Shires Media Partnership / WBTN
The Bennington Community
Information Needs Assessment Project
January 28, 2010 / 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Bennington Free Public Library

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION STARTER

PART ONE – Setting the stage (40 minutes total)

- Welcome / Why we're here (Bob Howe / Bill Densmore) – 2 mins.

- Process / agenda (Michael Harrington (5 minutes)
   -- Who's in the room? Why did we come? What to achieve? -- 15 mins.

- What is Shires Media Partnership (Ken Norris-WBTN) -- 15 mins.
   -- Radio station as initial service
   -- How are we doing? (Discussion)

- The J-Lab grant – a chance to focus (Dawn Rodriguez) – 5 mins.

PART TWO – Assessment discussion (45 mins. total)

- Knight Commission background/purpose (Bill Densmore) – 5 mins.
   -- How do we define community? (10 mins.)
   -- What's a healthy info community? Rating Bennington -- 15 mins.
   -- What are best feasible actions? – 15 mins.

PART THREE – New media examples (2o mins.)

- Michael Wood-Lewis, Front Porch Forum, Burlington, Vt. (15 mins)
   -- What is a hyperlocal online news community?

- Bill Densmore, the Newshare Commons proposal (5 mins)
   -- Journalist-guided, social news net in libraries, cafes, public spaces
      http://tinyurl.com/yacnxdn

PART FOUR – Next steps (15 mins.)

- What happens next? Initiatives? Another meeting? (group discussion)

7 p.m. – Adjournment / refreshments / informal discussion for a few more minutes)

Are we living in an "info healthy" community?

The Knight Commission report provides these 10 suggestions for considering whether your community has a "healthy information ecosystem." We've added an 11th: Please Assign "10" to the questions you strongly agree with, "1" to those you strongly disagree with (or would answer "no") and any number in between.

1. Do people have convenient access to both civic and life-enhancing information, without regard to income or social status?

2. Is journalism is abundant in many forms and accessible through many convenient platforms?

3. Is government is open and transparent (either in fact or intent)?

4. Do people have affordable high-speed Internet service wherever and whenever they want and need it?

5. Are digital and media literacy widely taught in schools, public libraries and other community centers?

6. Is technological and civic expertise is shared across the generations?

7. Does local media -- including print, broadcast, and online media -- reflect the issues, events, experiences and ideas of the entire community?

8. Do people have a deep understanding of the role of free speech and free press rights in maintaining a democratic community?

9. Are citizens are active in acquiring and sharing knowledge both within and across social networks.

10.   Can people can assess and track changes in the information health of their communities?

11.   Does an infastructure exist for constructive, civic problem solving?

What the Knight Commission recommended

Here are the 15 recommendations made by the Knight Commission on Oct. 2 of last year: Please make a note of the <u>two or three best, feasible initiatives that could be undertaken by the Bennington area community starting tomorrow.</u>

1. Ensure that every local community has at least one high-quality online hub.
2. Direct media policy toward innovation, competition and support for business models that provide marketplace incentives for quality journalism.
3. Increase support for public-service media aimed at meeting community information needs.
4. Integrate digital and media literacy as critical elements of education at all levels through collaboration among federal, state and local education officials.
5. Engage young people in developing the digital information and communication capacities of local communities.
6. Empower all citizens to participate actively in community self-governance, including local "community summits" to address community affairs and pursue common goals.
7. Increase the role of higher education, community and nonprofit institutions as hubs of journalistic activity and other information-sharing for local communities.
8. Require government at all levels to operate transparently, facilitate easy and low-cost access to public records, and make civic and social data available in standardized formats that support productive public use.
9. Develop systematic quality measures of community information ecologies, and study how they affect social outcomes.
10. Fund and support public libraries and other community institutions as centers of digital and media training, especially for adults.
11. Support the activities of information providers to reach local audiences with quality content through all appropriate media, such as mobile phones, radio, public-access cable and new platforms.
12. Expand local media initiatives to reflect the full reality of the communities they represent.
13. Emphasize community information flow in the design and enhancement of a local community's public spaces.
14. Set ambitious standards for nationwide broadband availability and adopt public policies encouraging consumer demand for broadband services.
15. Maintain the national commitment to open networks as a core objective of Internet policy.