff, political leadership, volunteers, financial contributors, citizens, and other political campaigns. Political hypermedia are the conjoined superstructure of fast, high-capacity hardware and software communication tools that let people transmit, interact with, and filter data. First, political hypermedia are structured literally over and above traditional media in a network of satellites, relay stations, and data bases that coordinate the retrieval and delivery of public and private content. Second, these media operate at greater speeds and with greater amounts of content than do traditional media. Third, they permit simulations of offline interaction, speedy circulation of social signs and meanings, rapid decomposition and recomposition of messages, and increased transience of socially significant symbols. The rising prominence of hypermedia campaigns has been marked by three trends.

First, a service class of professional political technocrats with special expertise in information technology (IT) arose. Like pollsters, TV ad managers, and other campaign strategists, the consultants specializing in IT collected information about competing candidates and prospective voters for the campaign and projected information about the campaign to the electorate. Unlike these other campaign managers, however, the consultants specializing in IT also *built* new communication technologies for citizens and candidates. Second, the political consulting industry replaced mass-media tools with targeted media tools, ranging from fax and computer-generated direct mail to e-mail and Web-site content, which allowed the industry to tailor messages to specific audiences. The hypermedia campaign builds a targeted-media strategy. It not only produces political content for mass consumption over broadcast technologies, it also produces political content for private consumption over networked technologies. Third, the engineers of political hypermedia made technical decisions about political hypermedia that constrained subsequent decisions about the production and consumption of political content. The hypermedia campaign took advantage of the norms and values entrenched in technology when designer's choices – embedded

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with attitudes about how democracy should work – were turned into code. In this sense, the code in software has become embedded with the normative choices of designers. The tools of a political campaign and the choices that campaign managers make about manipulating data, ideas, and people reflect their own political norms. Some campaigns choose to obstruct real learning about political issues, manipulate their membership, and prevent too much interactivity. Other campaigns allow a range of interactive tools, adapt their organizational behavior to allow members to both produce and consume political content, and give such members the capacity to seed their own campaigns.

Political communications technologies have become so advanced that it is possible for campaign managers to send significantly different messages to potential supporters. Citizens experienced with computing technologies will sort through the manipulative messages and find content more sophisticated than ever before. Richly detailed political information is increasingly available on the internet, in the form of direct correspondence from political leaders, policy options from diverse voices, and records of government activity. At the same time, political campaigns in the United States is increasingly manipulative, as managers find new ways to distribute propaganda, mine data, mask political interests, and mislead people unfamiliar with computing technologies.

One of the most lucid cases for periodizing political campaign styles is made by historian Robert Dinkin in *Campaigning in America.* He labels the period between the 1950s and the last election he analyzed, the 1988 campaign year, as the "Mass Media Age." This was a period in which the power of influence of the grassroots organization of political parties increased in comparison to the party elites and political consultants, the television attained dominance as the most costly and most popular conduit for political information, and truly national political campaigns came to exist (Dinkin 1989). But I argue that the hypermedia campaign has succeeded the mass media campaign, such that the 1988 campaign was the beginning of an important transition in the organization of political information in the United States. This introduction has provided a historical background to the role of information technology in political campaigning. The first step in my argument, however, is to define the relationship between political culture and communication technology and offer a theoretical framework for how this relationship should be studied.

Throughout these chapters I explore four different kinds of code. First, there is the software code for Web sites, relational databases, and content

distribution systems that has become the primary medium through which we now produce and consume political content. Second, there is the normative code of political campaign managers that shapes decisions about technology design and campaign strategy, a normative code that they encrypt in the information architecture that other citizens use but do not always understand. Third, there is the language-based conceptual system for encoding and organizing political information, which provides a structure consisting of political objects, events, processes, and memory. Analytically framing political life through inputs and outputs tends to privilege the consumption of political information over the production of political information. Contemporary theory treats culture as competing discursive strategies. Rather than providing standardized values, culture provides resources for interpreting and approaching problems and provides different resources in different ways to different subcultures. These cultural resources take the form of discourse, such as talk, media, text, and, as analyzed here, the hardware and software of information technologies. Finally, there are the encrypted informational systems that few people understand and to which few have access. This is the secret language of lobbyists' relational databases and private data-mining services that code labels about who we are and what our public policy preferences are likely to be.

The range of tools for producing and consuming political information has greatly expanded over the last decade. Of course, most politicians produce Web sites with content about their goals and aspirations. But more and more citizens use a sophisticated tool kit for interrogating the work and ideology of political representatives. Some look for news or information about politics or the campaign, go online to get news or information about the elections, or participate in online discussions or "chats" about the elections. Others register their own opinions by participating in electronic polls, get information about a candidate's voting record, or learn when and where to vote.

A growing number of people send and receive e-mail supporting or opposing a candidate for office and contribute money to a candidate running for public office through his or her Web site. They explore these Web sites for details about candidates' positions on the issues, send e-mails with campaign and election jokes, and send friends and relatives information about "getting out the vote." They research political endorsements or ratings of candidates by favored organizations. They visit Web sites that provide information about specific issues or policies of interest, such as the environment, gun control, abortion, or health care

reform. They also visit partisan sites, such as those run by the political parties, a candidate, or a campaign, and compare points of view with nonpartisan sites. Not everyone learns about politics in these ways, but a growing proportion of the public does (Howard 2005).

The short history of political life online includes both discouraging and inspiring chapters. Information technologies enable the major political parties and lobbyists to hone their skills for manipulating public opinion. However, voters are turning to ever more diverse resources for their political news, often preferring interactive political media over television news. Campaign managers themselves say they like to use technologies such as the internet to create informational feedback loops between candidates and constituents. Whenever information-gathering technologies diffuse – whether they are computer-assisted telephone interview systems, Nielsen television ratings, or the internet – these technologies are used to help politicians calibrate their messages. However, the feedback loops for interactive information technologies, or *hypermedia*, are different enough from those in the mass media campaign manager's tool kit that they warrant specific and critical treatment.

THE EVOLUTION OF HYPERMEDIA CAMPAIGNS IN THE UNITED STATES

Between the 1988 and 2004 presidential campaign seasons, the political internet emerged as a critical component of U.S. campaign strategies. The proportion of people using the internet to collect news or to research policy alternatives increased significantly as the technology diffused. From inside candidate and issue campaigns, the internet and related tools allowed a number of campaigns to make significant advances in fund-raising, volunteer coordination, logistics, intelligence on voters, and opposition research. As journalists began to cover campaigns, they produced stories about the new digital democracy, hypermedia campaigns, and cyber-activism. Internet technologies, headlines declared, were revolutionizing political life. Just as the new economy had become a fast-paced, interactive system in which traditional economic elites had to battle with young, creative start-ups for the attention of the information-savvy consumer, politics was becoming a fast-paced, interactive system in which traditional political elites had to engage with new actors offering creative policy options for the information-savvy citizen.

