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The View from CTC VISTA Project HQ
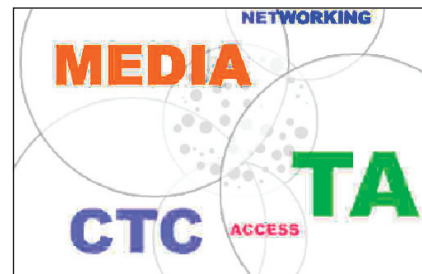
by Paul Hansen

When I think about the CTC VISTA Project, this is the picture... Look at all those nodes! Big nodes, little nodes, nodes nodes nodes. There's no mistaking it— it's a network diagram...we have always been a networking project.

Beginning last year we introduced Project priority areas and they...put us on the networking fast-track... a more focused structure...for us to provide [collaborative] substantive support and training to our VISTAs...

[W]e have ... been engaged in networking with the national organizations working in the field (CTCNet, NTEN, AFCN, ACM, NAMAC, ATAccess)... As we pursue more focused program-specific partnerships these relationships may be strengthened and new partnerships developed.... to make significant progress towards achieving a more focused set of priority areas for our next major round of placements in the summer of 2007.

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CTCVISTA 2.0: The Evolution of the Project's Communications

by Danielle Martin

...During his tenure at the Project, Saul [Baizman] helped the site evolve from a confusing, multi-tool system to a more simplified contact directory complimented by a webblog system. ...[Using] an open source content management system called Drupal..., the Project has evolved in emphasizing opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing among CTC VISTAs on our new site CTCVISTA.org.

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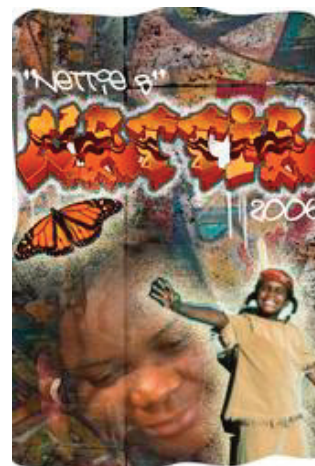
Technology and Participatory Culture

by Nettrice Gaskins

With the growth of digital media tools and the ongoing transition of the World Wide Web from a collection of websites to a full-fledged computing platform, technology is providing key resources for a growing participatory culture...that allows people to act as active filters and editors and create and distribute content and ideas in increasingly sophisticated multimedia formats.

Open source applications, online video/audio, participatory media or personal broadcasting, and dynamic knowledge creation and social networking tools ...popular services such as MySpace (I have my own page) and Second Life (a cross between a social network and gaming platform) not only reflect what people are consuming and using but can also provide clues on how to develop new and exciting projects for young people today and in the near future.

Nettrice's incon on MySpace

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community networking:

community organizing

Community Networking Hits Media Mainstream (Almost)!

by Frank Odasz

Bill Moyer's recent PBS special "The Net @ Risk: Net Neutrality" relates media monopolies and their effects on local radio stations to the threat to free speech in America. At one point, a banner appeared on the screen: "For more on community networking go to www. pbs.org."

This is one of the few mentions of community networking we've seen in the major media. ...Perhaps future programs will focus on the lessons learned from thousands of community technology centers and community networks struggling to educate citizens, generate local content, and provide fiber and wireless broadband access. Stories such as...

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Community Organizing Online: Future Opportunities and Challenges

by Ed Schwartz

When I first became aware of the Internet in 1994, it didn't take long to recognize what a contribution this new technology could make to community organizing. ...the enormous potential of email lists—listservs—to permit many-to-many communication within communities, throughout the country, and even throughout the world. This was unprecedented... I started my first email list that summer—civic-values—and have been managing lists ever since, including several on YahooGroups in Philadelphia where we have built a network of more than 1,200 community activists and City officials who communicate with each other every day.

The Internet has given us powerful tools. Web sites and email lists have been thoroughly integrated into all aspects of our lives. The relative newcomer—blogs—has made it possible for a new generation of writers and activists to gain national attention just by transmitting their thoughts in writing on the Net every single day. I'm sure new tools will create new opportunities, especially in the area of online conferencing, another invaluable tool for organizing.

....Clearly, while we have made great progress in using the Internet for organizing, there are major issues facing us as we wrestle with how to use this technology in the future. Here are a few that come to mind...

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Citizen Speak: A Low-Cost Organizing Online Tool

by Jo Lee

I recently gave a talk at the 2006 CTC Vista Project Orientation. I was prepared for a total disaster. My presentation followed Wendy Cohen from Media Matters. She showed these awesome laugh-out-loud and tear-jerking short films that moved the entire room. How could I possibly follow that act? All I had to talk about was how a small group of activists used a free email advocacy service called CitizenSpeak to battle a multinational railroad company. Much to my surprise the room, full of VISTA members and supervisors, lit up in response to the opportunities afforded by CitizenSpeak.

CitizenSpeak is a free, grassroots, e-advocay service. It is designed to enable individual activists or small grassroots organizations to launch move-on-like email campaigns. By doing so, small grassroots orgs – which may be just a couple people organizing around a kitchen table – can identify a constituency, promote a cause, build capacity, and ultimately lobby their representatives more effectively. To service small grassroots groups, CitizenSpeak is designed to be as easy to use as possible with minimal bells and whistles.

