

FUNCTION OF THE BOOK	+ explain what public discourse is and how it serves as an important resource for developing a just and productive community. + present a methodology for critiquing a communication technology's potential to support the pragmatic functions of public discourse. + use this methodology to critique modern mass media . + outline the practical design for an optimal technology for public discourse in the modern mass society.	
PERSPECTIVE	SCOPE	VALUE
pragmatic structuralist radical democratic Heavily influenced by the work of: James Curran, Noam Chomsky, Neil Postman, Jurgen Habermas, Mike Cooley, John Willinsky & Langdon Winner	constitutional potential of PD the activity, not the content mostly <i>formal</i> communication community communication technology theory, not cultural interdisciplinary	rejuvenated appreciation for PD identify technological barriers to public knowledge and community progress provide specific ideals for critiquing PBT a design for an optimal PDT

Chapter 1 - An Introduction to the Concept and Value of Public Discourse (27 pages)

Definitions	COMMUNITY: a body of people that feel they have something in common. PUBLIC SPHERE: the realm of common community interest, including its public institutions, topics and activities (mainly from Habermas). DISCOURSE: an exchange of ideas. Synonymous with a discussion, a talk, and a conversation, but typically more formal, a discourse is a complex and interactive communication between two or more people. PUBLIC DISCOURSE: The open exchange of ideas for all community members to participate in. COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY: the <i>technics</i> , systems and techniques for creating and supporting the exchange of messages between people. This includes the instruments of communication, the organization of people and the structuring of situations that define how communication may occur.	
THE PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE	Effective PD is an essential condition for achieving democracy.	EXAMPLES OF PDT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>informing community members and sustaining critical debate</u> - the development and recognition of public opinions - facilitating the creation of consensus and equilibrium - providing a check on structures of power - facilitating community organization 		An open space, the town square, street corner, salon, coffee shop, town hall, painted wall, poster, book, newspaper, magazine, film, public address system, radio, TV, websites, email lists, and online forums.

Chapter 2 - Effective Public Discourse Technology Ideals (37 pages)

COMMONALITY: encourages common participation in a central discourse concerning issues of importance to the entire public.	
ACCESSIBILITY: allows all community members equal and complete access to both the reception and transmission of public messages. <i>Where direct access is not possible:</i> allows for complete and fair access of representative contributions. Ideal representatives are directly responsive to their constituents concerns and interests.	
FREE SPEECH: does not limit participants in what they can communicate could not be censored by external forces provides communication methods that compliment individuals' psychological and physical communication challenges does not edit content beyond the author's desires does not limit the depth, breadth or redundancy of potential discussion retains all of the communication it has supported.	
CONTINUOUS: always provide the opportunity for contribution and also makes that contribution immediately available to the public.	
CLARITY OF COMMUNICATION: promotes the mutual interpretation of messages sent and received uses signs with published meanings provides techniques for easy, efficient, useful and accurate feedback from message recipients to the message producers	
INFORMATION QUALITY = Accuracy of Information: employs the skills of experts to recognize and explain what information is of the greatest accuracy provides direct access to the documented original sources of any information publishes the basic expert knowledge required to judge the accuracy of a piece of information in direct relationship to the information being discussed. + Objectivity: does not claim to be objective promotes a diversity of perspectives on every issue.	
DEBATE CONSTRUCTIVENESS: presents conflicting arguments in relation to each other to encourage critical debate allows any participant to respond directly and easily to any message presented + Logic and Reason: promotes the rewarding of reason and fact over other persuasive factors promotes fair and equal access to debating resources allows participants to avoid unnecessary presentation form and style differences between arguments with in a debate promotes the analysis of messages for their own merit, not that of the authors employs methods for making the strengths and weaknesses of arguments most apparent + Public Benefit: promotes productive decision making in relation to community needs always presents the established community goals and values in relation to what is being debating structures a debate in relational to the practical needs it aims to serve.	
USABILITY: empowers all users with complete control over how they individually interact with the PDT employs the fastest methods for transmitting messages and will promote efficient message interpretation employs the highest of information design and architecture + Efficiency finding content of interest and importance: allows users to efficiently find messages that are relevant to their lives and their community employs an infinitely expansive characteristic based information searching system publicizes information that is of the highest importance to the community, as decided by the community. + Understanding information: employs a system for structuring information so it that maximizes the efficiency of comprehension for its community members limit the presentation of information to amounts that are comprehensible and comfortable for the users always provides the general, basic and fundamental information necessary to understand a topic. + Comparing and Relating content to create knowledge: presents related information in close proximity structures information presentations in such ways that reveals greater meanings + Efficient message sending: assist users in the production of content based on common public languages, but will not censor users from creating original signs promotes and assists the efficient use of standard common signs, but will not censor users from creating original signs facilitates the use of any combination of complimentary media + Surveying to discover public opinions: provide methods for collecting and publicizing a representative, accurate and objective survey of the varied public opinions makes the public opinion surveying process transparent and open to public critique.	