Political information technologies develop in stages, in concordance with the size of campaign budgets. This means that most of the

innovation in political campaign strategy occurs under immense deadline pressures, at the height of campaign seasons, and when money is flowing to strategists whose professional standing will change when their issue or candidate wins or looses. Presidential campaigns are the biggest, most consistent spenders on new media tools. Lobbyists also spend significant funds during a presidential election year or in years when their key issues are addressed by legislation. Candidate campaigns at the congressional or state level put financial resources toward innovative communication strategies in two-year election cycles.

Political Computing

Computers have been used to process political information since the early 1970s, though the classic text on the political consulting industry labels the consultants and firms themselves as the "new campaign technology" (Sabato 1981). An analyst with the AFL-CIO's Data Processing Department, which in 1973 registered almost nine million names in its computer memory bank, registered his enthusiasm for the political applications of the computer:

> In sheer speed the computer is awesome. In sorting information, the computer can read 350,000 numbers per second off a disc. When information is going out, the computer performs equally prodigious feats: in one hour, it can turn out 30,000 of the 3 × 5 cards [of member profiles], 66,000 lines on a listing or 75,000 mail labels. A lot of volunteers have to do a lot of typing to match that.
> (Hardesty 1976)

Even though the computer was a new, powerful tool to the political campaigns of the 1970s, we can read this analyst's statement and immediately identify what has changed over the last couple of elections. Not only are billions of numbers per second read on contemporary computer disks, but this is done on personal computers, not large organizational computers. There are no more 3 × 5 data cards, and a political consultant is just as likely to send 7,500,000 e-mails as 75,000 postal letters. So it is not sufficient to say that computers have long had a role in political life; over the years they have become personal, networked, and evolved significantly from the elaborate, card-sorting, computing devices of thirty years ago.

By the mid-1980s, the Republican National Committee had built an extensive private intranet for research into President Reagan's Democratic opponents. Already, intelligence collected by all fifty state party

headquarters, all fifty state campaign headquarters, and aides in 208 broadcast markets could be accessed from Air Force One. Republican leaders could then catch inconsistencies in Democratic statements and produce their own instant parry (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1997). Some public policy officials were beginning to use computers to model scenarios, and it was found that the process of modeling was itself an important process of negotiation between the stakeholders in public policy debates. The concreteness of computer models forced stakeholders to share and classify their expectations openly, turning the act of computer modeling into an act of consensus building (Dutton and Kraemer 1985). At the time, social scientists were most interested in how computers were used by political parties and grassroots movements, but the lobbyists used computers most adroitly. Beginning in the 1970s, they were the first to use computers to produce form letters from constituents to political leaders. At one time, the handwritten letter of grievance from a constituent would capture the attention of Capitol Hill staff. The flood of form letters, even though addressed and signed by constituents, strained staffing resources (Frantzich 1982). However, lobbyists sought bigger, more efficient campaign stunts, and computer technology allowed strategists to manage their intelligence on voters and politicians with greater alacrity. By the end of the 1980s, a number of scholars had published instructive books about how political campaign consultants could and should use computer technologies to manage voter lists with spreadsheets and permanent data records, to test campaign messages with videotaped speeches and electronically recorded feedback from focus groups, and to take instant polls from specific samples of the population (Luntz 1988; Tehranian 1990).

1988

In terms of campaign communication technologies, 1988 was the year that the Democratic and Republican National Committees discovered the fax machine. The major presidential and lobbyist campaigns had staff devoted to using this new technology – people who would maintain call lists for "blastfaxing" and who would sort the faxes the organization received. Many of the hypermedia technologies we use today, from cellular phones to the internet, had been designed in prototype but not hit the commercial market. But even prototype technologies, conceived by engineers aware of technical possibilities, inspired others to conceive of organizational and institutional possibilities (Arterton 1987; Sabato 1988; McLean 1989). Although the national party committees and

well-financed lobbyists had had access to computing technologies since the early 1970s, by the end of the 1980s researchers found small communities of urban activists, scientists working for peace, and small public bureaucracies using computer technologies to improve their political communication strategies and organizational efficiency (Downing 1989; Huff et al. 1989).

1990

By the 1990 campaign season, e-mail had become a commercially viable communication tool and was immediately classified as an empowering technology for the citizen-activist (Ganly 1991). The term "narrowcasting" was coined to describe the strategy of hitting voters with direct *postal* mail using computers and relational databases to tailor printed political messages to the addressee. Campaign professionals later used the word to describe the process of sending e-mails to particular people or the process of customizing Web pages for particular interests. Online discussion groups clearly allowed people to build ties across traditional socioeconomic boundaries, to build empathy with other members sharing grievances, and to draw new participants into civic life (Wittig and Schmitz 1996).

1992

By the 1992 campaign season, not only was e-mail available to activists and intelligentsia, but satellite dishes allowed political messages to be broadcast directly into local markets. The major presidential campaigns learned from the strategies of activists who maintained e-mail lists and bulletin boards for their members. At the time, the networked infrastructure was found in dense urban areas, such as New York City, and on the nation's university campuses. While activist and computer-literate members of these communities had lively discussion groups, the content of Bush, Clinton, and Perot campaign discussion groups did not vary much from the content already sent out in fax releases. Campaign managers were very careful to make their discussion groups more like announcement lists (Diamond et al. 1993; Myers 1993). Some lists evolved into fora for smart debate, but this rarely happened to lists closely supervised by campaigns with an integrated communications strategy (Kirp 1992; Ronfeldt 1992; Hacker et al. 1996). In 1992, however, the excitement about new media had less to do with the internet and more to do with direct satellite transmission of Perot's thirty-second infomercials into local television markets. These electronic informational services allowed

community journalists to tailor content for their neighborhoods, reporting as if they were on the campaign trail, asking questions, and keeping on top of campaign subterfuge. Insiders called these kinds of technologies "soft" formats because they allowed politicians to get messages to voters without using the hierarchical news dissemination technologies of traditional broadcast and newspaper journalists. Direct, decentralized, and networked technologies allowed access to the media environments people actually used in their daily lives: cable news services, call-in radio shows, MTV, late-night talk shows, small-town newspapers and online computer services (Diamond et al. 1993; West 1993).

As the White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said of the 1992 campaign, "Through the proliferation of computer modems, faxes, e-mail, interactive satellites, and other new modes of communication, several rounds of charges and countercharges are often exchanged in time for the evening news" (Myers 1993, 181). In her opinion, the ever more fast-paced interaction between campaigns was not a result of a particular communication tool but a result of multiple, networked technologies that formed a new system for collecting and distributing political information.

