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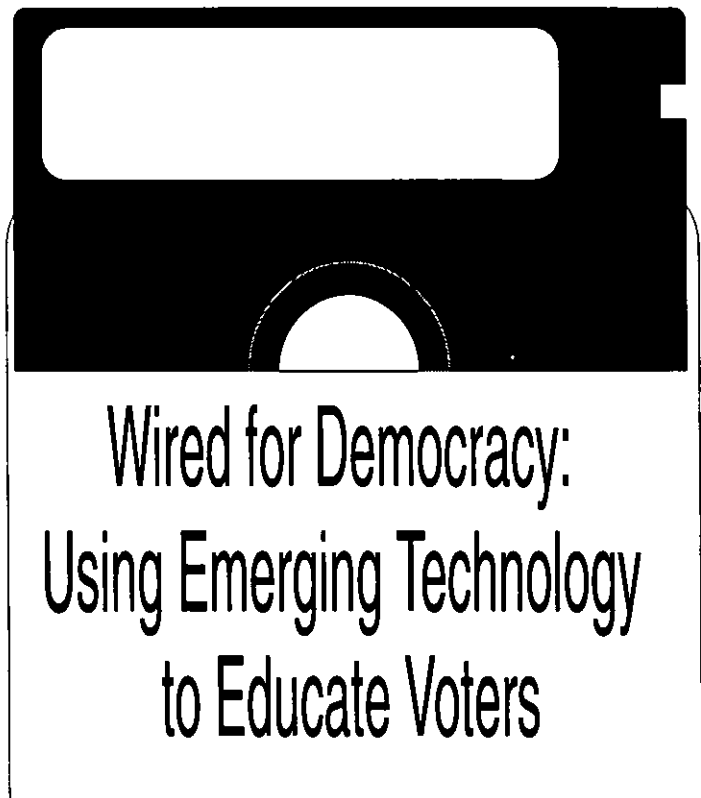|	
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League of Women Voters Education Fund

Wired for Democracy:
Using Emerging Technology to Educate Voters

Contents

Introduction

In recent years, the only constant in communications is change.

The 1970s and 1980s produced a steady stream of new communications media, with the advent and growing use of cable television, VCRs, cellular communications, voice mail and personal computers expanding information and entertainment options. However, in the last decade of the 20th century, the stream has turned into a tidal wave. A vast array of new communications media are emerging and promising, among other things, to transform the way Americans learn, work and live. And maybe even the way we do "government by the people."

Among the changes we can look forward to in the coming years: the digitization (that is, the translation into the ones-and-zeroes binary code of computers) of all types of information, including voice, videos, text and data, for rapid electronic distribution; the convergence of radios, televisions, computers and telephones into one, mega-medium; and the rewiring of the country with fiber optic cables and advanced wireless communications technology to speed a vastly expanded number of information highways into every home, school, office and other gathering place. Taken together, these developments will result in the information superhighway—the expansive electronic communications network of the future that will provide traditional and innovative communications services to 21st-century Americans.

So far, much of the discussion about the information superhighway has focused on commercial services—home shopping and banking, telecommuting and "video on demand," a home video-store option allowing viewers to order movies and other programming at the touch of a button. Communications industry leaders talk mostly about the revenue-producing potential of new communications technologies. That would explain the television executive who said, "I've seen the future of communications and it's retail."

Not everyone buys into the money-making-only vision of the information future, however. The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF), for one, is encouraging more discussion focused on the *public* uses of new technology. The LWVEF and other public sector groups are working to ensure that as new communications technologies are developed, the enhancement of citizen participation in political dialogues and the expansion of the role of people in democratic government are key policy goals.

One project initiated to test the promise of the information superhighway on future citizen participation is "Wired for Democracy." Launched by the LWVEF in 1994, "Wired" sought to assist and encourage local and state Leagues as they tried out innovative communications methods to reach larger and more diverse audiences and provide those audiences with the resources to make informed decisions in the voting booth.

Nineteen Leagues across the country, recipients of "Wired" community education grants, developed new methods of informing the public about candidates and issues for the 1994 election cycle. The Leagues:

• Went online on computer communications networks.

• Installed or upgraded office voice mail systems so callers could access detailed election information around the clock.

• Produced public access cable programs on candidates, and later distributed videotapes to Leagues and other groups.

• Used talk radio to encourage others in the community to participate in public dialogues about policy issues.

Before employing these new technologies, the Leagues' project managers attended a training conference that brought together government, business and public policy experts and citizen activists for frank discussions about the democratic uses of future communications.

And the impact of these efforts? The public, and especially segments of communities not traditionally reached by Leagues' voters guides and other printed materials, gained access to reliable, nonpartisan election information through new and alternative sources. And as an added bonus, League members became more familiar—and comfortable—with using new technology to further the League mission of stimulating the informed and active participation of citizens in government.

Following the 1994 elections, the League pilot projects were evaluated with an eye toward developing models for action for Leagues and others to use in the 1996 elections and beyond. This publication, one result of that work, describes the projects undertaken by Leagues participating in "Wired for Democracy" and the lessons learned. Part I briefly sketches the impetus for the project; part II offers information on the most compelling of the new and alternative communications methods used or considered by Leagues; and part III provides step-by-step instructions and advice to help Leagues and other organizations put the lessons learned into practice. The two appendices offer more details and source information: Appendix A covers the Leagues' "Wired" projects in greater depth; Appendix B lists government, nonprofit and commercial sources of information, guidance and services available on the emerging information superhighway.

Why "New Media"?

The way citizens receive information about candidates and issues during election campaigns is changing. There once was a time when newspapers, a few leading columnists, and television's evening news and Sunday morning public affairs programs, along with voters guides produced by the League of Women Voters, were the predominant sources of candidate information for most Americans.

In the 1992 presidential campaign, however, candidates experimented with innovative ways of reaching voters, using new and alternative communications media to circumvent established or traditional sources of campaign coverage. At times, candidates seemed to appear anywhere and everywhere. They fielded callers' questions on CNN's "Larry King Live"; did one-on-one interviews on "Donahue" and other daytime talk shows; performed on such late-night talk/entertainment programs as "Arsenio Hall"; did frequent guest spots on NBC's "Today," ABC's "Good Morning America" and CBS's "This Morning" programs; spoke to the special concerns of youth, women and minorities in appearances on cable networks targeting narrow audiences (such as MTV, Lifetime and BET); and turned up on local TV and radio news programs—thanks to remote interviews transmitted using satellite hook-ups. Other new or alternative communications media were visible throughout the campaign—especially during the primaries—as candidates used toll-free numbers, faxes and computer connections to drum up support, raise funds and get their messages to the public.

The broadened use of media to get messages out was not restricted just to the political candidates. Citizens also used a number of nontraditional communications methods to engage in more direct and numerous contacts with the candidates, and communicate with other citizens about the important public policy issues of the day.

