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Thank you.

helping
individuals
and
communities
work toward
social change
through the
power of
information
and the
potential of
electronic
communications

The
Morino Institute

Executive Summary

The Morino Institute is dedicated to helping individuals and communities work toward social change through the power of information and the potential of electronic communications. Electronic communications are already changing our society by dramatically enhancing our ability to interact with each other and reach new sources of information. The Institute's work is to educate local communities in ways they can use information and electronic communications as a force for *positive* social change—so that they can more readily address community needs like economic growth, advancing education and improving access to healthcare information.

The Institute emphasizes local communities as the most effective level at which to address these needs. It will initiate community-based programs to pursue six primary initiatives:

- Enhance awareness of the positive and negative potential of electronic communications, and help people understand the implications for their daily lives.
- Sponsor studies to understand the information and electronic communications needs of communities, how communities are using these technologies now, and how they are being affected by them.
- Create effective training programs that can be used by communities to help their members develop electronic communications and information literacy.
- Educate people in knowledge management techniques and encourage information providers to deliver their product within a context that makes it more usable and understandable to others.
- Train people in the techniques of collaboration as a method for solving community problems.
- Develop models for community-based programs that make fair and reasonable access to information and electronic communications available to all segments of our society, particularly the disadvantaged, the struggling middle class and the disabled. We believe such access is essential to achieving our goals of social change and community improvement.

In pursuit of these goals, the Institute will work in partnership with community members and other groups to provide four key program areas:

- **Education and Communications Programs** to help individuals and communities understand and use information and electronic communications
- **Collaborative Pilot and Research Program** to explore the use of electronic communications for positive social change
- **Community Service Fellowship Program** to sponsor the work of outstanding individuals who are committed to community service
- **CommunityWorks Program** to convey news and information on the Institute's programs to subscribers.

Electronic communications offers people an opportunity to affect their communities in positive and lasting ways. The Institute strives to help them fulfill this potential.

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A New Age of Human Communications

Human communication is the basis of social organization. It determines how we learn, how we share and how we work together. Practically speaking, it determines what careers we can choose, with what groups we will associate, and how much an individual or community can achieve. Our levels of information and knowledge also determine those things; and we access that knowledge and information through communication.

Today's new electronic communications greatly enhances the potential of our human communication and social networks. It enables us to reach more people regardless of location, it brings us near-instantaneous access to volumes of information, it helps us work collaboratively across great distances, it delivers messages anytime without disturbing our current projects and it allows us to hold conversations with countless numbers of people simultaneously.

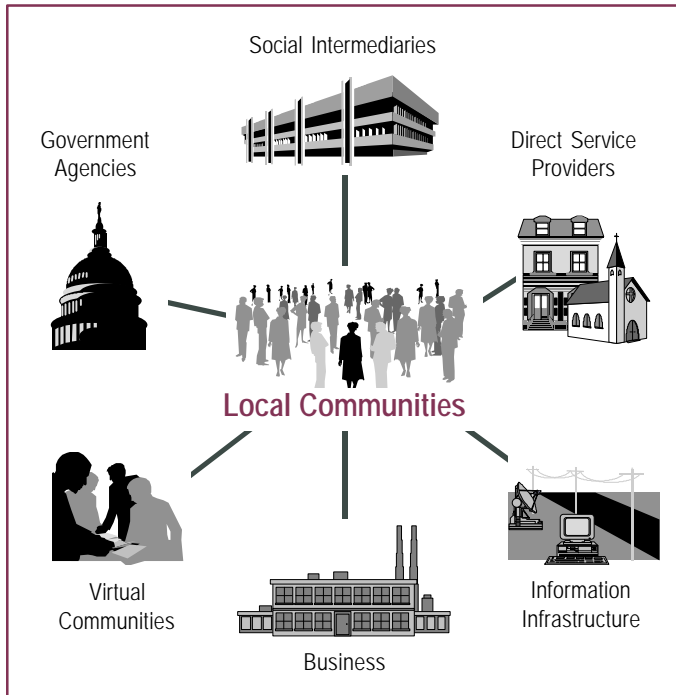
This is the power of electronic communications today, while still in its infancy. No one can foresee how it will eventually develop or exactly how it will affect society. What we can predict is that since the power of electronic communications is so great, its effects are going to be dramatic. Whenever we enhance our ability to communicate, we change our human relationships, which in turn causes social transformations great and small. The power of today's new electronic communications leads many people to believe that we are about to see social change as deep as any we have ever experienced.