1994

In 1994, future California senator Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat, was the first candidate to build a Web site for her constituency office. A year later, Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy, of Massachusetts, was the first sitting senator to develop an official Web site. But while most political offices and campaigns were equipped with stand-alone computers, networking was far from standard in political organization (Casey 1996). Since new media technologies were increasingly part of the public reality and fantasy about how to make democracy efficient, academics began to philosophize about what citizenship might mean in an electronic polity (Friedland 1996; Graber 1996; Grossman 1996). What would it be like if we could all vote online? Speculation about online elections and the rise of articulate grassroots movements equipped with information-rich media was grounded in the assumption that accessible political information seeds vigorous deliberative democracy (Huckfeldt 1995; Sachs 1995; Glass 1996; Groper 1996). After the 1994 campaign season, the first naysayers argued that the digital divide prevented important rural, poor, and minority populations from participating in digital discourse, and that those who were participating were portioning themselves in groups of like-minded thinkers (Kling 1996).

1996

The 1996 presidential campaign season was important to the development of political hypermedia for two reasons. First, the truly networked quality of political hypermedia took shape, with satellite networks, cell phone networks, and the internet all becoming conduits for political information. For example, with Clinton and Gore approaching the Chicago Democratic Convention on different trains, DNC campaign managers set up the first moving-train interview feeds with a system of helicopter and satellite relay stations that allowed both candidates to communicate with supporters and journalists from different parts of the country while en route to the event. The White House and congressional e-mail infrastructure had been developed during Clinton's first term in office and, though distinct from the campaign communications infrastructure, was adeptly used by the incumbents to communicate both with journalists and directly with the public (Browning 1996; Casey 1996; Tedesco et al. 1998). Second, political hypermedia tools were developed for measuring and manipulating public opinion. The first examples of negative online advertising appeared, and researchers acknowledged that online discussion groups were not necessarily more honest, fair, or respectful than political debate offline. But research also found that in comparison with other media, the internet seemed to have a constructive role in political debate (Klotz 1998a,b). Academic research began to make tentative claims about the relationship between having an effective Web site and getting more votes (D'Alessio 1997; Rash 1997; Johnson et al. 1999). However, these findings may have had more to do with the strong correlation among being a voter, highly educated, and using the internet, a correlation that has weakened over time.

Institutional resistance from political parties to online campaigning disappeared in the 1996 campaign, as the national political organizations became very active in using the internet for contacting voters. Comparatively, nontraditional, alternative political actors were more dependent on e-mail, as the larger organizations could afford a full battery of television, radio, mail, and telephone communications (Bimber 1998a).

Several important texts appeared on new media and politics, but they did more by way of positing advantages and imagining problems than methodically assessing evidence of what was still a relatively new phenomenon (Selnow 1998; Willock 1998). Analysis of how citizens used the internet expanded beyond activists' internet use. Those people found browsing the internet for content or discussing social problems on USENET seemed to have a unique and noble set of political norms,

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and they were given different labels: digital citizens, netizens, or digerati (Hauben 1997; Hill and Hughes 1997). Some argued that these norms were a result of internet use and were bound to spread as the rest of the population went online. Others thought these norms were going to dissolve as the rest of the public went online. Many argued that the important impact of new media was in allowing both campaigns and citizens to bypass the institution of established media interests (Johnson et al. 1999). Technologies such as the internet provided decentralized media for exchanging information and a fundamentally different way of distributing political information from the centralized systems of mass communications media (Selnow 1998). One of the best examples of this was the Library of Congress's THOMAS server system, which presented many government documents, speeches, committee minutes, and reports for public access online, a system that was up and running during the 1996 campaign.

But an important thesis was developed in response to the 1996 campaign, an argument that challenged scholarly enthusiasm for a digital deliberative democracy by asking for real evidence that political deliberation online was actually different from deliberation offline. Did the new media technologies actually have an effect on the real politick of campaign strategies and games (Margolis et al. 1997; Margolis 2000)? Several scholars argued that when political campaigns developed an online instantiation, it was only a symbolic gesture at participating in a popular medium and not a substantive commitment to interactivity, an accusation that would be repeated in the analysis of the role of new media in the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns (Klinenberg and Perrin 2000; Stromer-Galley 2000; Puopolo 2001; Warnick and Endres 2004). However, many new media technologies, such as the internet, were serving both as a tool for organizing public opinion and as a tool for surveilling private lives (Howard 2003, 2005). The shape and character of this political campaigning online receives more attention in later chapters.

1998

Over two-thirds of the candidates for congressional seats in this election had established Web sites, driven by campaign managers hoping to capitalize on small online donations (Dulio et al. 1999). Outside this more widespread use of Web sites for campaign communications, 1998 was also a big year for the political internet because Congress released the *Starr Report* online. Over 400 pages of procedural melodrama and pornographic presidential details were quickly and easily accessible to the

concerned public. In addition, campaign managers began to meet and share stories about organizing hypermedia campaigns and for the first time produced tangible numbers about the impact of online campaign advertising strategy on visibility (Faucheux 1998; Jagoda and Nyhan 1999; "Technology" 1999). However, the online campaign still took on a relatively limited form. First, campaign Web sites were called "brochureware" because they merely reproduced content derived from print sources. Second, the Web sites themselves were rarely used as organizational tools for the campaign itself, with content specifically for coordinating campaign staff, candidate schedules, and volunteer resources. Third, campaign Web sites were not yet used as data-mining tools. Although some have cogently argued that the internet was constructed, from the very beginning, as a tool for the surveillance of users, political Web sites aggressively collected data on users only after the 2000 campaign (Elmer 2004).

In 1999, Jesse Ventura won the governorship of Minnesota as the first candidate to win an elected office with an e-mail–dependant communications strategy. Whereas PeaceNet activists and people with access through universities founded the political internet, it was now becoming a tool for the average citizen. Scholars observed that the internet was becoming a community-building tool, not just a tool for advancing radical political agendas. Indeed, it was a localizing tool for overcoming collective action problems and engaging with local, state, or federal agencies on day-to-day questions of policy and practice (Hill 1998; Klein 1999; Mele 1999; Tambini 1999; McGrath 2000). Scholars, however, still had difficulty finding a distinct media effect, such as changes in voter turnout or political sophistication or even a stable population of engaged citizens and policy makers committed to deliberative processes online (Hurwitz 1999; Kamarck 1999). The THOMAS system for distributing information about the legislative process was online, but not all government agencies had such an interactive internet presence and the new media ideal of transparent government far from being met.

Moreover, the internet was not just a place for community building and finding information on political campaigns. It was also a place for political manipulation. Political consultants began customizing their political content in earnest. The number of citizens online was sufficient; the penetration of new media technologies was sufficient; and campaign budgets were big enough to begin building the relational databases needed to target messages online. Where political deliberation was occurring, it was rarely inclusive and constructive (Milbank

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1999; Wilhelm 2000). Online activists seemed to have the same political profile as the offline population and were perhaps even more likely to stick by major party candidates (Hill 1998). The political internet business was recast as an aspect of the larger internet industry bubble, with similar cults of personality for leaders within the industry and financial hyperbole for investors (Morris 1999; Ransell 1999).