Impact on the 1992 Presidential Election

So, with nearly everyone using new and alternative communications during the presidential campaign, was there an effect on the election's outcome? Did voters find themselves better equipped to pick a candidate, and did the new media succeed in getting the candidates and the people—alienated in recent years—talking again? Yes and no,

according to political observers. Yes, because there was a significant gain in voter participation in 1992. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 90 percent of all persons who reported that they were registered also reported they went to the polls. This brought about the largest percentage increase in voter turnout in more than 30 years.

Certainly, increased communication between the candidates and the public played a role in stimulating voter interest. Just how much of a role became clearer in survey research following the election. Pollsters reported that the public was more satisfied in 1992 with the election process than they were after the 1988 elections. In one poll, for example, conducted in November 1992 for the Times-Mirror Center for People & the Press, a majority of Americans said issues mattered more in the 1992 campaign. Also, most respondents said they learned enough during the campaign to make an informed choice among the presidential candidates.

Despite the rosy glow, however, there was something wrong with the picture. Polls turned up several reasons for concern regarding new media and the future of citizen participation in government. First, talk of the significant impact of new media appeared to be just that—talk. The benefits were more imagined than real. Again, the Times-Mirror survey reported that most Americans said they continue to rely on television as their primary source of campaign information—disquieting because of the medium's limitations. Most television news stories are less than two minutes in length—not long enough to explore fully the intricacies of policy issues and candidates' positions. So, much of television's coverage ends up as superficial, limited to the sound-bite-of-the-day and the "horse race"—who's up, who's down. Also, television is a visual medium and stories without compelling pictures tend to receive less airtime.

A second reason for concern, also uncovered in the survey, is that a greater number of Americans, especially young people, said they depend *exclusively* on television for election information; they don't consult newspapers, magazines and other media for in-depth coverage, perspective or analysis.

A third reason: candidates' uses of new media largely were controlled by the campaigns. Missing from new media were additional sources of unbiased information from independent organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, long a supplier of nonpartisan voter materials.

Even more worrisome, after the 1992 election, Americans remained cynical and alienated from national politics. Despite the explosion of new communications technologies accompanied by promises for expanded access, people still felt disconnected—almost literally—from elected officials and government.

Enter Wired

The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) and other organizations involved in civic-sector issues believe this detachment puts an intolerable strain on the fabric of democratic government. Repairing the disconnect between the people and their government is critical to the nation's future.

The 1992 experience notwithstanding, effective use of new technologies still appears to be a source of promise and hope. The key may be in the way the new communications technologies are employed by the League and other public interest organizations. But how? To figure out ways of using new media to break through the cynicism and disconnect, the LWVEF launched "Wired for Democracy." The project is designed to help local and state Leagues across the country experiment with innovative communications methods in order to reach a larger and more diverse population and provide them with nonpartisan information so they can make informed decisions in the voting booth.

Of course, Leagues already provide this type of information—but primarily in traditional forms. League-produced or -sponsored voters services such as voter registration drives, candidate debates, issue forums and printed voters guides are mainstays of election campaigns. So the question became, "How can Leagues provide the same reliable, nonpartisan information while moving beyond traditional approaches to use 21st century communications methods?" And a related issue: "Can Leagues using new media expand their reach to provide voters services to a more diverse audience—especially people not typically on the receiving end of League information and education efforts?"

Bypassing Traditional Media

To explore these and other important issues, and to devise strategies for pioneering the use of new technologies to create models for action, the LWVEF hosted a "Wired for Democracy" training conference in April 1994. With representatives of 30 local and state Leagues taking part, the meeting explored the potential of existing and emerging communications media to stimulate voter involvement in future elections and strengthen the ties that bind people and government. The LWVEF brought in experts from government, private industry, public policy and other nonprofit organizations to engage in dialogues about and provide demonstrations of emerging communications options. Among the media discussed:

■ Cable access—The channels on a cable system reserved for use by nonprofits and other community organizations.

■ Commercial online services—Computer services providing business, information and entertainment services, and also allowing subscribers to send and receive e-mail, access data libraries and participate in forums (discussion groups). CompuServe, Prodigy, America Online, GEnie and Delphi are the largest commercial online services. The League is on CompuServe's Political Debate Forum and also is accessible on Prodigy.

■ DBS—Direct Broadcast Satellites, a new television program delivery system in which programming is sent from high-powered satellites directly to home satellite receivers, or dishes.

■ E-mail—Electronic mail sent from and received by computers equipped with modems—devices that convert text and graphics into audio signals transmitted through telephone lines.

■ Freenets—Local community computer networks, provided at no cost to the user, offering bulletin boards, forums and other services. Freenets can be reached by dialing a local phone number; most also enable users to access the Internet.

■ Information Superhighway—A vast, electronic communications network of the future that promises to deliver all manner of information—text, data, voice, sound and video, stored in digital form—and services to every American school, library, workplace and home. The information superhighway also is known as the National Information Infrastructure (NII).

The NII will be interactive, enabling Americans to be providers and receivers of information. It will be "interoperable," letting people transfer information across interconnected networks using different media. Video, sound and graphics, when transmitted in digital form, are "wide loads" that require expanded transmission capacity. Wider highways. Existing narrowband technology, such as the copper wires that deliver residential phone service, eventually will be upgraded with new transmission lines providing expanded bandwidth—the wider communications roadways—to people's homes.

The expansion of bandwidth, plus interoperability and interactivity, will distinguish the information superhighway from today's communications roads. But these developments will require the construction of new highways or the repaving of old ones. At this point, there is general consensus that the private sector will build the information superhighway. The cable and telephone industries and the electric utilities have emerged as the most likely highway engineers. Meanwhile, the federal government's role will be to assist with research and development, fund pilot projects, promote the adoption of standards and use the NII to collect information and distribute government data and services. State utility regulators also will play an important role in developing future communications and keeping them affordable.

■ The Internet—A global network of computer networks, started by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the National Science Foundation to provide supercomputer access to universities and research centers. With the number of commercial users rising sharply in recent years, the Internet—or simply the Net—provides more and more users with computer access to enormous resources including electronic libraries, databases, discussion groups (called newsgroups), live conversations and opportunities to send and receive electronic mail.

While considered a prototype for the information superhighway, the Net does not deliver on all of the NII's promises of broadband wires into homes, full interactivity and interoperability. And the Internet has a downside. For one thing, it can be difficult to navigate, although "gophers," the World Wide Web (WWW) and Internet browser software such as MOSAIC and Netscape are making getting around easier. The browser programs make "surfing the Net" (trying out Internet services) possible by pointing and clicking with a mouse.

The WWW is an advanced library system that organizes contents by subject and files them on home pages. To navigate the WWW, people can use the browser software; another option is to use hypertext links. These words, underlined or in a different color, permit the user jump to related material in other databases. One of the Internet navigation guides is "gopher." Named for the mascot of the University of Minnesota that

developed it, gopher allows users to tunnel through different databases to retrieve information. The name also is a pun because gopher enables Internet users to "go for" specific information. As the Internet attracts more users who are not computer wizards, efforts to make the computer networks easier to use will gain ground.