In fact, the social change has already started. It is evidenced by the many business cards that now include electronic mail addresses; by the many governments around the world which are galvanized behind projects like the information superhighways; and by the growing number of magazines that are being distributed through commercial online services as well as the newsstand. The change has not only started, it is accelerating. As of this writing over 25,000 corporate, educational and research networks are connecting millions of people through the Internet world-wide. Over 3000 academic journals are available online, some of which are *only* available electronically.

The opportunity before us is to steer this change so that it helps people and communities solve the social problems they face, and to do so without creating new ones.

Making Community Action More Effective

Our local communities are facing many challenges— from economic underdevelopment, to insufficient access to healthcare, to illiteracy, to homelessness, to school dropouts, to political apathy. Electronic communications can help the people working to solve these



problems by helping them reach more people, find and share more information, generate new ideas and work collaboratively. It can also exacerbate these and other social problems if people become disenfranchised through lack of skills or lack of access to these same communication lines.

We believe that most social challenges like these will best be mastered at the local community level. That is where individuals see and feel the true nature of the problem, where they have the confidence of their neighbors, where they can feel personally involved and where they can grasp workable solutions to immediate challenges. It is where people are already in place to do the most good. And while nothing will substitute for hard work and dedication, knowledge and communication are two of the most powerful assets people can draw on to become more effective.

Community members can use those assets— knowledge and communications— to tap a wealth of allies and resources that are part of and surround their local communities. These include:

- Direct service providers, like local health clinics or youth centers
- Statewide and national social intermediaries, like the YMCA or Red Cross
- Local, state and federal government agencies
- Socially responsible businesses
- The growing electronic communications infrastructure, including the Internet, commercial online services, and not-for-profit and community networks.
- The "virtual communities" of like-minded people who are working to solve similar problems in their own local communities and who can be reached more readily through electronic communications

At the center of these organizations and services is the local community whose members are working for social change. The challenge they face, and where the Morino Institute will help them, is to make sense out of this array of resources— to avoid the redundancies, to understand which resources can be of service and how they can be used to complement one another. We will focus our efforts on helping local communities reach, use and share knowledge more effectively so that they can:

- help people understand the relevance and harness the power of information and electronic communications to improve their lives and their communities
- stimulate economic growth by helping individuals and businesses become more adaptive
- improve the quality and availability of education for all ages and levels of society
- help people engage and improve their government
- assist the public and social sectors to reach and engage the people they serve more effectively
- improve access to and the quality of health care information and services
- advance the state of environmental awareness, monitoring and protection

The Opportunity for Community and Social Change

Consider how one community in south Florida was able to help its elderly. A problem was becoming common in area retirement homes— too many residents were just passing the days with no support from family or loved ones. A group of concerned people— doctors, nurses, students, volunteers — decided to do something about it. Using electronic communications, they planned a comprehensive program matching the

Saving Lives

A father was worried about his young daughter's upcoming spinal surgery. Using a communications network, he took it upon himself to learn as much as he could about her ailment. Between his research of medical information and electronic conversations with experts in the field, he came to believe that her doctors might have misdiagnosed her condition. When he shared his concerns with those doctors— and the facts to back up those concerns— they were able to correctly identify the rare syndrome she really suffered from and begin the correct treatment. The father says that the communication he had with those other experts, and the knowledge he gained, "may have saved my daughter's life!"

isolated seniors with volunteers from area high schools. Today, those retirees eagerly await their frequent visits from the students. As one nurse observed, "there's no doubt about it, this has changed their lives."