2000

The important advance in the 2000 campaign season was that new media became as crucial for internal organization as they were for external publicity. Both candidates for party nomination and the ultimate nominees devoted significant resources to their Web-site content, with variation in informational breadth, depth, interactivity, readability, and negativity (Benoit and Benoit 2000). Complex relational databases allowed campaign staff to model public reactions, predict voter turnout, manage financial and personnel resources, and adapt communications strategy on an hourly basis at the neighborhood level. In the campaign season of 2000, the big political parties and lobbyists raised the stature of new media strategists within their campaigns. Web-site managers became chief information officers and were given access to campaign war rooms; significant portions of the budget for traditional media buys were reapportioned to develop new media applications. The presidential nominating conventions were broadcasted on the Web. Democratic Senator Bill Bradley, a challenger to Al Gore for the Democratic nomination, was the first to raise one million dollars online. In one day of the primary season, Senator John McCain, a challenger to George W. Bush for the Republican nomination, raised half a million dollars online. By this election, the Republican National Committee claimed to have a million activists online, and nearly four-fifths of major party candidates for the Senate maintained Web sites (Jagoda 2000; Puopolo 2001).

The Green Party presidential candidate benefited from a system of vote swapping, coordinated online. The Nader campaign's goal was to earn 4 percent of the electorate's support and the opportunity for federal matching funds in a subsequent election, whereas the Gore campaign's goal was to win more electoral college delegates than the Bush campaign. Gore supporters agreed to vote for Nader in districts where Gore was sure to win, and Nader supporters agreed to vote for Gore in districts where Gore's victory was uncertain. Almost 30,000 people agreed to swap votes, including some 1,400 Florida-based Nader supporters who agreed to vote for Gore. In 2000, political hypermedia were deeply integrated

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within campaigns. They were used for unique content not found in other media, purposefully as an organizational tool, and aggressively for data mining.

Survey research compared the role of the political internet in 1996 with that in 2000 and found a significant growth in the number of people who were participating in online discussion groups, researching candidates and policy options, and following political news online (Rice and Katz 2003). Of course, such citizens also received increasingly sophisticated political messages. Political marketing strategies were on the rise, whereby political parties mimicked the branding and retailing strategies developed in the commercial marketplace (Scammell 2000). Some survey research suggested that the political hypermedia were particularly engaging for young people who were comfortable with technology and less likely to consume political news through other media (Delli Carpini 2000). It appeared there was marked enthusiasm for voting online; statistical models suggested that familiarity with internet technologies was a greater predictor of participation in an online vote than a "sense of duty" (Bainbridge 2003; Stromer-Galley 2003). Interestingly, some scholars wrote about new aspects to grassroots campaigns, arguing that many activists had become transnational activists, no longer merely citizens but "rooted cosmopolitans" (Tarrow 2001).

2002

This was the year that many electoral districts, embarrassed by their logistical bungles in counting ballots in the 2000 election, invested heavily in digital equipment for recording votes. Although touch-screen polling stations were not sharing data over the internet, some were networked within polling stations. Miami-Dade County, the epicenter of electoral drama in 2000, invested almost $25 million in 7,200 touch-screen machines. Around the country, almost 20 percent of registered voters used an electronic voting system (McNulty and Truslow 2003). In terms of the political research the public conducted online, the internet portal America Online reported that more than 30 million voters had accessed their political content online since the 2000 election. Services such as MeetUp.com, MoveOn.org, and blogs were used by millions of people to research political options and express political opinions. At this point, social scientists were finding that important political decisions had been made about the information architecture of many search engines, privileging some information sources over others while excluding other information sources altogether (Introna and Nissenbum 2000).

Voter News Service had provided the data used by journalists to predict incorrectly the electoral outcome of the 2000 election, but was unable to improve its data collection techniques in time for subsequent elections. Pollsters still recorded a modest rise in the proportion of people going online for political news, but scholars who dug deeper into such data insisted that there was no "internet revolution" because users seemed to prefer the Web sites of the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, CNN, and other Web sites purporting to offer news, such as the Drudge Report and National Rifle Association. The tiny minority of people using the internet for politics comprised the more engaged segment of society anyway, not people "newly enraptured with politics" by new media options (Norris 2000b; Kohut and Rainie 2003). Similar survey data revealed that the public clearly wanted to be able to vote online, even assumed that it was only a matter of time before the technology for direct democracy arrived at their doorsteps (Bainbridge 2003; Stromer-Galley 2003).

The amount of political information online had been growing since the early 1990s, and by the 2002 election the average citizen could find genuinely user-friendly, intelligible databases of knowledge, not just quantities of unsorted, raw information. One could look up the top ten polluters in a neighborhood and click through to read about the sources of pollution, the definition of pollutants, and the political avenues for protesting pollution. One could track the records of specific politicians, matching political statements with voting records, funding contributions, and political affiliations. If citizens did not trust the quality of this information, often culled directly from the records of government agencies such as the Federal Electoral Commission and the Library of Congress, they went directly to the campaign Web sites of candidates and incumbents for the candidates' messages. The information was available, though people with different search skills experienced measurable levels of frustration and failure in finding government information online (Hargittai 2003).

By 2002, however, there were several major problems with the way political business was being done on the nation's information architecture. The BBC discovered that Florida's Republican secretary of state had removed 57,000 voters from the state's voter rolls before the 2000 election, using faulty data from a privately held firm in Atlanta, ChoicePoint's subsidiary Database Technologies. It turns out that 95 percent of the individuals listed in the data file were actually innocent of a crime, and 54 percent of the individuals on the list were African American (Palast 2003). On average, 30 percent of African Americans in Florida came out

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on election day, voting nine-to-one in favor of Gore. On average, 40 percent of whites and Latinos in Florida came out on election day, voting evenly for Gore and Bush. Even with the conservative assumption that only 5 percent of the correctly identified felons were African American, this administrative decision cost Gore well over 6,000 votes.[2] The data file had other kinds of errors. Whereas a criminal conviction date was provided for most people in the data file, a small number of people had no confirmed conviction dates, and a small number of people had conviction dates in the future. Of course, to know the real impact of this mistake a correct list of Florida voters who should have been excluded from the rolls is needed, but no such list has been produced.

These kinds of electronic mistakes occurred before the counting mistakes for the polling districts, the transmission mistakes by the polling stations trying to get data to the media, the exit poll mistakes by Election Data Services trying to anticipate outcomes, the display mistakes by the data firm responsible for color-coding the distribution of electoral college votes as the results came in, and the interpretive mistakes by television newsroom journalists trying to get data to the viewers. Bush's margin of victory of 577 votes in this electoral college district provides an important lesson: Data quality affects political outcomes.

2004

In this election year, campaigns – and scholars – discovered blogs. In particular, Howard Dean's presidential campaign made strategic use of blogs, encouraging people to write up their thoughts on politics within the informational architecture provided by the Dean campaign.