Another, perhaps more important, shortcoming of the Internet—the lack of human diversity—remains a matter of serious concern for the League and representatives of other public interest groups that are involved in equity issues (see "Potholes, Construction Zones," page 14). Today, cyberspace—the virtual universe in which computer users travel—has more males and fewer women, minorities, children, older Americans and poor people than the real world.

■ Kiosks—Special computer terminals stationed in public places providing access to interactive multimedia services. A common example today: the Hallmark kiosks in retail stores that allow customers to create their own greeting cards. In the future, kiosks will be able to do more. Televoting USA is one group working on the development of kiosks to provide the public with access to government agencies and services.

■ Satellite teleconferencing—Public forums transmitted by satellites with participants at downlink sites able to see, hear and take part in the discussion; teleconferences, also called videoconferences, can be free or licensed. The LWVEF held separate national satellite teleconferences on groundwater protection and health care reform in 1994.

■ Talk radio—The interactive radio station format allowing listeners to call in with their questions and opinions. Recent years have seen an explosion in the number of talk radio outlets across the country.

■ Voice mail—Telephone call processing systems enabling callers to leave messages, run through menu options and listen to targeted information, and generate faxes or letters to third parties.

As the list demonstrates, "high technology" was a special focus for Leagues attending the training conference. However, alternative but not necessarily cutting edge communications methods also were examined for voter education potential. Voice mail, for one, has been around since 1982—a long time for a "new" communications method.

Test Driving the New Media: The Pilot Projects

The heart of the "Wired" project consisted of community education grants and technical assistance to Leagues using new media and outreach methods for the 1994 election cycle. Besides providing models for future action, the pilot projects were designed to get Leagues comfortable with broadcasting, video, cable, computers and information services—media and communications methods expected to play important roles in the emergence of the information superhighway.

While League members tried out media they had not used before, they also made connections and built relationships with some of the people who will make the decisions that will shape future communications. This networking will help assure the expansion of citizen participation as a goal for the 21st century.

In June 1994, 20 Leagues were selected to receive the community education grants. Selections were based on a number of factors, including the proposed use of a new technology for voter education and outreach, the League's assessment of its community's needs, and the degree to which the project targeted diverse audiences. (One of the 20 Leagues was unable to complete its project due to unrelated events.)

By far, use of online computer connections topped the list of Leagues' plans. Several posted voters guides and other election information online. The LWV of Seattle, Washington, for one, uploaded its voters guide onto the Seattle Community Network, an area freenet, and conducted interactive forums where League members responded to questions posted on the League's message section. Other Leagues uploading voters guides and exploring opportunities for voter involvement afforded by freenets included the LWV of Oakland-Berkeley, California; the LWV of Richardson, Texas; the LWV of Dearborn/Dearborn Heights, Michigan; the LWV of White Bear Lake/North Oaks, Minnesota; the LWV of Wisconsin (in addition to its electronic bulletin board service, the League held training sessions on using the Internet); the LWV of Cuyahoga County, Ohio Inter-League Organization; the LWV of New York State; the LWV of the Wilkes-Barre Area, Pennsylvania; and the LWV of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Leagues expanding office voice mail systems to provide voter information included the LWV of the Springfield Area, Illinois (its service was called Project Tele-Vote) and the LWV of Metropolitan Columbus, Ohio. The LWV of Missoula, Montana used talk radio to help citizens understand ballot initiatives on taxes and other fiscal issues. Other Leagues used cable access and video for voter education. The LWV of Missouri, the LWV of Memphis-Shelby County, Tennessee and the LWV of New

Jersey Education Fund all produced video versions of their voters guides. The LWV of Alexandria, Virginia produced a Spanish-dubbed debate tape and aired it on public access cable. And the LWV of North Carolina began laying the groundwork for an electronic Citizen Information Service Center.

Additionally, four of the Leagues selected for community education grants also participated in the Voter Online Information and Communications Exchange (VOICE), a joint project between the LWVEF, Public Information Exchange (PIE), the Online Computer Library Coalition and Project Vote Smart. In October 1994, VOICE went online with information about the candidates, issues and voting in the 1994 elections. More than 2,500 citizens accessed the VOICE system in the two weeks before the election.

For details about the local and state Leagues pilot "Wired" projects, see Appendix A, page 17.

Future Technologies

Beyond the technologies used by Leagues in the model "Wired" projects, several emerging technologies may hold promise for future citizen involvement in democracy. Among them:

■ Multimedia. The ability to combine video, voice and data in one medium could have tremendous benefits in voter education, proponents say. Already, a company is working to build an online service combining speeches by members of Congress with the texts of legislation, floor votes and other database materials.

In the future, voters may be able to sit at their computers or new types of communications devices in their homes and call up floor remarks by their elected representatives, and with a click of the mouse or a touch of a finger bring up the text of relevant legislation. Another click would bring up analyses of bills by public interest organizations, or the elected official's voting record on the issue, or Congress's schedule for the day.

■ Interactive television. This new form of television will allow viewers to see the programming they want when they want it. It also could become a valuable source of voter education and information in the future. Besides demanding to see the latest videos or reruns of television programs, viewers could call up public affairs programming produced by Leagues and other civic-sector groups. Additionally, interactive television promises to offer a nearly unlimited number of channels. Public interest

groups need to position themselves to become program providers, not just sources of information, in the new communications world.

Both the cable industry and the telephone companies are developing interactive television and both have important tests under way. (The electric utility industry, the third potential builder of the information superhighway, has several regulatory obstacles it must overcome before it can test the feasibility of providing commercial telecommunications services.) Time Warner, one of the nation's largest cable system operators, is experimenting with an interactive television service in Orlando, Florida. The project, called "Full Service Network" or FSN, involves building a new cable system using fiber-optic cables to deliver more channels of programming and provide interactive services such as home banking and multiple-player video games.

Bell Atlantic, one of the nation's regional telephone companies, is trying out its "Stargazer" interactive service in a small number of homes in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC. Like FSN, Stargazer promises to provide video on demand, games and other services. Both tests, as well as dozens more under way or on the drawing boards across the country, will provide voter education and other public interest groups with opportunities to get into or expand involvement as program providers.

■ Electronic Program Guides (EPGs). Related to the development of interactive TV, a number of companies are developing software programs to help users select programs to watch on new interactive media. EPGs will deliver more information, but function similarly to *TV Guide*. Companies developing the new program guides for interactive TV include the software giant, Microsoft.

■ Wireless Communications. Personal communications services (PCS)—a new generation of wireless communications—will use smaller, portable phones capable of transmitting voice and data communications over all-digital networks. Additionally, PCS users could have a single phone number that follows them everywhere and allows calls to be switched from wireless to land lines (the telephone wires that run underground and along streets), whether they are in their cars, at home, at the beach or anywhere else. The first PCS systems will be available in fall 1995, at the earliest, and perhaps not until five years later.