The Morino Institute will partner with local community members and their allies to see that efforts like these multiply. Our mission is to help individuals and communities work toward social change through the power of information and the potential of electronic communications. We will do so by providing educational and research services in the use of knowledge and

communication, and by working with our partners to develop programs that can be used as models for community-based social change.

- *The Institute will work to enhance awareness of the positive and negative potentials for the use of electronic communications and help people understand its implications for their daily lives.*

Despite increased media attention, most people today do not understand the potential for social change— both positive and negative change— presented by electronic communications; nor do they understand why the decisions being made by business and government about the so-called information superhigh-

way are so important. In addition to raising awareness about these issues, the Institute will help people and communities engage the debate about how these technologies will be implemented so that the community view is represented.

A. J. Liebeling wrote that “Freedom of the press is limited to those who own one.” By letting us communicate with dozens, potentially millions of people simultaneously, electronic communications can make everyone a publisher and a broadcaster. That can be a strong force for freedom, expression and learning.

Providing Care

In Cleveland, members of 47 families who all had a relative that suffered from Alzheimer’s disease asked their doctors and nurses the same question: How can we care for our loved ones at home while still receiving the kind of information, advice, and if necessary, intervention that they would receive in a facility. When a hospital linked the family caregivers with inexpensive computer communications equipment, they were able to solve that problem. Nurses answered questions and the caregivers accessed medical data as the project’s planners hoped. What they didn’t anticipate, however, was the way in which this community evolved into a real support group — communicating with each other and helping each other cope with the daily problems they all faced.

Yet electronic communications can also be used to broaden the reach of demagogues and hate mongers. What is more, they may force a rethinking of our laws and practices of copyright, libel, censorship, freedom of speech, information theft and plagiarism.

Electronic communications will have even more basic effects on people’s lives. Some people will see their jobs change because of it, some will lose their jobs. Others will find new careers with new challenges as a direct result of these technologies. Some people will

find an affordable home because the government now puts all HUD listings online. Some, who do not have online access, will miss opportunities because they received those listings too late. People in isolated areas will become more connected to other people, government and institutions around them. Others, who may be excluded, will find themselves more isolated than ever before, even though a thousand connections and conversations are going on around them.

- *The Institute will sponsor studies to understand the information and electronic communications needs of communities, how communities are using these technologies now, and how communities are being affected by them.*

Electronic communications is still in its infancy and so are discoveries about the ways we will use information in this new communications age. With the information superhighway still undefined, more research is needed, especially in the areas of what communities need and want in the way of knowledge access and communications support; what is working successfully and unsuccessfully today; how electronic communications can enhance community action and what programs and initiatives are producing results.

The growing phenomenon of community networks— also known as community computing, community telecomputing, community bulletin boards, civic networking, telecommunity systems and community information systems—is the grass-roots components of the information and communications infrastructure. They offer no-cost or inexpensive access to local community information

and resources. Members receive and share information and often form groups who work to solve community problems. New community networks are appearing at an ever increasing pace, but aside from anecdotal stories, there are not enough broad-based studies of the effects of community networks—their levels of engagement, who is using them and how, what mistakes to avoid when starting one and how they can be made more effective for community service.

Similarly, more research is required into the needs of communities relative to electronic communications, information access and information use. The Institute will support this kind of research and share the results in order to clarify how the information infrastructure can be built to serve community goals.

- *The Institute will work to develop effective training programs that can be used by communities to help their members develop information and electronic communications literacy skills.*

Traditional literacy requires us to master certain skills— technical skills such as writing, conceptual skills such as reading and structural skills such as proper grammar and spelling. Likewise, electronic literacy requires us to understand the technical tools of networked communication and to develop the conceptual and social skills appropriate to this new medium. Most importantly, we must learn how to identify, evaluate and contextualize information in the same way we articulate and combine ideas in a sentence.