[2] This is a conservative estimate of net number of votes that would have been cast for Gore if the innocent people denied voting privileges had been allowed to vote. If 57,000 people were removed from the voter rolls, 54 percent of whom were African American and 95 percent of whom were innocent of a crime, then 54,150 people were unfairly denied a vote. If the 5 percent of correctly identified felons were all African American, then 49 percent of the total sample were African American and denied the vote (27,930 people), and 46 percent of the total sample were of other races and denied the vote (26,220 people). Assuming that turnout rates reflected those across Florida, 30 percent of the disenfranchised African Americans would have voted (8,379 people) and 40 percent of the other disenfranchised Floridians would have voted (10,488 people). Assuming that voter preferences reflected those across the state, 90 percent of African American voters would have voted for Gore (7,541 people) and 10 percent would have voted for Bush (838 people). Assuming that the other disenfranchised Floridians would have voted evenly for Gore and Bush (5,244 people for each candidate), we can estimate that 6,082 people would have voted for Bush, and 12,783 would have voted for Gore, giving Gore a net advantage of 6,703 votes.

The campaign released configurable, open-source software for setting up community politics Web sites in support of its candidate.[3] Dean led his competitors for the Democratic nomination in donations, most of which came online. The Dean campaign also took advantage of MeetUp.com's technology, which allowed community groups to easily form, discuss online, and then meet in person to continue discussion. But in this campaign season the people designing electronic voting technologies revealed that they had their own strong political affiliations and were not independent purveyors of public technologies either in terms of intellectual property law or in political affiliation. The president of Deibold, a manufacturer of automatic teller machines and paperless touch-screen voting stations, invited wealthy Republican donors to a fund-raising dinner at his home in Columbus, writing, "I am committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president next year." That the president of a voting technology company would be committed to electing a Republican president while also committed to building voting technologies for citizens was an obvious conflict of interest. Less clear was the conflict of private and public interests in the way Deibold and other companies were building electronic voting equipment. On one hand, voting is supposed to be a civic act, discretely done in the public sphere. On the other hand, the companies building the technologies had claimed that that the software code and hardware mechanisms were proprietary. These software systems were not inscrutable, however, and close examination discovered inadequate cryptography, leaked software code, data without protective passwords, and unanswered questions about ways and means of manipulating electronic ballots (Warner 2003).

The presidential candidates relied heavily on internet technologies to both get messages out and organize volunteers. The Republican National Committee had its Voter Vault, while the Democratic National Committee had its Datamart. Both parties had consultants develop tools for their armies of neighborhood volunteers, tools that would distribute data on voters in the neighborhood and allow volunteers to upload new information on these voters. Citizens who provided Bush or Kerry with e-mail addresses were sent an e-mail message every day, so that the news of the day could be spun in some way. Experiments revealed that when citizens revealed conservative or liberal policy preferences and their state of residence to either Republicans or Democrats, the major political

[3] General Wesley Clark was the only candidate for the Democratic nomination for President to encourage this activity without regulation by campaign managers.

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parties were able to tailor content to reflect both ideological and regional interests. One of the more controversial political nonprofit groups, America Coming Together (ACT), used handheld computing technology in its door-to-door canvassing in Ohio. After interviewing prospective voters revealed policy interests, the ACT canvassers were able to show short, strategically chosen digital videos on topics of interest. The most complex relational databases of the day provided clues about which states and districts to devote coveted campaign resources to and which states and districts to leave to local organizers.

Candidate Web sites provided basic issue positions while avoiding both direct and indirect forms of dialogue, and only the intensity of the campaign battle seemed to drive up the quality and quantity of political information on these sites (Stromer-Galley 2000; Xenos and Foot 2005). A decade before, campaigns had begun distributing prepared interview responses by satellite, called "video actualities," to local television markets. This was a way for campaigns to both manage questions and provide answers. Local journalists would splice in their questions to create the impression that they were interrogating political candidates, where in fact the answers were canned and the journalist had limited creative freedom in phrasing questions without making the interview seem nonsensical. In 2004, campaigns, government agencies, and many large corporations developed other kinds of electronic press kits to help journalists interpret public policy and prepare the news. While these actors aggressively helped to shape news production, some of the public began to treating the Web sites of these actors as direct sources of news. In particular, the Web sites of political candidates had a direct agenda-setting influence on both the public and journalists (Ku, Kaid, and Pfau 2003).

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

Two kinds of data reveal how important information technologies have become to the system of political communication in the United States. Survey data reveal that citizens increasingly use information technologies such as the internet to learn about political campaigns, follow the news, and engage in political activities by volunteering, donating funds, or researching public policy options. Survey data about how campaigns increasingly use information technology in their communications strategy reveal that, at least at the national level, almost every political campaign fielded by major party candidates and most minor party candidates

must now have a Web site. Sometimes the Web site is a basic statement of a candidate's political ideas, but increasingly Web sites offer interactive ways of participating and also serve as internal logistical tools for campaign operations. These dual trends in political communication, from citizens and campaigns, must be acknowledged as a prelude to the key research questions taken up in subsequent chapters.

Perhaps two singular events mark the importance of the internet in the modern public sphere in the United States, two events that both occurred on September 11. On September 11, 1998, the Starr Report was released to a public hungry for details, clogging e-mail traffic and crashing servers with political and pornographic content. On September 11, 2001, the internet became an important conduit for immediate news coverage of what was happening, but also for finding loved ones after the terrorist attacks and for collective expressions of grief. Many political campaigns began developing political applications for new media technology, and the amount of political content available over hypermedia grew, as did the number of people using hypermedia to explore political content. Table I.1 reveals patterns in the rise of the internet as a political communication tool over the last five election cycles. It shows that the online population has come to look much more like the offline population, with notable changes in how the internet is used in politics. Since the internet is now well embedded in the everyday lives of many in the United States, it is sensible to present data about particular online activities not as percentages of a sample of internet users but as percentages of a sample of the total adult population (Howard et al. 2001). This allows for easier comparison of trends about how the internet is used as medium for political information. More important, this allows for more meaningful generalizations about patterns of cultural consumption for the entire country and theory building about the role of the internet in the larger public sphere. The table reveals several important trends up to the 2004 elections, in which the internet was available to most of the population, and a significant portion of that population chose to learn about politics over the internet. These survey questions were fielded in the month leading up to each election period since 1996.

