



Technology and Democratic Values in the Early Republic

Chair: Peter Onuf, University of Virginia

Comment: Brian Balogh, University of Virginia

Friday, November 3, 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Dome Room, the Rotunda

“By the Press we can speak to Nations”: Franklin, Newspapers, and the Revolutionary Construction of an American Identity

Robert Parkinson, Shepherd University

When war broke out between England and its American colonies in 1775, one of the most difficult problems facing the leaders of what would be known as the American Revolution was that of definition. What did they want? How would they get a majority of their fellow colonists to take their side? And most importantly, who were they? Since the American Revolution was, at its heart, a massive, multi-layered argument, patriot leaders understood that their ability to wage a successful military campaign depended on their skill in defining the shape and identity of “the American people.” They had to establish a national narrative that was capacious enough to transcend local prejudices and intercolonial rivalries and also persuasive enough to sustain their republican rebellion. They had to create a founding, a persuasive civic myth that explained who belonged to this emerging nation, who did not, and why. In other words, they needed stories – compelling ones.

The best way to accomplish this difficult task was through print. Newspapers could function as potent revolutionary weapons; through the universal practice of “exchanges” –the clipping of pieces from other papers to insert into your own – they were the medium through which the diverse and suspicious colonies might actually perceive a “common cause.” No one understood the power of newspapers better than Benjamin Franklin. A few months after the battle of Yorktown, the printer-turned-politician wrote a friend that the leaders of the American Revolution had to utilize the most significant technological tool at their disposal: “now by the press we can speak to Nations.” “The facility with which the same Truths may be repeatedly enforc’d by placing them daily in different lights,” he continued, “gives a great chance of establishing them. And we now find that it is not only right to strike while the Iron is hot, but that it is very practicable to heat it by continual striking.”¹

¹ Benjamin Franklin to Richard Price, 13 June 1782, in William Willcox, ed. *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* 37 vols. to date (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-), 37:472-473.

This paper examines how Franklin and his fellow leaders in the Revolutionary movement used the technologies of print to help define the “American people.” More specifically, the patriots printed and reprinted – or, to use Franklin’s words, struck and continued to strike – countless war stories that celebrated the values and character of “Americans,” while denigrating the behavior of their enemies. These war stories matter – both then and now – because of images they contained and the assumptions they underscored. They matter because the most prevalent way Franklin and the Revolutionaries used print to shape an “American identity” during the Revolutionary War was through printing stories that denigrated the British by making them the sponsors of slave “insurrections,” Indian “massacres,” and Hessian “atrocities.” Stories about the British aiding Virginia’s slaves to desert their masters, British agents working with Indians on the frontier to slaughter innocent civilians, and the King encouraging German mercenaries to pillage Pennsylvania farms were just as much part of the news of the Revolution as the battles of Saratoga or Yorktown. Revolutionary leaders – Benjamin Franklin especially – worked diligently on this project of circulating images and stories through the press that conflated black, red, and Britain as one “foreign” enemy. Aided by the technology of print, I argue these stories constructed a negative identity against which “the American people” could be defined. They constituted the founding, civic myth that would have significant consequences for the shape of citizenship in the early years of the American republic. This paper will examine how technology, politics, war, race, and citizenship collided at the founding to create a nation based on the idea that belonging was restricted to whites only.

***A Monopoly of Steam:
Robert Fulton, Robert Livingston, and Commercial Collisions on the Hudson***
Brian Murphy, University of Virginia

In 1798, the state of New York made a deal with Robert R. Livingston. Eager to see steamboats promote upstate settlement and invigorate waterborne commerce, but lacking the capital or expertise to design and deploy such a vessel, the Legislature agreed to give Livingston a multi-decade monopoly on steam technology if he could successfully launch a boat within the next ten years. In the late 1780s the state had made a similar offer to Philadelphia inventor John Fitch; it re-assigned the grant to Livingston in light of Fitch’s subsequent inaction.