Now, wireless transmission is used in a rudimentary way to enable a personal computer user to access online computer networks through another computer housed nearby. Eventually, the goal is to unlock personal computers from telephone lines and make laptop computers truly portable. Meanwhile, today's cellular communications carriers are upgrading their systems from analog—a type of engineering circuitry that represents information as continuous waves and uses varying voltage

levels—to digital and making other improvements to provide better signals and expanded services.

Lessons for 1996 and Beyond

"Wired for Democracy" participants proved the value of going online, on cable and on other media to distribute nonpartisan information for the 1994 elections. And, in trying out new ways of disseminating useful facts and background data about the candidates and the issues, they also were able to go beyond the traditional audiences for League voters services materials and stimulate others to become informed and active in community political discussions.

Besides reaching new audiences, there were other successes. The Leagues were able to provide voter information faster. Using electronic dissemination got around the need for long lead times needed for document publishing. Plus, computer networks provided room for a thorough airing of issues; space limitations imposed by newspapers and time restrictions dictated by commercial broadcasters were no longer factors. Another benefit of the Leagues' use of new media: online networks and voice mail systems were more responsive to users. Residents could access the services to get the information they wanted when they wanted it.

Additionally, Leagues used "Wired" projects to demonstrate the possibilities of multiple-media formatting, that is, preparing information in several communications formats to maximize the audience reach. Leagues produced cable access programs and then distributed videotapes of the shows to other organizations for use with their members and others. There are a number of other examples of how multiple-media formatting could work. For instance, an audio portion of the cable access program can be made for airing on public radio, and audiotapes can be distributed to vision-impaired individuals, people who do not read English well and older Americans. Another option: posting the transcript of the public access program online.

The community education grants produced a number of side-benefits. As a result of training and hands-on involvement, the project participants are more comfortable using new technology, both as providers and receivers. Another area of success: League members established or broadened contacts with diverse populations and groups in their communities. And finally, through their "Wired" efforts, League members gained access to some of the individuals and organizations that will be shaping new technology. As a result of the LWV of Wisconsin's work with Omnifest, a Milwaukee freenet, for example, League project director Dawn M.

Crowley was recommended and is now a member of the Special
Committee on Communications and Government Proceedings, a new
panel established by the state legislature. Another example: the
partnership between the LWV of Seattle and the local chapter of
Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.

These developments and others point the way for Leagues and other
public interest groups to become more active in the policy debate
concerning future communications developments. Of course,
participation by public interest groups is vital to resolving a number of
important concerns.

Obstacles, Potholes, Construction Zones

One significant issue is equity. As the nation moves into a new
information age, the price of full citizenship will be a function of having
access to advanced communications media and methods. But the
development of new communications has renewed the debate over what
constitutes universal service. The principle that everyone in the United
States should have access to low-cost, basic communications services
has been a policy goal since the Communications Act of 1934.

A few statistics make the point that access to communications today is
far from universal. Only 25 percent of the population have a personal
computer in their home today. According to a 1989 U.S. Census Bureau
report, ownership of a computer is closely associated with household
income. People with high incomes are much more likely to have home
computers than people at the other end of the economic scale.

But the disparity goes beyond computer ownership. The often-cited
model for universal access today is the telephone; nearly 100 percent of
the population have access to a telephone. But not every U.S. household
owns a phone. In fact, in some low-income urban areas and remote rural
areas, the number of households with telephones is below 75 percent. If
computers and telephones are the gateways to the information
superhighway, on-ramps are missing for large parts of the population.

To some individuals and groups involved in the policy debate, universal
access is achieved through public on-ramps to the new information
highways. These on-ramps can be located in schools, shopping malls
and public libraries. In fact, libraries have been looked to as providers of
a "communications safety net." But as cities, counties and states adjust
public spending to resolve financial woes, libraries have been closed or
their hours reduced. Ultimately, these and other cutbacks could limit
access to communications and information for parts of the community.

The League and others are working to assure equal access for all to new communications.

Another leading concern is the impact of all media on the survival of community. To an extent, modern communications—especially television and computers—have reduced the amount of time devoted to human interaction. Computer freenets, even with their expanded opportunities for people to hold discussions on matters of public interest, lack the group dynamics that foster consensus. Online bulletin boards are not workable substitutes for town meetings.

Luckily, substitutes for town meetings and other forms of face-to-face political discussion are not needed so long as the League and other organizations continue to bring citizens together face-to-face to resolve common problems and promote the common good. And the good news is that emerging media technologies can provide a range of options enhancing those efforts. The new communications pathways can help organizations reach and encourage more and more of "We the People" to participate in the political debate.

Part III

Getting Started

Using new communications methods and media can be exciting, challenging and at times even confusing, but the effort is well worth it, as Leagues demonstrated in their "Wired" projects. The League models also underscored the importance of planning, partnerships and promotion in developing successful approaches to new technology.

In planning your citizen education project, keep in mind the needs of your community. This will help you develop a project that meets those needs. At the same time, the project can provide an impetus for your members to start using new media. Define goals and how to measure them. Be specific. Assess the types of media available in your community—the services provided, the users, the costs. Evaluate any equipment needs, including computers, software, modems and telephone lines. It also may be useful to conduct an assessment of the availability of communications equipment among your organization's members and their familiarity with new media. You may have experts within your organization who can help others get up to speed on emerging technologies.

Other planning tips:

■ Develop a realistic budget and strategy for raising the needed funds.

■ Plan a timeline. Be sure to allow enough time and money for member training, if necessary, to insure that a sufficient number of your organization's members are comfortable with using new media.

■ Recruit volunteers from your organization to participate in the project. One attraction, besides helping the community, is the chance to acquire new skills and first-hand experience using a new technology.

■ If you plan to distribute information through a computer network, consider sponsoring an interactive section, too. These sections provide opportunities for the public to ask questions, request information and perhaps, get involved in your organization. Post a challenging question to start a dialogue.

■ If you want to provide programming to cable access, take advantage of any free training the cable system may offer. Also, if there is a nonprofit board set up to oversee the cable access channels in your community, consider serving on it. Board members can assure that cable

access encourages diverse voices and airs programs that meet the community's needs.

■ If you decide to reach the public through talk radio, be persistant in attempting to contact program producers. If you cannot talk to a producer, find out if the station has a community affairs director. And, if at first you cannot get on a radio program as a guest, try to make your points as a caller. Often, callers who are experts on a subject and who have good presentation skills are invited to be guests. Once you do get on the air, be authoritative, but speak in a conversational tone.

■ Pursuing partnerships is a good way to expand your organization's reach to broader, more diverse audiences. By working with others, you may gain credibility with your target audience, learn about pitfalls and how to avoid them, and discover new approaches you may not have pursued on your own. Also, consider ways of forming partnerships with people and organizations involved in communications issues. They can be a valuable source of technical information and assistance. In working in partnerships, remember to be flexible. It may be important to modify your plan in order to keep everyone happy. One final benefit of joint ventures: your partners may provide new members for your organization.

