Community Informatics
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Overview

* More on communities
* What is informatics?
* Defining community informatics (CI)
* Whys study CI?
* Stakeholders in CI
* Relationship between CI and LIS
Community
“shorthand for forms of interventions designed to empower people, who may be living in a given locality or holding a shared set of interests, to take collective action to achieve a greater degree of control in social, economical and political issues that affect them”

(Scott & Page, 2001)
Lost
Saved
Liberated

(Wellman & Leighton 1979; Haythornthwaite, 2004)
Communities are diverse social constructs

- What works in one may not work in another
Informatics

* Intersection of people, information and technologies

* Understanding the impact information and communication technologies (ICTs) have on individuals, organizations and society

* Socio-cultural implications of ICTs

* Application of technology to a discipline
Study and application of ICTs to the arts, science and professions, and to its use in organizations and society at large.

- How ICTs shape relationships, organizations, and the world.
Areas of study

* Health informatics
* Bioinformatics
* Museum informatics
* Socialinformatics
* Development informatics
* Crisis informatics
* Educational informatics
* And more...
What is community informatics?
Defining community informatics

* Principles and practices concerned with the use of (ICTs) for the personal, social, cultural or economic development of and within (local) communities.

* Focus on underrepresented and marginalized groups.

* Effects upon community development, regeneration and sustainability (Keeble and Loader (2001)).
Finding ways of making:

- ICTs of real value to communities of all types
- Overcoming social exclusion / digital divide
- Reducing disparities in wealth and income
- Bridging cultural gaps
- Creating a more participatory society...
CI projects seek to:

* Improve educational outcomes
* Support economic development
* Address local health issues
* Document and express indigenous knowledge
* Contribute to theories of social capital and community development
* Be of a participatory design
* And more...

(Bishop & Bruce, 2005)
Who has a stake in CI?

* eChicago Community Informatics Symposium
  * Librarians, information workers, policymakers, researchers, academics, students, grass-roots activists, community workers, social workers...
Is it a new discipline?

Include:

- LIS
- Development studies
- Sociology
- Computer science
- Management information systems
- Urban planners
- Political scientists
- Women’s studies
- Social work, and more
**ICT4D (ICT for Development)**

- Social and economic development in developing and emerging countries
- Citizen empowerment
- UN Millenium Development Goals
  - Poverty alleviation
Relationship between LIS and CI

- Users
- Communities
- Technologies
- Access to information
- Information retrieval
- Public good
- Public access computing
Topics- Community Technology Centers
http://www.scn.org
Welcome to the Blacksburg Electronic Village. As an outreach of Virginia Tech, the Blacksburg Electronic Village serves the local community.
Topics included in CI course (2)

* Digital and social inclusion
* Social capital and social networks
* Frameworks for measuring the impact of CTCs
* Public libraries and community building
  * Role of public libraries in creating social capital
Impact of public libraries in the digital age

http://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/
CTC’s in libraries

CyberNavigators

CyberNavigators are computer tutors who help provide access to information resources for adults and youth at 45 library locations throughout Chicago. CyberNavigators help bridge the digital divide by connecting Chicagoans to a world of information that is increasingly moving online.

Through technology training and mentoring, one-on-one assistance and public classes, CyberNavigators work with library patrons to teach computer basics, resume writing, word processing and Internet searching to enable them to access employment opportunities, health and education benefits, and other vital resources.

2,600 free public-access computers and free WiFi available at all locations combine with CyberNavigators to provide equal access to information for all library patrons.
Topics covered in CI course (3)

- Public policy
  - e.g. broadband initiatives, identify inequalities in broadband access
- CI and e-Health
- CI as a development strategy in low-income countries
- CI and crisis response
Join

* Community Informatics Researchers Network (CIRN) Mailing List, a discussion group on community informatics.
* Provides an important communication channel for the community informatics community.
* Messages you receive will give you a flavor for the current hot topics under discussion in the field.
Read

The Journal of Community Informatics