Although Livingston was an improver – frequently corresponding about designs for pumps or the virtues of raising merino sheep – he was not an inventor. By 1798, Livingston had spent most of his life in politics and law as the state’s chancellor, a representative at Congress and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention; in 1800 he would become the nation’s minister to France. Yet Livingston, whose personal connections and fortune were unrivalled in New York, was the ideal choice to become the state’s agent. Both he and the Legislature recognized that steam technology would not have to be *invented*, but *adapted* to become an instrument to unify and develop the state. In this way, nobody was better positioned to patronize American engineers and import foreign steam technology to New York than Robert R. Livingston.

And so he did. While in France, Livingston recognized in Robert Fulton the ingenuity and practicality he desired. The duo publicly launched the *Clermont* on the Hudson in 1807, fulfilling the state’s charge to build a twenty-ton steamboat that could travel against the current of the 325-mile long river at a minimum of four miles per hour in the presence of the governor,

lieutenant governor and surveyor-general. In return, they were given the exclusive right to use and license steamboats on the waters of New York state.

As this paper demonstrates, monopoly rights could be useful legal instrumentalities for states to mobilize private investment in research and development, but at the same time were vulnerable because they were fundamentally incompatible with a republican conception of political economy. In this case, the steamboat monopoly made the state's waterways lively arteries for commerce and spurred the planning of the Erie Canal, yet Livingston and Fulton's rights were routinely violated and politically assaulted by rival interests. Distributive political pluralism was a creative force in New York's economy and a political solution to the state's limited financial capacity, but turned destructive once factions seized the Legislature and state courts to challenge the legitimacy of patents and grants. In time, intra-monopoly rivalries fostered broader inter-state commercial conflicts as neighboring states circumscribed the rights of other states' citizens to protect their own intellectual property. In the wake of these travails, I argue, John Marshall was forced to sketch a view of federalism in his 1824 *Gibbons v. Ogden* decision to ensure that technological innovation and the commercial benefits of the federal union did not conflict. Reconciling Adam Smith's liberal political economy with states' internal transportation needs, Marshall proceeded to create a national free trade zone under the Constitution's 'Commerce Clause.'

***Thomas Jefferson and the Evolution of a Populist Vision of
Intellectual Property Rights and Democratic Values***

Jeffrey Matsuura, Alliance Law Group

Thomas Jefferson's philosophy on intellectual property rights reflects a populist vision linked closely to his view of democratic values. This Jeffersonian vision of intellectual property rights, based on principles of open access, information sharing, and collaborative creation, was substantially shaped by Jefferson's unique background as a scientist/inventor, patent law pioneer, and active consumer of intellectual property. Jefferson's populist vision, recognizing a close and essential connection between public access to intellectual property and vitality of the democratic system, represents an important perspective which is often in conflict with a more rigidly proprietary notion of intellectual property rights which has become popular over time. This presentation describes Jefferson's intellectual property rights vision, compares that vision with the more proprietary intellectual property model, and applies the Jeffersonian philosophy to a select group of current intellectual property rights issues (e.g., "open source" software, peer-to-peer digital file-sharing, intellectual property in the developing world).

Political Lives of Inventors

Chair: Tom Hughes, University of Pennsylvania, emeritus

Comment: Jack Brown, University of Virginia

Saturday, November 4, 9:15 to 10:45 a.m

Harrison Institute

Tom Paine's Iron Bridge and the Technology of Nationhood

Edward Gray, Florida State University

If there is one figure who embodies trans-Atlantic revolution in the eighteenth century it is Tom Paine. In addition to crafting the democratic idiom of *Common-Sense*--an idiom that shaped republicanism on both sides of the Atlantic--Paine provided some of the most cogent arguments anywhere against hereditary governance. We no longer think that what Paine said in Revolutionary Philadelphia or Revolutionary Paris was entirely original, but few historians would challenge Paine's unusual capacity to make republicanism an essential rational creed. Paine did this through the mastery of one form of technology: the written word. As any great pamphleteer, Paine made writing an instrument for political change.