■ As your project moves from the drawing board through implementation, build in opportunities for promotion at every step. Visibility should attract public interest in your project and in your organization. Be sure local media, government agencies, other citizen education groups and organizations involved in communications issues are aware of what your group is doing. Remember, you are a pioneer in a new frontier—the communications frontier—and others in the community need to know about your project so they can learn how to follow the trail you are blazing.

Community Education Projects Conducted by Local and State Leagues

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Leagues Test VOICE Voter Education Service

Four of the Leagues selected for "Wired" community education grants also took part in a test of the Voter Information and Communication Exchange (VOICE), a voter education project cosponsored by the LWVEF, the Public Information Exchange (PIE), the Online Computer Library Center and Project Vote Smart.

The project provided online computer access to national data and also information collected by the Leagues about local and state candidates running for election in November 1994. The information was available through computers in public libraries in the four pilot sites. VOICE also was accessible through the Internet to anyone with a computer, modem and access to the World Wide Web. Plans call for VOICE to be available on computers at public libraries beginning with the 1996 presidential election.

The four Leagues taking part in the VOICE pilot test were the LWVs of Oakland-Berkeley, California; St. Petersburg, Florida; Evanston, Illinois; and Columbus, Ohio.

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1. LWV of Oakland-Berkeley, California
"Online Help"
The LWV of Oakland-Berkeley worked with the LWV of California to put election information (job descriptions, candidate names and texts of the ballot initiatives) online. The information was accessible through CompuServe and America Online, and through a community access network.

Besides making information available to subscribers of CompuServe and America Online, the Oakland League also provided technology training and technical assistance to diverse community organizations and hosted a youth conference to brainstorm ideas about communications methods to reach younger people.

2. The LWV of the St. Petersburg Area, Florida
"Plug into Democracy"
The LWV of the St. Petersburg Area, working in partnership with the city's Enoch Davis Community Center, launched a "Wired" project, entitled "Plug into Democracy," to encourage an awareness of the importance of voting among young African Americans. League members met three times a week for a month with 22 children, ranging in age from 8 to 12, for discussions about elections, candidates and issues, and opportunities for citizen involvement.

As part of the project, the children held a mock candidates forum, learned about the mechanics of the election process during a field trip to St. Petersburg's Election Service Center and heard Percy Shelton, a well known community activist, and other guest speakers talk about the importance of voting.

3. LWV of Evanston, Illinois
"Making Voter Participation Accessible"
The LWV of Evanston targeted voter education to help citizens with disabilities participate in elections. As part of the effort, League members and others worked in two-person teams, one able-bodied and one physically challenged, to survey all 75 polling places in Evanston and report on access for persons with disabilities. Project director Mary Friedl developed the survey form and the League compiled the information in a computer database. Among the findings: 50 percent of

Evanston's polling places are not accessible as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The survey results were provided to the city clerk's office and the public library.

The League used the data and its research on several absentee ballot options to produce a brochure providing comprehensive coverage of Evanston's voting options for citizens with disabilities. Copies of the brochure were distributed by mail and through meals-on-wheels and visiting nurse programs, senior citizens' centers, doctors offices, local libraries and other agencies and groups. The League also made the information available on the Internet.

The project, billed as the first of its kind in the nation, attracted media attention for the local League and for Mary Friedl, the project director. One result: Friedl was asked to write a regular column for a local newspaper on issues relating to persons with disabilities.

4. The LWV of the Springfield, Illinois Area
"Dial 793-VOTE"

For its "Wired" pilot project, the LWV of the Springfield Area concentrated on making effective use of a well established communications medium accessible to nearly everyone—the touch-tone telephone. Working with WMAY, a local news/talk radio station, the local League established and operated "Project Tele-Vote" as a voice mail service providing callers with reliable, round-the-clock election information. The phone information line (793-VOTE) operated between September 6 and Election Day on November 8, 1994.

Using nine menu options, the Springfield League's voice mail service furnished the names and background data on candidates for office in Springfield and Sangamon County; the locations of polling places; notice of voter registration drives and other voter information.

League project director Julie Imhoff wrote the scripts after collecting information from city and county elections offices and local media. Project partner WMAY, provided the "voice." Station manager Jay Layendeck read Imhoff's

scripts, and other radio station staff promoted "793-VOTE" on the air. The League also worked with community organizations and others to promote the service to target audiences—young adults, recent arrivals, adults in literacy or remedial classes and clients of social service agencies. And the local League promoted the project with a billboard, posters and bookmarks.

As an added service to the community, the local League provided election night results, updated every half-hour until midnight, through its voice mail service.

5. LWV of Dearborn/Dearborn Heights, Michigan
"Online on the Greater Detroit FreeNet"

The LWV of Dearborn/Dearborn Heights posted voters guide information online through the Greater Detroit FreeNet, a community access network provided at no cost and accessible to area residents through a local phone call. Additionally, the League answered questions from the public using a freenet bulletin board and posted results from the November 1994 elections.

The League's online information service was available to anyone with a personal computer and a modem, and to others using terminals in the public libraries. In fact, the local League's partners in the project included the Detroit and Wayne County public library systems, the Detroit FreeNet and other area Leagues.

One of the goals the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights League set was reaching out to segments of the population with traditionally low rates of voter participation. Among those targeted: persons with disabilities, homebound individuals and young, first-time voters. Many young people, the local League found, own personal computers or have Internet access through their college or university.

Besides getting information to groups on the margins of voter participation, another benefit of the "Wired" project, according to Kathryn Allen, the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights League project director, was the opportunity to make contacts with government officials and others

interested in providing community information electronically. "They seemed to be impressed that the League is keeping up with technology," Allen concluded.

Since the election, the local League continues to post community information electronically.

6. The LWV of White Bear Lake/North Oaks, Minnesota

"Online: Voters Guide"
The LWV of White Bear Lake/North Oaks provided online access to voters service information through an electronic bulletin board established and run by the League. Candidate and other election information was available electronically for the six weeks leading up to the November 1994 election. To assure community-wide access to the bulletin board, the League arranged for computer hook-ups from the public library, a senior citizens center and a grocery store that usually helps the local League distribute its printed voters guide.

To make sure the public was aware of the new electronic version of its voters guide, the League obtained news coverage in a White Bear newspaper and a newsletter for senior citizens.

7. The LWV of Missouri

"Candidate Cablecast"
For its "Wired" project, the LWV of Missouri explored the use of cable and video to disseminate election information. And the result? The "Show Me" state League showed the public how valuable information about the candidates can be presented in an easy-to-use, electronic format.

The Missouri League produced "Candidate Cablecast," a program featuring the candidates running for the statewide offices of U.S. senator and state auditor. For the primary election, the League recorded segments with nine of the 15 candidates. Videotapes were made available to each of Missouri's local Leagues. Additionally, the state League arranged for the segments to be aired on cable

access—the channels set aside by cable systems for community use.

For the general election, the LWV of Missouri produced a program featuring candidate debates. Again, the state League distributed videotapes to local Leagues and arranged airing on cable access. To promote "Candidate Cablecast," local Leagues advertised the videos in their voters guides.