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Media Literacy on the Streets (of Boston)

by Colleen Kelly

You would think creating a new media literacy series would be easy enough. There are enough of them out there. Thus, when I was asked as a brand new VISTA to create a new media literacy curriculum for Project:Think Different, ...the task seemed simple.

But... I needed to make the curriculum accessible to teens. Boston teens. Boston teens living in the neighborhoods

Project Think Different Media Watch Team

in which teenage death rates are the highest, in which an attraction to hip-hop music and commercial materialism are identifying aspects of the youth culture, and in which young people are most likely to be portrayed in the news media in relation to situations of crime and violence. ...the task seemed ...daunting.

...After a whole lot of work with our Media Watch Team (a group of ten teens who work part time at PTD and came up with the outlines for the workshops in the curriculum), fairly high stress levels, and a small skirmish or two, the Media Action Series is complete. The new curriculum addresses the media's role in creating a culture of violence, racism, sexism, and commercialism while educating, empowering and organizing youth to take action on the subjects of media literacy, accountability, access and policy...

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CTC VISTAs Can Share! - Digital Media Toolkit

[From the blog of Danielle Martin, 10/13/2006]

Morgan Sully developed an open source Digital Media Toolkit with a simple HTML start page and links to resources and free software (usually distributed on CD) to bring to sessions he did in his work with the San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender Community Center.

He put it up on his blog and posted it to the Digital Media discussion list (and Nettrice posted it to the old portal), and opened it up for folks to take and customize for their own work.

In response, Roxanne Johnson, built upon it and compiled her own toolkit to train her Ameri-Corps volunteers and youth at the Twin Cities C-CAN/CTEP Project in Minnesota.

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Static Web Design: On Its Way Out?

[From the blog of John Miller, July 1, 2006.]

In a few weeks, I'm heading up the web design workshop at the Intel Computer Clubhouse's Teen Summit. My task: to help 15 or so teenagers create a journalistically-slanted website covering the Summit. How to do it? What will make this website good or bad?

John Miller (right) at Teen Summit

A good website...allows people to easily add information. If there's only one maintainer, this won't be too bad. The site design depends largely on how the maintainer likes to do things: write code by hand, use a wysiwyg editor, or use a content-management system. Simple sites can get away with hand-coding; it's not that much work to add a page or two, especially if you use templates. The hard work lies in creating templates. The same holds true for wysiwyg editors: they are less well-suited for creating new pages, but are quite nice for editing text or populating a template. That leaves the content management system.

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Wall of Video

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Reflecting as I'm exiting...

[From the blog of Ellen-Rae Cachola, August 11, 2006.]

I must say my favorite memories from the past year are meeting the most coolest people who I consider good friends! I think this project really got me closer with community and technology... I know this roots reggae band called Bambu Station who say "technology is the tool for civil-lie-zation." Yet being part of community tech centers has helped me learn how to use technology to serve the voices and perspectives of oppressed and disadvantaged people.

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Lessons Learned: Summer Youth Tech Program at Computers 4 Kids

[From the blog of Raymond Varona, August 23, 2006.]

During the summer, most of our population was made up of kids whose primary language wasn't English and who had never used a computer before. As a result, the workshops were more like guided activities instead of real skill-building sessions since I have to literally show them, step-by-step, how to do every action (including opening files and browsing through folders). So I started off with an intro to Photoshop and gradually worked my content down to the point where my last workshop was on how to change fonts in different programs...

This brings up a significant problem for Computers 4 Kids in that we have some kids who are learning how to program and others who are learning how to use a mouse, and somehow our programs and curricula have to include both. Definitely something I'll continue to address as the year presses on.

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At PSO...first blog

[From the blog of Carl Seifert , September 7, 2006.]

So, details...I'm ...a cajun from Louisiana, now a resident of Arlington, Virginia. I got connected with a great CTC ... and started teaching adult computer literacy classes to our mainly immigrant clientele... Now, I'm going to be serving in a new capacity to increase our organization's ability to keep up with our students.... after their courses at Computer C.O.R.E.

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The CTC VISTA Wall of Video

1. CTC VISTA Project members, supervisors and staff represented well at this year's CTCnet National Conference in Washington, DC. This video by VISTA Leader Danielle Martin includes conference presentations by VISTAs and Project staff and other CTC VISTA high jinx.

2. Produced through the facilities of Malden Access TV, this short video describes the programs of the Cyber Cafe @ Malden Square, in Malden, MA. It features interviews with William Martin, CTC VISTA, and supervisor Claire Murray.

3. Ellen-Rae Cachola (Homeless Prenatal Program) posted a few more videos she created to document the issues that her org fights against (homelessness/poverty, immigration, prenatal care, domestic violence, drug abuse) for their website.

4. New CTC VISTA Tony O'Rourke's youth celebrated Hispanic Heritage at the Boys and Girls Clubs of the East Valley, AZ, by creating animations with BGCA Animate Your World software.

5. HOME Inc. partnered with Boston Neighborhood Network to provide a summer teen video program, thanks to the work of CTC VISTAs Alli Shaughnessy and Kevin Palmer.

6. The first digital story Jessica McCoy produced as a CTC VISTA at the Center for Digital Storytelling, as she learned to train others and gather content for StoriesForChange.net.

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