But Paine's relationship to technology was not limited to the quill pen and the printing press. Indeed, Paine was as much a revolutionary inventor as he was a revolutionary pamphleteer. From 1784 until the end of his life, Paine pursued a solution to one of the most vexing engineering problems of human history: spanning rivers. That pursuit resulted in an innovative design for an iron bridge, a design Paine tirelessly promoted almost to the end of his life. It was in fact the bridge project that initially brought Paine back to France and then England after the American Revolution.

For the most part historians have had little to say about this chapter in Paine's life. It was, they seem to agree, simply a reflection of that "projecting spirit" so familiar to the artisans and tinkerers of Revolutionary Philadelphia. But, my paper suggests, that projecting spirit was more than a footnote to Paine's political career. It was at its very heart. Paine regarded himself as an inventor, and not just an inventor of iron bridges. He saw himself as an inventor of a new political reality, and technological innovation was essential to that new reality. In freeing individuals from the perils of pre-modern life, it freed them to become true citizens, with a vested interest in a new polity. This spirit of invention, as much as any particular brand of republicanism, unified the Revolutionary Atlantic and made Paine a truly Atlantic Revolutionary.

Democracy, Technology, and Changing Ideas of "Americanness": the Case of Samuel F. B. Morse

Sarah Kate Gillespie, Brooklyn Historical Society

Through his invention of the electro-magnetic telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse was widely hailed as the logical successor to Benjamin Franklin's legacy of nationalistic innovation. The fabric of American society and culture, however, had altered drastically in the one hundred or so years between Franklin's contributions and those of Morse. Increased immigration and the

ascendancy of the middle class throughout the nineteenth century tested many citizens' notions of democracy and what exactly it meant to be "American." This paper explores the tension between changing notions of democracy, and the technologies that promoted these changes, as embodied by Morse's attitudes towards both.

In addition to his invention of the telegraph, Morse was also one of the first in the country to use and promote the daguerreotype, one of the earliest methods of photography. Both of these technologies can be described as democratic in nature, and affordable, instant communication, be it of words or images, played an enormous role in the continuing rise of industry, which in turn engendered vast social changes. Morse, who has been characterized as "a man of culture in the age of Jackson," was strongly opposed to the social changes that his own invention, the telegraph, helped to create, and he strove to retain photography within the realm of the fine arts, rather than celebrate its democraticizing potential. The artist and inventor had long been of two minds: one committed to helping his fellow man, embodied in activities such as co-founding the National Academy of Design, and the other as a guardian and arbiter of cultural taste, who felt it was the job of the nation's elite to educate and edify the lower classes. This paper traces the correlation between Morse's deepening involvement with these technologies and his increasing nationalism and xenophobia, which culminated in a series of events: his 1836 and 1841 mayoral runs for New York as the Nativist candidate, his publications of vitriolic anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant tracts in this same time period, and his activity as an ardent anti-abolitionist in the 1860s. This essay explicates Morse's ideas regarding democracy and how it shifted as he moved from artist to inventor, and how such activities are representative of a larger cultural resistance to and anxiety regarding new technologies and the social changes they helped produce.

King Crank: Technology and Democracy in the Golden Age of the American Eccentric

Robert MacDougall, University of Western Ontario

The decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in America were, it has rightly been said, a "golden age of the crank." Literally, a crank is a piece of machinery, and Americans in these years embraced machine technologies with immense enthusiasm. Scores turned their hands to tinkering and invention in hopes of becoming the next Thomas Edison or Alexander Graham Bell. Figuratively, a crank is an eccentric individual obsessed with a single idea, and America was rich in these too. Eclectic druggists, backyard inventors, and political prophets toiled over patent medicines, perpetual motion machines, and social or financial nostrums for the ills of American democracy. Members of this eccentric fraternity often turned their hands to both technological and political reforms. This paper explores the interplay of technology and democracy in the personal imaginations and the public images of the great American cranks.