8. The LWV of Missoula, Montana

"Talking Taxes"
With three initiatives on state fiscal and tax issues on the ballot in Montana in November 1994, the LWV of Missoula decided the public needed a better understanding of complex economic issues, and that talk radio was the most effective medium to deliver accurate information to the community.

Building on the work of the Montana Fiscal Forum, a nonpartisan discussion series developed to provide community leaders with facts on revenue issues, the League worked with the Fiscal Forum's coordinator to get the information to a wider audience. The League's project director, Nancy Maxson, and the forum's coordinator, Stanley Nicholson, decided on the issues to be covered, ranging from the state's revenue system to school district funding, and selected panelists for the discussion series. Six segments were produced and aired in October 1994 over a Missoula radio station.

9. The LWV of New Jersey Education Fund

"Cable Candidates"
The LWV of New Jersey Education Fund produced a cable version of its voters guide to provide all of the state's residents with information about candidates in their congressional district. By using cable, the state League hoped to reach beyond the usual audience for printed League voter education materials.

Congressional candidates were invited to tape statements, and 33 of them accepted the League offer. Two bilingual candidates

recorded their statements in both Spanish and English versions.

The League supplied the candidates with public policy questions to address in their statements and it handled all the complicated scheduling arrangements. When five representatives could not make any of the taping dates, League project manager Cynthia Berchtold arranged for the incumbents to tape their segments at their party headquarters in Washington, DC.

Next, the League edited the tapes, adding a tagline: "This is one of 35 public service announcements produced by the League of Women Voters. For nonpartisan voting information, call 1-800-792-VOTE." The League contacted all of the state's cable systems and succeeded in arranging for the candidate spots to be aired by a cable operator in each congressional district.

10. The LWV of New York State
"Reaching Students Online"
The LWV of New York State placed its voters service information online, using computer networks and bulletin boards. Additionally, the League distributed disks containing the same candidate and election information to libraries.

Young people were a special focus for the state League's voter education efforts, and the League enlisted nonprofit organizations serving students to help make the League election information available to young voters.

11. The LWV of North Carolina
"Helping Carolina Communities Connect"
The LWV of North Carolina began laying the groundwork for an electronic citizen education network that one day will connect each of the state's local Leagues. Among the uses envisioned for the network: providing voter information online and functioning as an on-ramp to the information superhighway for low-income communities, rural areas and other locales lacking direct access.

In the first phase of the project, entitled "Carolina Communities Connect," the League conducted a survey of computer hardware and software capabilities of local Leagues and League members. (See page 25 for sample survey results.) The survey findings will be used in deciding how to construct the citizen education network.

The League also researched the availability of commercial and public network services. A review of those services revealed the existence of several databases providing voter information on federal candidates, leading the state League to decide against establishing a similar database of its own. The League revised its plans to call for producing a *Citizen Guide on Network Services*.

Future plans call for acquiring the computer equipment and software to turn the League office into a Citizen Information Service Center; installing an 800-number to give state residents voter information; producing a newsletter to provide legislative updates; and offering a workshop at the state's convention to review computer systems, databases and related developments.

12. The LWV of Metropolitan Columbus, Ohio
"Voter Information Anytime, Anywhere"
The LWV of Metropolitan Columbus embarked on a three-phase "Wired" project. It: added a fax modem to its office computer providing a connection to the Columbus Freenet; expanded the phone system to provide voter information during off hours; and produced a large-print version of its *Voter Information Bulletin* for use by visually challenged individuals.

The League's move to join the online world received good media coverage, with articles in the *Columbus Dispatch* newspaper and elsewhere. The League was one of the first groups to provide information to the Columbus Freenet, and its online collection now includes the local League's *Voter Information Bulletin* and *Civic Directory*. Since going online, the League has maintained a message area on the

freenet. Online activities include checking the message area, responding to e-mail requests for information and publicizing upcoming League activities.

Although the League encountered delays in making the new voice mail system operational, the service proved very useful. Based on research on the types of questions received in the past, League members knew just what information to include in the voice mail service. Callers to the League office could find out the answers to such frequently asked questions as where to register to vote, what's their representative's address, and what are the deadlines and rules for absentee ballots. On the plus side, League members had fewer calls to return each morning, but they faced higher phone bills because the League is billed for all incoming calls.

In producing and distributing large-print voter information, the League worked closely with libraries and groups serving the vision-impaired population. Among the lessons learned for the future: large-print publications also are useful for nursing-home residents; and a good way of providing publication materials to persons with visual impairments, according to the Library for the Blind, is to provide the text in ASCII format and on a floppy disk. This way, the person can print it out as desired, perhaps even using a software program that prints in Braille.

Voter Information on Computers. . .
at your neighborhood library
VOTE SMART!
NOVEMBER 8, 1994
Sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Cuyahoga County. Doris Geld, Treasurer, 12550 Lakewood OH 44107

13. The LWV of Cuyahoga County, Ohio
Inter-League Organization
"Online and Local Bus"
The LWV of Cuyahoga County worked with a community newspaper and county libraries to make its voters guide available on line. The voters guide was printed and included in the *Cleveland Free Times*, a weekly newspaper. The paper also gave a floppy disk version of the guide to the Cleveland and Cuyahoga public library systems. The libraries made the voters guide accessible on its computers.

A special focus for League voter education efforts was the use of alternative communications methods to reach groups with traditionally low rates of voter participation. One League innovation: bus ads publicizing the availability of voters service information on computers at neighborhood libraries. The ads also reminded citizens to vote on November 8, 1994. The League produced 25 "taillight" ads for placement on the backs of buses. An estimated 33,000 voting-age residents saw at least one of the bus ads.

14. The LWV of the Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania
"Helping Older Americans Get Online"
The LWV of the Wilkes-Barre area experimented with computer technology to provide voter information electronically to the community's large senior citizen population. Working in partnership with county officials on aging, the League provided its voters guide and another publication, the *Government Directory*—a list of elected officials—on disk for loading onto computers at four senior citizen community centers.

The local League took a "value-added" approach in making its voter information available electronically. "We aimed to add one more option to our existing selection of voter information options. Essentially, we were not concerned with creating new material for this project, but instead were interested in adapting existing material to a new format," explained Anne Pelak, the Wilkes-Barre League president and project manager.

In the course of adapting the information for computer use, the League conducted two training sessions to help League volunteers feel more comfortable using computers. Workshop participants reported heightened "comfort levels," according to Pelak. As a bonus, the League volunteers' comfort and enthusiasm carried over into a desire to make other League publications more visually appealing.

Although the local League had to overcome some computer compatibility problems, the

group found the online world to be beneficial. Among the advantages: freedom from the space limitations imposed by the printed page and increased timeliness—the local League was able to deliver the entire package of online information for loading onto the senior centers' computers several weeks before the printed voters guides were distributed.

15. The LWV of Memphis-Shelby County, Tennessee

"On Cable: Meet the Candidates"
The LWV of Memphis-Shelby County produced a voter education program for airing on cable television, and enlisted the cable operator as one of its partners for the project. Other partners included diverse groups working with a number of populations targeted by the League for voter information and education outreach efforts. The groups were given tapes of the LWV voter education video to share with others in their communities.