Over this period, the portion of the public reporting to have read a daily newspaper dropped from about 50 percent to below 40 percent. The proportion of people listening to news radio and watching a news program on television also declined substantially. The proportion of people who had ever gone online rose from 23 percent in 1996 to 59 percent in 2004. By 2004, some 31 percent of the population reported

Table I.1A: *Comparative Media Use, 1996–2004, Percentage*

Comparative media use	**1996**	**1998**	**2000**	**2002**	**2004**	**Change**
Yesterday, did you get a chance to read a daily newspaper, or not? Answered "yes."	50[a]	47[a]	40	39	38	–12
[How did you get most of your news about the election campaigns?] Answered "radio."[b]	44	41	17	13	16	–28
Did you watch the news or a news program on television yesterday, or not? Answered "yes."	59[a]	65	64	61	62	3
Do you ever go online to access the internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive e-mail? Answered "yes."	23[c]	41	54	61	59	36
Yesterday, did you go online? Answered "yes."	–[a]	–	30	35	36	6
Do you ever get news online? Answered "yes."	–	–	12	41	69	57
Yesterday, did you get news online? Answered "yes."	–	–	12	17	31	19
Do you ever look online for news or information about politics or the campaign? Answered "yes."	4	6	16	24	57	53
Yesterday, did you look online for news or information about politics or the campaign? Answered "yes."	7	9	9	8	17	10
Total weighted *N*	4,360	3,184	13,343	2,745	4,542	

Source: The author's calculations using data from the Pew Center for the People and the Press and the Pew Internet and American Life Project.
[a] Dash indicates no data available.
Notes: Wherever I could not repeat Pew calculations from raw data, I report the findings from original press releases available at www.pewinternet.org and www.people-press.org. I have made every effort to extract comparable data from their regular post-election surveys even though changing research agenda made some lines of questioning inconsistent.
[a] This question was fielded in April of that year.
[b] For 1996 and 1998, radio use is based on the number of people who reported listening to news on the radio in the previous day. For 2000 and 2002, this was extracted from a multiple response question, "How did you get most of your news about the

Table I.1A (*Footnote continued*)

election campaigns in your state and district? From television, from newspapers, from radio or from magazines or from the internet?" Two responses were solicited, and I created a separate "radio" variable if either response was for radio. A tiny fraction of respondents chose "magazine," so this category is not used in this analysis.

[c] This question was fielded in July 1996.

[d] In 2000, this question was prefaced by "Thinking about yesterday. . . . "

[e] In 1996, this question was worded "Has any of the information you have received online about the 1996 elections influenced your choice of candidates?"

[f] This question was fielded in October 1996.

[g] Each year, respondents were queried about whether they participated in some of the popular online political activities of that election season. Since this list changed (grew longer) over time, this figure is the proportion of people having completed at least 25 percent of the activities suggested by the interviewer that year: looking for news or information about politics or the campaign; having gone online to get news or information about the elections; participating in on-line discussions or "chat" groups about the elections; registering their own opinions by participating in an electronic poll; getting information about a candidate's voting record; getting information about when and where to vote; sending e-mail supporting or opposing a candidate for office; receiving e-mail supporting or opposing a candidate for office; contributing money to a candidate running for public office through his or her Web site; looking for more information about candidates' positions on the issues; getting or sending e-mail with jokes about the campaigns and elections; getting or sending information about getting people out to vote; finding out about endorsements or ratings of candidates by organizations or groups; visiting Web sites that provide information about specific issues or policies that interested the respondent, such as the environment, gun control, abortion, or health care reform; visiting partisan sites, such as those run by the political parties, a candidate, or a campaign; visiting nonpartisan sites, such as those run by the League of Women Voters; participating in online discussions, signing petitions online, or donating money online; subscribing to candidate or party e-mail notices; volunteering online for campaign service; learning about ballot initiatives or races for presidential, Senate, House, governor, or local offices; finding out how candidates are doing in the public polls; checking the accuracy of politician's claims with online sources; watching political video clips online; following election returns online.

[h] In 2004, this question was worded, "When you go online, do you ever encounter or come across news and information about the 2004 elections when you may have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news?" This is the percent responding "yes."

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Table I.1B: *Information about Politics and Campaigns Online, 1996–2004, Percentage*

Information about politics and campaigns online	**1996**	**1998**	**2000**	**2002**	**2004**	**Change**
Have you gone/Did you ever go online to get news or information about the [current] elections?	6	6	10	13	30	24
Did you go to a Web site looking to read the news, or did you just happen to see some political news while you were doing something else? Responded "looking to read the news"	–	12	7[d]	9	–	−3
. . . Responded "just happened to see the news."	12	20	5[d]	15	30[h]	18
Were you following up on news that you FIRST heard about someplace else, or were you going online to learn what was in the news? Responded "following up."	–	17	3[d]	4	–	−13
. . . Responded "going online to learn."	–	9	4[d]	5	–	−4
How often do you go online to get news about the elections? At least weekly.	2	4	13	8	23	10
How important has the internet been in terms of providing you with information to help you decide how to vote? Responded "very or somewhat important."	–	14	–	20	24	6
Has/Did any of the information you have received online about the [elections] made/make you decide to vote for or against a particular candidate? Responded "yes."	2[e]	3	8	5	8	6
Do you ever visit Web sites that provide information about specific issues or policies that interest you such as the environment, gun control, abortion, or health care reform? Responded "yes."	–	11	–	24	21	10
Total weighted *N*	4,360	3,184	13,343	2,745	4,542	

Source and notes: See Table I.1A.

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Table I.1C: *Civic Engagement, 1996–2004, Percentage*

Civic engagement	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	Change
Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs? Responded "most of the time."	52	46	–	49	54	2
Some people go online for campaign news because they are very interested in politics and enjoy following it. Others don't enjoy politics, but they keep up with it because they feel it's their duty to be well-informed. Which view comes closer to your own? Of those who go online, responded "enjoy politics."	38[f]	29	–	31	–	–7
. . . Of those who go online, responded "feel duty."	59[f]	57	–	66	–	7
When you go online to get information about the elections, do you ever do any of the following things? Responded doing at least 25% of the offered options.[g]	–	6	5	16	22	16
Have you ever signed up for an electronic newsletter from a journalism or political organization that e-mails the latest news about politics and elections? Responded "yes."	–	7	–	6	6	–1
Total weighted *N*	4,360	3,184	13,343	2,745	4,542	

Source and notes: See Table I.1A.

going online on a daily basis for news, approaching the proportion of the population that read a daily newspaper. The proportion of people who especially went online for political or campaign news grew from 4 percent in the 1996 elections to 57 percent in the 2004 elections. The

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portion of adults who look for news or information about politics on a *daily* basis during campaign periods was 17 percent in the 2004 elections. However, respondents were also asked whether they had ever gone online to look for news or information about that specific election period, and the population who responded positively grew from 6 percent in 1996 to 30 percent in 2004.

An important demographic transition has taken place in the online population over the last decade, which explains many changes in the ways people use the internet for political communication. Some of the activities popular a decade ago reflected the demographics of the online population of that time. Early internet users tended to be male and white, as well as younger, more educated, wealthier, more technically sophisticated, and more ideologically conservative than the general population. Subsequently, as more people gained internet access, the demographics and interests of internet users came to reflect those of the country at large (Howard et al. 2001). In terms of internet access, many of the digital divide categories disappeared, and gender, race, income, education, and age became less reliable predictors of who was using the internet. In terms of internet content, there were important deficits in the kinds of information women and racial minorities found personally relevant and accessible. In the early years of the political internet, the average user was deeply interested in public life and eager to use the technology as a means of democratic engagement. By the turn of the century, such users were in the minority, but this is not to say that the average internet user was apolitical.