- *The Institute will work to develop better knowledge management techniques and educate people in how to use them for more effective human and electronic communications.*

We need information to do our jobs, to improve ourselves, to make decisions, to remain politically engaged and to help our communities. We can often feel

inundated by the sheer volume of information available to us. Too much of the information we need, especially over today's electronic media, is too hard to find, and too much of the information we encounter is relevant but unusable. People need to be presented with information in context, in a frame of reference so they can use it for effective problem solving.

Sharing Knowledge

A small community in the midwestern United States was wiped out by the floods of 1993. Just as public services were in their greatest disarray, the flooding made the tap water undrinkable. Luckily, other communities who had had similar experiences, were able to share their knowledge through electronic communications—how to sterilize water, where to find reserves, how to survive the crisis.

At the Morino Institute we believe that knowledge management techniques must be further developed and taught to our citizens to help them use both human and electronic communications effectively. We will work to do that, and to encourage the providers of information to use these techniques to structure their product within a context that makes it more useable and understandable.

- *The Institute will train people in the techniques of collaboration as a method for solving community problems, and will research and develop new techniques to enhance this process.*

Collaborative work—team work—is becoming a model for businesses, institutions and government to increase effectiveness, responsiveness and success. Communities have been using collaboration for generations to solve local problems and satisfy local needs— from homesteaders getting together for a

barn raising, to volunteer fire departments, to bake sales that raise money for local school enhancements.

Working Together

What do we mean by collaboration? The possibilities are endless. Today, two co-authors on either side of a continent write a book on 18th century ballet. A primary-care doctor in Idaho and a specialist in Rome agree on treatment for a sick child. Tomorrow, entire communities will work together over great distances to address interrelated problems like crime, inadequate education and homelessness.

Electronic communications enhance our ability to work collaboratively. It removes the impediments of time and distance, supports interactive and group communication and allows people to both divide problems into manageable pieces and assemble the component solutions.

Collaboration through electronic communication means we can expand our definition of community beyond geographical boundaries to form “virtual communities” consisting of individuals from around the globe who share a common project or interest. For example, youth workers in three neighboring areas want to develop a radio station to help engage local children. No single community has the resources— knowledge or fiscal resources— to accomplish it themselves, but together and with the aid of electronic communications, they are able to interact with knowledgeable people, assemble teams to handle individual projects, and pursue decentralized fund raising. In electronic conversation they discuss the idea with colleagues in another state who are inspired to initiate a similar program. Each group works and shares experience with the other in a virtual community that supports the action of local communities.

- *The Institute will research and advance models for community-based programs that make fair and reasonable access to information and electronic communications available to all segments of our society—particularly the disadvantaged, the struggling middle class and the disabled.*

Lack of access could lead to the most damaging potential risk of electronic communications—creation of an information and communications underclass.

Consider how isolated an illiterate person is today. She or he cannot read the want ads, or a driver’s training manual, or the names in a voting booth or the road signs ahead. In the age of electronic communications, people may be able to read and write but still not have access to the information or facilities they need to communicate. With more and more services going online and more information repositories available, we could negate all of our efforts to improve communities by excluding those most in need of help.

The issue is partly an economic one. Currently, these systems are expensive so we run the risk of excluding not just the disadvantaged, but the struggling middle class as well. There is also an education issue: providing access to the necessary literacy training and a retraining for those who may find their jobs changed or eliminated because of electronic communications. There are also issues related to inclusion, especially of the disabled and those who have their mobility restricted. It would be tragic to see the potential that electronic communications holds for inclusion turned to exclusion for lack of appropriate support.

We believe that broad-based, fair and reasonable access to information and electronic communications is critical to achieving our goals of social change and community and personal improvement.

A Strategy for Change

At the Morino Institute we subscribe to the ageless proverb, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he will eat forever.” With this in mind, the Institute’s main function is education and research into how people can better use information and electronic communications to achieve positive social change.

Timing is Everything

If people don't get the information they need when they need it, it's often no good to them. Take the case of one group of low-income families in California. They were in danger of losing their homes, and having their families broken apart. Over a communications network, their lawyer heard about a new rule from Washington that might be able to help. Equipped with this timely information, and with only a few days left before eviction, he managed to save their homes. Over three weeks later, the local housing agency heard about the new rule through the regular channels.