16. The LWV of Richardson, Texas

"Getting Started with the Dallas/North Texas Free-Net"
The LWV of Richardson became a charter member of the Dallas/North Texas Free-Net. Once operational—projected for April 1995—the community computer network will provide access to voter and other information. The local League already has developed electronic information for the freenet. In fact, its *Guide to Elected Officials* is slated to be one of the first information bases used in test-runs of the freenet.

In other efforts to reach out to diverse populations, the League made available voter registration information to *The Chinese Daily News* for the benefit of an expanding Asian community. And, in partnership with the Dallas County Community College District's LeCroy Center for Educational Telecommunication, the League made voter information materials available on audiocassette tapes. Tapes were distributed through the public library and the Lighthouse for the Blind. The tapes were developed to assist blind and vision-impaired

persons, but they also proved useful for some senior citizens.

Richardson, TX
(tape introduction:)

"American citizens have the opportunity to do what millions only dream of doing. We can vote. The Voters Guide *is funded and published by the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund to help citizens prepare to cast an informed vote. The* Voters Guide *is organized by ballot order of parties (Democratic, Republican, Libertarian) within races for each office and contains the candidates' responses to a questionnaire. This tape contains the responses from the candidates for U.S. Senator, Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General races. For other races, consult the League's printed* Voters Guide."

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17. The LWV of Alexandria, Virginia

"¿Habla Español?"
The LWV of Alexandria worked with several partners to provide outreach and information on candidates and voting to the community's Spanish-speaking residents. The local League selected public access cable television as an effective medium to bring voter information to the target audience, and also produced a Spanish version of its printed voter guide.

To reach the target audience, the League worked with organizations serving the Spanish-speaking population, a bilingual counselor and a parent liaison from T.C. Williams High School and a representative from Jones Intercable, operator of Alexandria's cable system. While each of the partners made significant contributions to the project, the involvement of Spanish-speaking high-school students is particularly noteworthy. Under League members' guidance, the students conducted a telephone survey of Spanish-speaking residents in Alexandria to learn their concerns and identify questions they wanted the candidates for U.S. representative and senator to answer. Students also received

training in the use of video equipment; one of them set up the equipment, operated a camera and worked with a League member on editing a public forum featuring Spanish-speaking representatives of the three senate candidates. And on Election Day, Spanish-speaking students—recruited and assisted by the League—worked as exit pollsters, surveying Spanish-speaking voters on whether they watched the forum in Spanish or read the ballot and other election information provided in Spanish by the League.

Besides those efforts, the Alexandria League made available a videotape, dubbed in Spanish, of a debate between candidates for a congressional seat. Using a copy of the debate, the local League arranged the preparation of a debate transcript in Spanish. Next, the League asked the congressional campaigns to identify Spanish-speaking persons to dub the debate tape, and then arranged studio time for the voice-overs and editing. The League worked with Jones Intercable to have the tape shown four times before the November election.

18. The LWV of Seattle, Washington
"Electronic Communications Exchange"
The LWV of Seattle used the "Wired" project as the impetus for its first venture into electronic information distribution. It became a provider of voter service and other election-related material (see sample menu, page 24) to the Seattle Community Network (SCN). The network, established by the local chapter of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR), is accessible to anyone with a computer and a modem and through terminals at public libraries in Seattle. The SCN was selected by the League in the hope the computer network could help reach groups outside the normal audience for League voter education and information efforts. Special targets for outreach included persons with disabilities and young people.

The information uploaded by the League for online access was extensive, covering background and addresses for state, national and judicial candidates; the candidates' responses to questions posed by the League; all local and state ballot propositions, including pro and con arguments; instructions on voter registration and the use of the absentee ballot; a directory of elected officials; background on selected public policy issues; and more. The League also sponsored three interactive areas where users could ask the League questions and comment on election issues.

One of the overall benefits of the project was the establishment of solid working relationships with the CPSR and the Seattle Public Library, according to project comanagers, Lucy Copass and Hillary Hamilton. And the League developed contacts with other community groups providing information via SCN.

A second component of the local League's "Wired" project was member training. The League offered in-house classes on computer communications and sponsored a half-day, hands-on computer networking workshop taught at a training facility. In all, 27 League members received some level of training.

"Many women who might not otherwise have had exposure to computer communications were exposed to it in the supportive atmosphere of League-run classes," reported the League's Copass and Hamilton. "The growing competence of League members in the area of electronic communications was a side benefit of the project; others advanced to a new level of activity, such as exchanging e-mail with League colleagues or dialing in to the public library's online catalog to do research."

Now that it is online, the Seattle League plans to stay there. League members continue to maintain and update the League area on SCN, and they anticipate the uploading of voter service information during election periods will become a routine part of the League's work.

League of Women Voters of Seattle

(Sample menus as they ran on the Seattle Community Network during the grant period:)

<League of Women Voters>

1. About the League of Women Voters

2. Contacting Elected Officials . . .

3. Voter Information . . .

4. Candidate Rosters - November 8 General Election . . .

5. Candidate Answers to Questions . . .

6. Ballot Issues . . .

7. Online Forums . . .

8. Ask the League (Q&A)
----
h=Help, x=Exit FreeEmu, p=Previous menu, m=Main menu

Your Choice == 2

<Contacting Elected Officials>

1. Local Elected Officials

2. Congressional Email

3. White House Email

4. Make Your Voice Heard
----
h=Help, x=Exit FreeEmu, p=Previous menu, m=Main menu

Your Choice == 3

<Voter Information>

1. How to Register to Vote

2. Fair Campaign Practices

3. How to Pick a Candidate
----
h=Help, x=Exit FreeEmu, p=Previous menu, m=Main menu

Your Choice == 4

<Candidate Rosters - November 8 General Election>

1. Congress

2. State Legislature

3. Judicial
----
h=Help, x=Exit FreeEmu, p=Previous menu, m=Main menu

Your Choice == 5

<Candidate Answers to Questions>

1. U.S. Senate

2. 1st Congressional District

3. 7th Congressional District

4. 8th Congressional District

5. 9th Congressional District

6. Judicial Campaigns

7. 11th Legislative District

8. 32nd Legislative District

9. 34th Legislative District

10. 36th Legislative District

11. 37th Legislative District

12. 41st Legislative District

13. 43rd Legislative District

14. 46th Legislative District
----
h=Help, x=Exit FreeEmu, p=Previous menu, m=Main menu

Your Choice == 6

<Ballot Issues-General Election,

   November 8, 1994>

1. Seattle Public Library Bonds

2. Seattle Public School Bonds

3. Seattle Public Safety Bonds

4. Mercer Island School Bonds

5. State Referendum 43–Violence Reduction

   and Drug Enforcement

6. State Initiative 607–Denturist Act
----
h=Help, x=Exit FreeEmu, p=Previous menu, m=Main menu

Your Choice == 7

19. The LWV of Wisconsin

"It's an EBB World"

The LWV of Wisconsin established and operated an electronic bulletin board (EBB) service on Omnifest, a freenet in Milwaukee associated with the University of Wisconsin computer network. Residents with access to computers equipped with modems can read messages from the bulletin boards. If they want to post messages, users pay a $25 annual subscription fee.