Given the structure and presentation of content online, it is important to distinguish between users who intentionally research political information and those who casually stumble across such information. Those who intentionally go online for political information probably have a greater interest in politics than those who remember seeing a political news story while looking for some other kind of information. The proportion of people who deliberately look for news online has declined somewhat over time, as has the proportion of people who go online to follow up on news they heard offline, the proportion of people who report finding political news while doing something else online, and the proportion of people who treat the internet as their primary medium for news. Most telling, by the 2004 campaign, a quarter of the adult population said the internet was "somewhat" or "very important" in helping them decide how to vote. A small but growing group reported that something

they learned online made them decide to vote for or against a particular candidate, and in 2004, a fifth of the population reported having visited a Web site about specific issues, such as the environment, abortion rights, or health care.

Even though television is still the dominant medium for election news, those who have used the internet for political information report different reasons for preferring the internet as a medium (Howard 2005). They find the information more convenient, feel that other media do not provide enough news, find information not available elsewhere, and find that online news sources reflect their personal interests. They augment their understanding of current events and their knowledge of records of political candidates or deepen their understanding of particular issues by visiting the Web sites of national and local news organizations, commercial online services, and government, candidate, or issue-oriented Web sites.

The sequence of Pew surveys also allows some comparison of changing political norms over time. For obvious reasons, presidential campaigns catch more public attention than midterm elections. Over time, about half of the sample says they "follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time." When asked why they are motivated to go online for campaign news, the proportion of people who say they do it because they "enjoy politics" has declined, while the proportion believing it "their duty" increased between 1998 and 2002. The September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 might have had an affect on people's sense of duty, but the question on motivation was not fielded in 2000, so this attribution is tentative.

According to the survey data, the four most commonly used media for information about politics are television news programs, radio, newspaper, and the internet. Increasingly, the cultural content of one medium includes references to content available on other media, most often the internet. The internet, additionally, allows users to help produce political information through blogs, personal campaign sites, and other forms of content creation. Comparative data on the production of political content online are difficult to come by, especially when it comes to personal web pages and blogs. Table I.2 reveals the growing number of campaigns for the Senate, the House of Representatives, and governor that produced campaign Web sites.

Overall, the proportion of political candidates for elected office producing a campaign Web site has grown significantly over the last five

Table I.2A: *Candidates with Campaign Web Sites, U.S. Senate Races, 1996–2004, Percentage*

Parties	Candidates and Web sites	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	Change
All	Number of candidates sampled	126	140	117	126	159	–
	Number of candidates with Web sites	59	73	88	92	113	–
	Percentage of candidates with Web sites	47	52	75	73	71	+24
Major	Number of major party candidates	72	68	65	69	77	–
	Number of major party candidates with Web sites	48	49	59	62	71	–
	Percentage of major party candidates with Web sites	67	72	91	90	92	+25
	Percentage of major party incumbent candidates with Web sites	–	70	85	90	100	+30
	Percentage of major party challenger candidates with Web sites	–	74	95	90	88	+14
	Percentage of major party candidates with Web sites, competitive races	–	100	100	97	81	–19
Minor	Number of minor party candidates	54	72	52	56	82	–
	Number of minor party candidates with Web sites	11	24	29	28	42	–
	Percentage of minor party candidates with Web sites	20	33	55	55	51	+31

election seasons. Interestingly, candidates from the two major political parties are more likely to have campaign Web sites than minor party candidates. Campaign Web sites may be a way for minor party candidates to present their ideas to the public, but this evidence suggests that overall, minor party candidates have been slower to produce campaign Web sites than their better-funded competitors from the Democratic and Republican parties. Almost all of the major party candidates for Senate and governor produced a campaign Web site, especially if

Table I.2B: *Candidates with Campaign Web Sites, U.S. House Races, 1996–2004, Percentage*

Parties	Candidates and Websites	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	Change
All	Number of candidates sampled	1,380	1,075	1,265	1,123	1,209	
	Number of candidates with Web sites	222	377	696	640	824	
	Percentage of candidates with Web sites	16	35	55	57	68	+52
Major	Number of major party candidates	851	780	824	769	832	
	Number of major party candidates with Web sites	189	274	542	543	675	
	Percentage of major party candidates with Web sites	22	35	66	74	81	+59
	Percentage of major party incumbent candidates with Web sites	–	19	53	72	76	+57
	Percentage of major party challenger candidates with Web sites	–	52	77	75	86	+34
	Percentage of major party candidates with Web sites, competitive races	–	57	95	97	91	+34
Minor	Number of minor party candidates	529	295	441	359	377	
	Number of minor party candidates with Web sites	33	103	154	144	149	
	Percentage of minor party candidates with Web sites	8	34	35	40	40	+32

they were a challenger candidate. If a race was especially competitive – with the outcome an even bet in the month before the election – the candidates in the race were almost certain to have produced a campaign Web site. Today, the vast majority of campaigns for Senate, House of Representatives, or governor produce a campaign Web site. More important, campaigns increasingly have at their disposal – either through affiliation with parties and lobbyists or through direct purchase from consultants – technologies for using personal information about voters.

Table I.2C: *Candidates with Campaign Web Sites, Gubernatorial Races, 1996–2004, Percentage*

Parties	Candidates and Web sites	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	Change
All	Number of candidates sampled	37	151	28	162	44	
	Number of candidates with Web sites	–	104	23	121	30	
	Percentage of candidates with Web sites	–	75	82	75	68	−7
Major	Number of major party candidates	22	73	20	72	23	
	Number of major party candidates with Web sites	–	69	19	68	21	
	Percentage of major party candidates with Web sites	–	95	95	95	91	−4
	Percentage of major party incumbent candidates with Web sites	–	84	83	96	78	−6
	Percentage of major party challenger candidates with Web sites	–	100	100	95	100	0
	Percentage of major party candidates with Web sites, competitive races	–	96	–	96	68	−28
Minor	Number of minor party candidates	15	78	8	90	21	
	Number of minor party candidates with Web sites	–	35	4	50	9	
	Percentage of minor party candidates with Web sites	–	44	50	55	43	−1

Sources: 2004 from CampaignAudit.org. 1996–2002 compiled from multiple sources. In each year, projects managed to sample upward of 90% of the total number of candidates (Kamarck 1999; D'Alessio 2000; Schneider 2001; Foot and Schneider 2002; Kamarck 2002; Congressional Quarterly 2003).

