

Making Communities Work Online

Zack Rosen
CivicSpace

zack@civicspacelabs.org

Online Communities and the Wealth of Networks

- The web is a new social medium
- ..with deep and structural social implications
- It operates under surprising new assumptions
- At the center of this new medium are people and their communities

Top Websites (US)

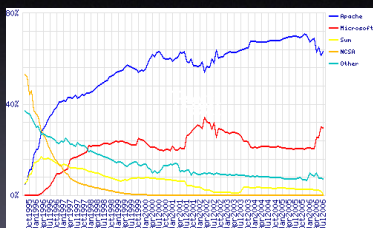
3 MySpace
5 eBay
7 Craigslist
11 Wikipedia
12 Blogger



"The change brought about by the networked information environment is deep. It is structural. It goes to the very foundations of how liberal markets and liberal democracies have coevolved for almost two centuries." - Yochai Benkler, The Wealth of Networks

http://benkler.org/wealth_of_networks/

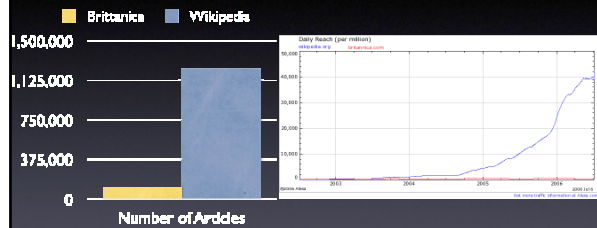
Example 1: Open-Source



Web server market share

http://news.netcraft.com/archives/web_server_survey.htm

Example 2: Wikipedia



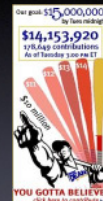
"Wikipedia comes close to Britannica in terms of the accuracy of its science entries, a Nature investigation finds"

<http://www.nature.com/news/2005/051212/full/438900a.html>

But, what are the implications for politics?

The Dean Campaign

- Entered presidential race as a dark horse candidate
- Ran an 'open-source' campaign
- Raised more money in the primary that Clinton did on his reelection bid and became the "front runner"
- Fueled by "netroots" campaign - small dollar donors and activists self organizing through the web



The future of the "Netroots" Community

- DailyKos.com readership is larger than all liberal magazines in the US combined
- Community members included John Kerry, Barbara Boxer, and President Jimmy Carter
- Community is urged to become directly involved in political races