Before the late nineteenth century, there had been little systematic effort in America to define the boundaries of legitimate and illegitimate scholarship. In Benjamin Franklin's day, the scientific American was not a specialist but a generalist, dabbling in a variety of academic disciplines. "The book of Nature is open to all," Franklin said—any humble tinkerer might remake the nation. Nineteenth-century Americans continued to cherish Franklin's democratic vision of technology and applied science. The professionalization of American engineering, science, and medicine around the end of the nineteenth century, however, required purging these

professions of dabblers and dilettantes. In the same way, the growth and bureaucratization of government pushed enthusiastic amateurs away from the machinery of American democracy. By the early twentieth century, a would-be Franklin who dabbled simultaneously in electrical, political, and moral experiments might well be regarded as a kook or a crank.

Yet the so-called cranks pushed back. They attacked the increasing specialization and stratification of American science and society, and appealed to popular traditions of democratic anti-elitism and homespun common sense. In an era of economic crises and social upheavals, they portrayed American democracy itself as a marvelous but malfunctioning machine that required only some small adjustment to resolve the growing contradictions between morality and progress, poverty and prosperity. In this, the so-called cranks reflected and responded to the anxieties and attitudes of a much larger public.

This project draws on the Archives of Useless Research, a remarkable collection of fringe inventions, pseudoscience, and eccentric political philosophies from the “crank files” of both *Scientific American* and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Archives’ contents date back to the late nineteenth century, and they document in a strange but compelling way a period of great change in American political and intellectual life. Scholars have examined the fervid politics of Gilded Age reformers and the technological ferment of the simultaneous “age of invention,” but not united them. In this paper, I aim to understand the interaction of technology and democracy in the eccentric enthusiasms of that age, and to explore the changing place of scientific and political expertise in a nation torn between its faith in scientific progress and its commitment to egalitarian ideals.

Manifesting Democratic Values in Art and Technology

Chair: Susan Stein, Monticello

Comment: TBD

Saturday, November 4, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Harrison Institute

Jeffersonian Politics, Republican Technology, and American Nationalism in Charles Wilson Peale's *The Exhumation of the Mastodon* (1806-08)

Katherine Woltz, University of Virginia

Peale's grand manner history painting *The Exhumation of the Mastodon* ostensibly records the artist-inventor's recovery of the first nearly complete "mammoth" skeleton. However, this interpretation raises two problems. First, where is the mastodon, and second, why did Peale wait five years to begin the *Exhumation* when the event happened in 1801? In this presentation, I will argue that the answer lies in the painting's focus on Peale's invention that is a combination man-wheel, trough, and chain of buckets, and what he felicitously termed "the lesson of the mastodon." The lesson is made manifest to viewers of the painting through Peale's appropriation of the grand manner painting formula, whereby narrative compositions borrow from classicism in order to insert thinly-veiled commentary on contemporary political issues, and encapsulate central axioms such as heroic action and moral edification. Significantly, the *Exhumation* provides a window into the past when the debate between Jeffersonians and Federalists to define national identity and the role of technology in a democracy became so divisive it threatened the infant Republic with collapse. Peale's response relies on the mobilization of ancient knowledge for a contemporary problem whereby his invention and the expedition that prompted its construction became sources of nationalist pride. Based on a water-draining mechanism described by Vitruvius in *De Architectura*, Peale's invention allowed for the first successful harvest of the mastodon's remains. Significantly, "Peale's Wheel" also points to a carefully packaged political manifesto.

These deeper implications are expressed in the painting's interlocking compositional devices which are, fittingly, connected by interactions between different groupings of people and related technological inventions associated exclusively with America and its economic potential. Deploying the concept of the mastodon as his explanatory device, Peale constructs American identity through its citizenry and native inventions, while cleverly marking the cleavage between Federalist and Republican visions of government and its role in a democracy. In the painting, Peale gestures to the pit and his invention. He stands with his family and across the pit from the noted ornithologist, poet, and artist, Alexander Wilson. Kindred spirits, the latter's condemnation of the dehumanizing effects of the British Industrial Revolution led him to seek political asylum in America, where he wrote verses for the patriotic song "Jefferson and Liberty." Intimately connected to the project of the politicized mastodon, the song also celebrated the end of the Federalist "witch-hunt" and "reign of tyranny" with the advent of Jeffersonian-style laissez-faire government. Strategically gathered between Wilson and Peale, however, are fashionable fops whose expressions of incomprehension are palpable as they watch the industry in the pit. They provide compelling parallels to the Hamiltonian Federalists, who lampooned the "Boney-parts," or Jefferson, the "mammoth President," and his closest