Notes: Kamarck (1999) defines competitive races being "in play or an even bet" in the October/November 1998 issue of *Campaigns and Elections* magazine. Kamarck explains that there were no governors' races in 2000 that were classified by the Annenberg Public Policy Center as toss-up races. The 2002 data calculated from Foot and Schneider (2002). In 2002 and 2004 a race was judged competitive if the Cook Political Report labeled the electorate in that district as either leaning toward a candidate or a toss-up. In 2002 and 2004, some political organizations produced multiple Web sites advocating candidates for office, so the definition of candidate campaign Web site used by Foot and Schneider is also used here: A candidate Web site is content at a specific domain name that was clearly produced or sponsored by the official candidate campaign organization.

This is a book about the people who develop and deploy these technologies and the emerging practices that are transforming patterns of political communication.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 argues that the many different formats for political information – Web sites, e-mail, databases, and news – now provide a material schema within which we construct political lives. Networked information technologies provide the structure for the contemporary system of political communication, a system that transforms important aspects of the democratic process. This chapter expands on the concept of political hypermedia and critiques the use of the traditional analytical frame of "media effects" in studying the role of information technologies in political life. Core concepts of deliberative democracy theory and cultural sociology inform a better analytical frame, one that is grounded in the experience of campaign managers and that treats these technologies as both a product of and container for political content.

Chapter 1 also introduces the community of political managers who work primarily at the national level of campaign organization in the United States. These IT professionals work not only for candidates from the Republican and Democratic parties, but also for independent campaigns and grassroots movements with alternative perspectives on issues on the national agenda. Based on observations of political hypermedia projects developed between 1999 and 2003, I construct the analytical frame that many campaign consultants subscribe to when they manage the production and consumption of political information.

I introduce two pseudonymous organizations in chapter 2: a political data-mining company called DataBank.com and a political action committee called Astroturf-Lobby.org. A decade ago, only the wealthier lobbyists and presidential campaigns could afford the services of DataBank.com, but now the firm also sells detailed relational databases to the country's nascent grassroots movements and individuals eager to start a small campaign of their own. Political data became a marketable product, something that could be sold to grassroots movements, elite campaigns, or corporate lobbyists. "We invite gun owners to join the NRA and women who use contraceptives to join NOW," says one consultant. "And then we sell guns to NRA members and condoms to NOW members." Astroturf-Lobby.org also merges voting records, credit card purchase histories, and social science survey data,

but whereas DataBank.com sells their services to anybody, Astroturf-Lobby.org prefers to help conservative affinity groups. Both organizations help aggrieved clients to campaign for legislative relief by finding and activating a sympathetic public. Both organizations also provide key logistical and intelligence services to candidate campaigns around the country, in doing so, the organizations play a major role in managing the production of political culture in the United States.

Whereas chapter 2 analyzes the generation of political information through hypermedia, chapter 3 analyzes how political information is consumed through hypermedia. Here I introduce two pseudonymous organizations, Voting.com and GrassrootsActivist.org, both of which specialize in helping "political information consumers" learn about politics. While these two organizations are compared for their approaches to the consumption of political information, they are contrasted for their motivations. Both firms developed a number of innovative applications: e-mail forms that allowed citizens to send their political opinions to the relevant elected officials, searchable databases that would tell voters which candidate's platforms would most closely match their personal political preferences, and applications that helped elected officials process the deluge of constituent e-mail. I discuss two important aspects of the structure of political consumption: shopping for candidates and the rise of issue publics. In conclusion, I explore the connection between the production and consumption of political information in the marketplace of political ideas.

How has the organization of campaigning evolved? In chapter 4, I discuss the norms and organizational behavior of the e-politics community. Over the past decade, this small group of professionals has brought IT to the country's major political parties, lobbyists, and government offices through political propaganda Web sites, high-tech campaign logistics, and wired advance-team planning. I present evidence about the community's culture: shared features of their identity, common personal and professional goals, a distinct policy project, and an ideology about information grounded in the language of technology, marketplace, and direct democracy. The e-politics community has a shared understanding of cause-and-effect relationships and common goals about how to shape political life with information technology. Whereas pollsters, spin masters, and logistics experts tend to be partisan, if not wedded to particular Presidents and presidential hopefuls, the architects of political hypermedia serve competing political masters. These consultants claim to work for a higher goal – a more transparent, accountable system of

representation through technology – by wiring up a digital democracy. I draw from several areas of the social sciences: theories about epistemic communities from political science, theories about communities of practice from sociology, and theories about knowledge networks from management.

Also in chapter 4, I respond to recent studies of campaign organization that posit the growing role of professional pollsters and professional fund-raisers by exploring the role of information technology officers in the nation's more prominent candidate and issue-positioned campaigns. Large political campaign organizations have rarely been treated ethnographically, and little is known about their internal organization. Political campaigns, whether they are advancing a candidate or an issue position, have always had to be flexible and adaptable organizations. While pollsters supply campaigns with important information about the electorate and fund-raising professionals generate revenue, information technology experts have also had significant influence on campaign organization. Information technology experts build their political values into the tools and technologies of modern campaigns, with direct implications for the organization and process of campaigning. The transformed campaign – a hypermedia campaign – is the result of the important technological and organizational innovations that have occurred in the last decade. This campaign works with small feedback loops between candidate and constituent, low information waste, and unobtrusive ways of collecting data. People and organizations are tied up in multiple, overlapping affiliations, yet have many neutral "thinking grounds," both physical and virtual. These structures of affiliations also have to be full of people who are comfortable in collaborative relationships and not afraid of or restricted by the communication technology at hand.

Chapter 5 discusses the meaning of citizenship and representation in a digital democracy. Knowing what we now know about the complexities of the hypermedia design processes, the context in which political consultants work, and the kinds of content campaign managers produce, what can we do to build a healthy digital democracy? I return to the analytical frame revealed in chapter 1, to compare how the process of producing and consuming political information has changed over the last decade. The social contract is renewed whenever citizens vote or engage in political activities, but imperfect information prevents them from understanding their roles, their leadership choices, or their leader's choice. Imperfect information also prevents leaders from understanding the policy preferences of citizens. To solve the problem of imperfect

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information, several companies set out to design communication tools that would better help candidates and campaigns produce content. The production of political campaigns through internet technologies is a process of tailoring content not for mass consumption but for private consumption. The parallels with e-commerce are obvious; "mass customization," "broadcast individualism," and "direct marketing" are all terms that now apply to the production of political icons, arguments, and actors. However, the use of political hypermedia for these kinds of strategies changes the meaning of citizenship. I develop three theories about what citizenship and franchise mean in the wired democracy. An important task in scholarly argument is addressing negative hypotheses and counterfactual evidence. Are the hypermedia campaigns and forms of citizenship I observe and analyze really that new? If we looked beyond the particular evidence presented here, and imagined the universe of cases, all types of political campaigns, and all forms of citizenship in the public sphere, would the analysis be the same? Chapter 5, the conclusion, is devoted to answering the first question by building theory about the differences between mass media and hypermedia systems of political communication and about the roles of thin, shadow, and privatized citizenship. The Appendix addresses the second question by explaining my sampling choices in social network analysis, survey, interview, and ethnographic methods.