

Information Sources Review Assignment

Introduction: This project examines social movements as an information community. By social movement, I mean collective actions that are dissatisfied with the current social order and seek to establish a new way of living (Lee, 1969). Examples of social movements are: the environmental movement, Black Lives Matter, the labor movement, etc. With the creation of the internet and other digital technologies, traditional social movements transformed into networked social movements which are typically organized around cultural values, tend to avoid traditional hierarchical leadership structures, and are globally oriented (Castells, 2001). The role of technology and its use in social movements took center stage during the Arab Spring and Occupy Movement protests in 2011. Facebook and Twitter played a prominent role in the rapid mass mobilization and the dissemination of information during these protests (Tufekci, 2017). This project seeks to understand the information seeking behavior of people within social movements that leads them to use not only social media tools like Facebook and Twitter, but other digital technologies in their endeavor to change society.

The following is a review of two sources, one a research-based source and the other a community-based source, that a social movement might use for their information needs. Each source will be reviewed based on its position within the information cycle, scope and content, its credentials, purpose and use, intended audience, design, frequency of update, biases and gaps, and its value to the social movement community. I will also compare and contrast the sources and conclude with a reflection.

Research-based source:

Social Movement Studies. Routledge. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/csms20/current>

- **Position within the information cycle:** *SMS* is an academic journal which means that it falls later in the information cycle, usually six months or more after the event. Articles provide a more in-depth analysis of the movement and may reflect on events well after they have taken place.
- **Scope and content:** This journal has an international focus and takes a broad interdisciplinary approach to provide a “forum for academic debate and analysis of extra-parliamentary political, cultural and social movements throughout the world” (Aims and Scope, 2018). Papers for this journal come from a variety of theoretical schools that examine social movements through their various stages of development and provide analysis to their context and impact on society.
- **Credentials and authority of the author, editor, and/or publisher:** This is a peer reviewed research journal that is published by Routledge, a renowned publisher of academic books and journals in the humanities and social sciences (About Routledge, 2018) and is part of the Taylor & Francis Group. The editorial board is comprised of professors from major universities in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and other universities worldwide.
- **Purposes and uses:** The purpose of the journal is to provide an academic forum for debate and analysis of various types of movements (Aims and Scope, 2018).
- **Intended audience:** The intended audience for this journal are academics and students researching political, cultural, and social movements worldwide.
- **Design:** The journal is published both in print and online for a subscription fee, although it does make some articles open access. The journal is accessible through San Jose State University’s King Library for those who have access to its resources; however, articles older than 18 months are only accessible.
- **Currency and frequency of update:** The journal is published six times a year.

- **Biases and gaps:** The cost of the subscription and recent issues not being available to the university library, restricts who can access the information in this journal. In addition, although the editorial board consists of international scholars, they mostly come from a western perspective.
- **Value for your information community:** This journal has limited value to the social movement community in the sense that its lack of accessibility restricts its greater use. Nevertheless, this journal helps researchers and those who want to better understand the dynamics of social movement to gain valuable insights into international social movements.

Community-based source:

Indigenous Environmental Network. Retrieved from <http://www.ienearth.org/>

- **Position within the information cycle:** The information posted by the IEN website is early in the information cycle. The site postings are on or near the day that events occurred.
- **Scope and content:** The IEN works with Indigenous communities and tribal governments to protect their land, people and natural resources, and with building sustainable communities (About, 2018). They act as an information source for Indigenous communities, organize campaigns and direct actions, raise public awareness, and help communities to address environmental justice issues (About, 2018).
- **Credentials and authority of the author, editor, and/or publisher:** The IEN has participated in many environmentally social movements in North America. For example, it had a prominent role at the Standing Rock encampment in North Dakota in 2011 which was an environmental direct action to stop the building of the Dakota Access pipeline (Van Gelder, 2016).
- **Purposes and uses:** The purpose of the website is to provide indigenous communities with information regarding ongoing environmental actions and concerns within their communities.

The mission of the IEN is to, “Protect the Sacredness of Earth Mother from contamination & exploitation by Respecting and Adhering to Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Law” (About, 2018).

- **Intended audience:** Although the website has useful information for anyone participating in the environmental movement, the intended audience is Indigenous people and their communities.
- **Design:** The IEN website is openly available on the internet. In addition, they have a Facebook page and Twitter feed that frequently updates information and allows community comments.
- **Currency and frequency of update:** The website updates the Headlines, Campaign Updates, & Press Release section with varying frequency. The rate is about one update per month.
- **Biases and gaps:** The website does not seem to facilitate community interaction. However, the IEN social media sites allow community members to engage with each other. This website is designed to promote the environmental movement therefore the website postings are in favor of community resistance to projects that threaten the environment.
- **Value for your information community:** This is a good website for the social movement community, particularly those interested in environmental justice and/or indigenous communities. It provides a listing of several campaigns of interest to the environmental movement.

Compare and Contrast: *Social Movement Studies* provides theoretical and in-depth analysis of international social movements and is intended for academics. The Indigenous Environmental Network, by comparison, is specifically for the environmental movement and intended for Indigenous peoples and communities. The IEN website is helpful for people wanting information about current movements that are currently happening in North America and provides information about how they can get involved.

SMS is helpful for people wanting to have a theoretical framework of social movements, but is not very helpful for activist wanting to know what direct actions are currently taking place.

Reflection: As I research more about modern social movements and their tendencies, community-based sources seem to be the most useful for their immediate information needs. Activists within social movements are looking for information that is in response to events that are currently going on or will be in the immediate future. Therefore, community-based sources like the IEN are useful because they can give activists information that they can put into action immediately. Academic journals like the *Social Movement Studies* provide a theoretical framework of social movements and an analysis of past actions that are helpful for a broader understanding of social movements, but they do not help the activist who needs to know when and where to respond to events that are taking place in their community. Leaders within social movements might find academic journals helpful in better understanding how to organize their movement, but as I have learned in doing this project, modern networked social movements move away from established leadership structures. Therefore, having a theoretical knowledge of social movements might be helpful in understanding society, but it might not matter much to the activist who is in the street being arrested by the police.

References

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