supporters—identified as Peale and the American Philosophical Society—as the champions of the “mobocracy” and “visionary democratic science.” Federalist barbs, however, lost their sting as the economic promise of the Louisiana Purchase became manifest. In sum, Peale’s *Exhumation* celebrates the Jeffersonians’ nationalist vision, its promise of harmonious relations between labor and industry, and its victory over the dissenting voice of the Federalists.

Monuments to the American Republic and its Technology

Jennifer Amundson, Judson College

The development of civic institutions which would steer the country’s progress was a primary concern for Americans exercising their growing sense of nationalism during the Federal Period. While such organizations would establish American identity abstractly, the physical structures which housed them would do so tangibly. Architecture was destined to play an important role in this pursuit because of its potential to aesthetically express institutional and communal values; it could do so through both carefully selected styles and also the functions which would receive the greatest architectural elaboration. Rather than through typical symbols of nationhood like court houses and capitol buildings, it was certain civil engineering projects that became the monuments which best express the interaction of democracy with another important American value: invention. In particular, the earliest projects for the Philadelphia Waterworks clearly reveal the manner in which technology and politics were integrated in the creation of republican institutions.

In Philadelphia, the municipally-supported Watering Committee was charged with the progressive task of providing pure water to a city that had enjoyed prominence in both the scientific and political realms. The very construction of both the original distribution system and a later expansion conveys American enthusiasm for, and confidence in, technology. Its enclosure in a domed, white marble pavilion (Center Square Pump House, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, 1799-1800) and within a collection of Greek temple-like structures (Fair Mount, Frederick Graff, 1815-22) reveals the understanding that the system was an outgrowth of America’s political system: both the government and its architecture were based in classical antiquity. By employing this precedent source, the Pump House and Fairmount Wheel Rooms were elevated to the status of other such civic exemplars.

The message of the buildings was expressed by the classical architectural vocabulary and also specific sculptural programs that reinforced the idea of republican virtue and technological achievement. Sculptor William Rush adopted the trope of free-standing draped muses and reclining river gods, but altered them through the addition of specific and legible national iconography, engineering symbolism and figural metaphor. At once inspirational and didactic, the sculpture illustrated the workings of the system and referenced the government responsible for it.

The success and popularity of the projects, and public understanding of their significance, is evident through their inclusion in tour booklets, selection as sites for patriotic holiday celebrations, and elevation as appropriate subjects for landscape paintings. The Waterworks projects should be considered among the most celebrated of nineteenth-century public buildings, for in them Americans saw the promise of their republican government realized in a tangible way. The extraordinary scientific endeavor to deliver clean water to all citizens was an

achievement of the American Republic—not a European monarchy—expressed through the art and architecture that housed stunning new technology harnessed for republican ends.

“That all my works may be cast [at] an American Establishment”:

H.K. Brown and the Origins of American Bronze Monuments

Karen Lemmey, National Gallery of Art

In the decades following the Revolution, many Americans expressed an interest in building monuments to the founding fathers, however, the scarcity of bronze foundries in the United States made it difficult to produce monumental sculptures locally. As a consequence, the earliest American monument commissions were awarded to European artists, such as Antonio Canova and Jean Antoine Houdon, both of whom shipped marble statues of Washington to the United States from their studios in Europe. In the late 1840s the American sculptor Henry Kirke Brown began experimenting with casting bronze in a rudimentary foundry in his studio in Brooklyn, New York. Eventually, Brown collaborated with the Ames Manufacturing Company, a firearms factory in Chicopee, Massachusetts, to cast his monumental equestrian statue of George Washington, unveiled in Union Square, Manhattan on the Fourth of July 1856, one of the first bronze monuments successfully cast in this country. Brown and Ames’ success revolutionized the monument industry in the United States by affording local sculptors the opportunity to finally build monuments on their home soil.