EDUCATION OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS	THE VALUE OF ART AND ENTERTAINMENT
An ideal community will teach its citizens to be most effective users of their public discourse technologies	can often be more effective at getting across complex messages, especially ones people are unfamiliar with the preferred mode of communication for some can make the PD experience more enjoyable

Chapter 3 - A Critical Analysis of Current Public Discourse Technology (32 pages)

THE CONTEXT OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

The Failures of State Media:	The Failure of the Commercial Free-Market:	Other Working Economies
elitist paternal censors limits discussion directs public opinion to its favor ignores extreme viewpoints	primacy of entertainment concentration of ownership economic barriers to access poor representation popular use of persuasion lack of useful quality information ownership of messages restricts public discourse... <i>Limiting access to communication according to who can pay is a fabricated barrier to community development.</i>	"Mandated Market Centrally controlled Market Hybrid (state/free-market/co-op) Regulated Market " (J. Curran)

CRITIQUES OF MASS COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Posted Signs (Posters to Billboards)	The Press (Newspapers & Magazines)	Broadcasting (TV & Radio)	Internet (World Wide Web)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ excellent accessibility of message sending ✗ dependence on manual labor restricts individuals to the number of posters then can post the lack of structure, interactivity, depth and the relative isolation of messages make the technology inadequate for building knowledge or conducting a debate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ high potential for distributing quality information, supporting the generation of knowledge, and conducting (elitist) debates ✗ expensive bureaucratic authoring system that severely restricts contributive access only those with excessive amounts of capital can afford to publish their own newspaper or magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ popularity of access to reception can effectively distributes simple ideas ✗ lack of control lack of contribution access very poor at sharing of in-depth information and constructive debate difficult to relate information to build knowledge high potential for distracting and abstract messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ great for free speech the effective use of linking, improving search mechanisms, free forum systems and assisted website creation are very powerful techniques for building and sharing knowledge, and participating in intense public debate ✗ 'digital divide' remains a real world barrier to common access the lack of formal content standards and information architecture also degrades its practical value.

Chapter 4 - A Proposal for a New Public Discourse Technology: *The C-Forum* (25 pages)

THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF THE COMMON FORUM

largely based on the developing success of Internet forums which allow users to post articles on a website and carry on threaded discussions | a unified forum that can accept any form of content | a highly dynamic database system that allows users to search and organize content by any imaginable article characteristic **A COMMON CROSS-MEDIA POOL OF ARTICLES:** only one common pool of articles that can be accessed and published through a variety of methods | partially or completely available in every major medium, including online, broadcast, the press, telephone, posters, postal service and more | goes around the 'digital divide' by giving analogue options for transmitting and receiving content to and from the online database **SUGGESTED GUIDELINES:** suggested techniques that promote standard methods and signs for effectively communicating and organizing information, but do not limit people to them + **Languages Guidelines:** similar to a dictionary | encourage the common use of signs | interface standards + **Formatting Guidelines:** *Physical format* - similar to the Internet | open standard formats to improve interoperability | traditional and popular offline formats as well | *Content structure* - each submission into the cForum be limited to only one major point | use of meta-content classification to describe the nature and content of each article (e.g. the author; the languages used; the specific topics discussed and to what depth; relevance to what community issue; whether it is a question, research, suggestion, theory, hypothesis, description, etc; what perspective the issue is discussed from; content type; jurisdiction; time/date of authorship; time/date of subject matter; and important names and terms discussed) **LINKING ARTICLES:** users link to the specific point of an article | users can create new links between already posted articles | linking classifications could include: addendum, alternative perspective, digression, example, application, maturation, suggested reworking, supporting information, or an answer to a question | enable users to author "link-maps" (designed paths between selected articles along certain links) | offline articles use traditional reference techniques (e.g. footnotes) **RATING SYSTEM:** users rate all elements of the cForum as they use it | as voting numbers grow, searching system can use the ratings to sort and organize elements according to public opinions | allows a community to promote and discourage content in a democratic manner without resorting to censorship | rate articles and links on several characteristics such as relevance to topic, intelligence, entertainment value, logic, clarity, accuracy, educational value, originality, importance to community, etc. **AUTHENTICATION OF INFORMATION AND USERS:** ensure that information is authentic and not the result of secret manipulations | a system for identifying and authenticating that individuals are real and original | also allow for anonymous use (without voting options) | users may leave their personal characteristic "DNA" on any action they do | track patterns to generate a kind of history and reputation | a method for recognizing expert knowledge **INTERFACES:** may include touch-tone phones, printed booklets, posters, mail in forms, TVs, radios and most importantly online computer applications | a diversity of online authoring/browsing utilities | different interfaces will suite different people | present users with manageable options | promote searching, navigating, selecting, interpreting, rating, storing and authoring as all part of an easy, efficient, enjoyable, continues, and integrated user experience

POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF THE CFORUM'S IMPLEMENTATION

increased public discourse | important information distribution, accurate public opinion surveying and constructive debating could lead to much more intelligent, informed and representative leadership | possibly the foundation for direct democracy | average persons would become more adept at research and debate | important communication would become more precise, standardized and structured | a much better social return on investments in research | promotes compartmentalization, classification, relating, judging, and reasoning | actual thinking processes of average citizens may become more structured and logical | encourage new forms of study | new celebrities, leaders, visionaries and geniuses could emerge from the collaborative rating system | more niche interest groups | **mass enlightenment:** that every person have a better understanding of their world and the complex relationships that exist within it, and that people become empowered with knowledge and understanding to make smart choices and productive decisions

CONCLUSION: While many other factors that will decide our future, public discourse technologies are important resources that allow us to exchange ideas and information, so may continue to question the way things have been done and to plan and organize for a better future. As a society, we should always be working to improve our public discourse technology.

To obtain a copy of the complete 150 page draft report, please email mail@jasondiceman.com

For more information concerning the improvement of public discourse, please visit www.communicationism.org

- Coovleft Jason Diceman 2001 -