The state League posted an electronic version of its voters guide for statewide races on the EBB, and updated the guide following the primary for use in the general election. One of the benefits of the electronic guide: more information. Printing and mailing schedules restricted the League's ability to include all of its up-to-date information in the printed guide, but the EBB did not impose those limitations. Since the November 1994 election, the state League continues to update the information on the EBB. Recent postings have included information on the state Supreme Court candidates running in the spring 1995 primary election.

Besides providing online information, the state League held a series of training sessions—called "Satellite Saturdays," although two of the five sessions occurred on other days of the week—to bring League members up to speed with new media and build confidence for using the Internet.

Despite a few obstacles—such as the lack of a freenet serving Madison, the state capital and state League headquarters—the "Wired" project was a major success, according to the Wisconsin League project director Dawn M. Crowley. "Wired" planted the seeds for Wisconsin Leagues to move into the 21st century," she said. And the state League's use of new media "has significantly expanded our visibility and our service to our mission, to League members and to other users."

CAROLINA COMMUNITIES CONNECT

RESULTS OF SYSTEM SURVEY

LEAGUE

Chapel Hill/Carbona

Membership: 162

Responses: 08

LEAGUE MEMBER	FAX/YES NUMBER	COMPUTER TYPE	SOFTWARE Word Proc.	SOFTWARE Spd. Sheet	MODEM	NETWORK SERVICE	COMMENTS
Name 1	N	IBM Clone	Word		N		
Name 2	Y	IBM Compatible	Yes	Yes	Y		
Name 3	Y	MAC	MS/Word	MS/Works	Y	Internet/E-Mail	
Name 4	N	IBM (at work)	WordPerf		N	Networked to SAS	
Name 5	N	PC 386	Word	Excel	N	Internet/E-Mail	Micro Pub., Draw
Name 6	Y	Gateway 486	Word	Excel	Y		
Name 7	Y	Compaq 860	Works	Works	Y		
Name 8	N	IBM 486	WordPerf	QuatroPro	Y		

Appendix B

Resources: Publications

A Plain English Guide to Technology: Telecommunications Trends and Implications, Association of America's Public Television Stations, Washington, DC. 1995.

The Federal Internet Source, National Journal, Washington, DC. 1995.

infoActive: The Telecommunications Monthly for Nonprofits, Center for Media Education, Washington, DC. 1994 and subsequent issues.

The National Information Infrastructure: Communications and Computing—Converging or Colliding?, The Annenburg Washington Program in Communications Policy Studies of Northwestern University, Washington, DC, 1993.

Strategic Communications for Nonprofits; Kirkman, Larry and Karen Menichelli, editors; *(Introductory Guide,* 1992; *Talk Radio,* 1990; *Voice Programs,* 1991; *Op-Eds,* 1991; *Using Video,* 1990 and 1991; Media Advocacy, 1991; Cable Access, 1990; *Electronic Networking,* 1991; *Strategic Media,* 1991.) Benton Foundation and Center for Strategic Communications, Washington, DC.

Resources: Federal Government Online

FedWorld
National Technical Information Service
Technology Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
Springfield, VA 22161
Phone: (703) 478-4608
Online information network providing a central resource for government data in electronic formats.
Dial up:(703) 321-8020
Internet: telnet to fedworld.gov
File Transfer Protocol services: ftp.fedworld.gov
World Wide Web browser:http://www.fedworld.gov

U.S. House of Representatives
New system, Thomas, named for Thomas Jefferson, was set up on the Library of Congress system in January 1995. The system is evolving as new services are added.
Internet:World Wide Web browser:http://www.thomas.loc.gov.

The House also has its own gopher site on the Internet providing, among other things, e-mail addresses for representatives who are online.
To access:gopher gopher.house.gov.
Then select menu option 2) Congressional information; next option 3) General information; then option 2) House e-mail addresses.

Senate
The Senate also has a gopher site on the Internet. It is suggested that anyone accessing it for the first time read the FAQs (frequently asked questions).
To access:gopher gopher.senate.gov.

Resources: Other Federal Government
(e-mail addresses, if available)

Congress
House Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance
U.S. House of Representatives
316 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2424

Senate Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Communications
U.S. Senate
508 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-9340

Independent Agencies, Executive Branch
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M St. NW
Washington, DC 20554
Phone: (202) 418-0200

Resources: Nonprofit, Industry and Other

NII Office
National Telecommunications and Information
Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
15th St. and Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230
Phone: (202) 482-1635   E-mail:nii@ntia.doc.gov

National Institute of Standards and Technology
Technology Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
Gaithersburg, MD 20899
Phone: (301) 975-4529   E-mail: cat.exec@nist.gov

Alliance for Community Media
666 11th St. NW, Suite 806
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 393-2650

American Library Association
50 E. Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611
Phone: (312) 944-6780

The Annenburg Washington Program
Communications Policy Studies
Northwestern University
The Willard Office Building
1455 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20004
Phone: (202) 393-7100

Association of America's Public Television Stations
1350 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 887-1700

Association of Independent Television Stations
(INTV)
1200 18th St. NW, Suite 502
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 887-1970

Benton Foundation
1634 Eye St. NW
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 638-5770
Internet: URL http://cdinet.com/Benton

Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association
1133 21st St. NW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 785-0081

Center for Media Education
1511 K St. NW, Suite 518
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 628-2620
Internet: cme@access.digex.net

Center for Policy Alternatives
1875 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 387-6030

Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility
666 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Suite 303
Washington, DC 20003
Phone: (202) 544-9240

Consumer Federation of America
1424 16th St. NW, Suite 604
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 387-6121

Electronic Frontier Foundation
1001 G St. NW
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 544-9237   Internet: eff@eff.org

Electronic Industries Association
2001 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 457-4900

Media Access Project
2000 M St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 232-4300

National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)
1771 N St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 429-5300

National Association of Regulatory Utility
Commissioners (NARUC)
Box 684, ICC Building
Constitution Ave. & 12th St. NW
Washington, DC 20044-0684
Phone: (202) 898-2200

National Cable Television Association (NCTA)
1724 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 775-3550

National Telephone Cooperative Association
2626 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20037-1695
Phone: (202) 298-2300

Project VOTE SMART
Center for National Independence in Politics
129 NW 4th St. #4
Corvallis, OR 97330
Phone: (503) 737-4000   Internet: gopher
gopher.neu.edu

Public Information Exchange (PIE)
7135 Minstrel Way, Suite 204
Columbia, MD 21045
Phone: (301) 596-7400   Internet: j-harris@rp.org

Telecommunications Research and Action Council
(TRAC)
P.O. Box 12038
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 462-2520

United States Telephone Association
900 19th St. NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006-2102
Phone: (202) 835-3100