In accordance with our goals, we believe that the best way to achieve the change we seek is by working at the local community level in collaboration with the educators, care givers and leaders among the social intermediaries and institutions who are already working to improve their communities. These are the people who are in place, who have the respect of their communities and who have the motivation to make positive change happen. Our projects and programs will be partnerships with these people and organiza-

tions in order to gain a multiplier effect through our combined efforts. We will seek partners who are obsessively committed to their cause, who demonstrate visionary leadership and who sincerely care about the communities they serve.

Working with these partners, we will undertake projects in four key areas: Education and Communications, Community Pilot and Research Projects, Community Service Fellowships and the *CommunityWorks* network.

Education and Communications Programs

The Morino Institute will work with a wide range of partners to develop materials that will help individuals and communities understand information and electronic communications and apply both in their efforts to effect social change. These materials will

include non-traditional courses and programs of self-study as well as classroom curricula and networked, interactive, multimedia instructional tools. These materials will be supplemented by newsletters, publications and articles to keep our constituents informed and connected with the activities of the Institute and its partners. We plan to develop curricula in a number of areas including: awareness and orientation, communications and information literacy, and global and community networking services.

The Institute will also support efforts to educate the general public as well as government, institutional and business leaders in ways consistent with our goals, focusing on such issues as advancing community networking and ensuring equitable access.

Collaborative Pilot and Research Programs

The Morino Institute will act as a facilitator to organize pilot and research programs that advance people's understanding of electronic communications and networked information and how both can be used more effectively in community service. The Institute will identify worthy projects and assemble collaborative teams to undertake the study or development effort. Results of the programs, and models generated from them, will be distributed to our constituents through the Education and Communications Programs so that other communities can learn from the successes. Examples of these projects might include networking a group of community youth centers across the country or conducting a community networking research study.

Community Service Fellowships

We believe that highly committed individuals play an essential role in working toward social change and building a sense of community. Community Service Fellowships will be awarded annually to outstanding individuals who are committed to public service work, including graduating seniors from colleges and universities and community innovators. Fellows will develop and implement innovative community service projects which use electronic communications. These projects will draw on and complement the educational, research, pilot or other programs of the Institute.

The CommunityWorks Network

In addition to the program areas above, the Morino Institute will develop and maintain a computer-based knowledge delivery service, *CommunityWorks*, for use by people interested in using knowledge management, collaboration and electronic communications in community service. It will consist of knowledge repositories as well as electronic publication, distribution and mail services that will be available through the Internet and other networks. Additionally, the Institute will operate a group communications service to facilitate collaborative forums, research, publication, development and project management for our subscribers.

Knowledge As Opportunity

Our progress as a people—as a global community—has paralleled the evolution of our ability to communicate. Where there are open communications and a free flow of information, people's lives are generally made better. Where knowledge is controlled and citizens cannot interact, they lose their sense of community— their spiritual as well as communicative connectedness with others. They become alienated, apathetic and their community crumbles—whether that community is a nation, a business or a neighborhood.

The real power of electronic communications is people as the ultimate source of knowledge—not the physical mass of wires, nor the complex networks nor the vast databases of information. It is people and their relationships, insights, spirit and expertise that are passed from one person to another through those wires, networks and databases that engender the magic of this interconnected world.

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The Morino Institute

Incorporated: 1994 in the Commonwealth of Virginia

Status: Application made to the Internal Revenue Service for approval of public charity status.

Donors: The Morino Foundation and Mario M. Morino are the principal donors.

Purpose and activities: Provides fellowships, education programs and facilitation of pilot and research projects to help individuals and communities work toward social change through the power of information and the potential of electronic communications.

Fields of interest: Youth; education; leadership development; health services; community development; volunteerism; opportunities for minorities, the aged, and otherwise disadvantaged or disenfranchised.

Application information: The Institute administers a directed grant program and does not accept unsolicited grant applications.

Advisors: The Institute is supported by the following advisors:

Arthur Andersen & Company
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