This paper examines Brown’s groundbreaking work with the Ames foundry and considers how this new bronze industry led to the dissemination of democratic values embodied in the sculptures of public monuments. With the establishment of bronze foundries commissions for American monuments shifted away from European artists into the hands of American artists, many of whom tried to make monuments more accessible to a wider public audience. For example, American artists like Brown abandoned Canova’s neoclassical precedent of depicting Washington in the guise of a Roman general—an allusion that was lost on many Americans—and instead chose to show the founding father as he appeared in life wearing the Continental Army uniform. Moreover, the medium bronze was heralded as patriotic and befitting of American monuments since it could be wrought entirely in the United States, while most of the early monuments had been made of Italian marble.

Ultimately, the expansion of the bronze industry allowed for the proliferation of monuments across the country, a democratization of one of the principal means of commemoration. Indeed, in the decades after the Civil War, it became possible for even the smallest township to erect a monument to a local hero or an unknown soldier, a contrast to earlier decades when only the most illustrious statesmen of national importance were honored with monuments erected in capital cities.

Technology and the Practice of Democracy

Chair: Bruce Williams, University of Virginia

Comment: Chris Sprigman, University of Virginia

Saturday, November 4, 1:45 to 3:45 p.m.

Harrison Institute

Communications Technology and Democracy: Localism and Nationalism at the Birth of American Broadcasting

Bill Kirkpatrick, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Within a few years of its emergence, American broadcasting shifted from a predominantly local non-commercial or goodwill medium to a predominantly national commercial medium, a development that has profoundly affected the role of communications technology in U.S. democracy, restricting access to the public sphere, limiting the marketplace of ideas, and de-emphasizing participatory democracy at the local level. This shift has been largely attributed to the political and economic power of corporate interests in the radio industry, as well as the failure of regulators to effectively contain the commercialism and consolidation that marginalized local and non-commercial media. While this standard account is persuasive, it relies primarily on economic motivators and fails to fully explain how social and ideological forces contributed to this result. I wish, therefore, to augment this standard political-economic explanation by situating the growth of communications technology within the context of competing values of localism and nationalism in American society.

One of the persistent structuring features of American life has been the tension between local and national identities, with Americans negotiating, on the one hand, the forces of centralization and an imagined national community, and, on the other hand, decentralization and local particularism. This tension has had important implications for democracy; for example, for much of the nineteenth century, local identities and local public spheres maintained a central role in American life thanks to the broad appeal of Jeffersonian agrarianism—an ideology largely of individualism and localism—complemented by the weakness of trans-local technologies and nationalizing institutions (e.g. the federal government was, in Benjamin Barber's phrase, "little more than a post office plus a President"ⁱ).

In the early twentieth century, social class increasingly inflected this tension between nationalism and localism, as an emerging national class of self-consciously "modern" professionals, holding privileged positions in the new corporate economy, advanced a vision of a centralized and cosmopolitan American society. Technocrats like Herbert Hoover, critics like Walter Lippmann, and artists like Sinclair Lewis celebrated a modern national state that relegated localism to the realm of the "pre-modern": sentimental, inefficient, and backward. Importantly, when broadcasting emerged in the 1920s, it began as a local phenomenon, growing out of the efforts of thousands of amateurs around the country. But in the hands of Hoover, professionals like RCA's David Sarnoff, and the technocrats of the Federal Radio Commission, radio was shaped neither to foster participatory democracy nor to support local identities and public spheres, but rather to bring about a modern America that privileged a particular class-based national identity. The resulting national media in turn helped reinforce and extend that national identity well beyond the national class, and further undermined the ability of

communications technology to strengthen local democratic structures. Although there were countervailing trends to this process, I argue that out of the tension between local and national identities and politics, technology was made to serve national identities at the expense of local ones and used to advance a centralized, technocratic political structure over the interests of localized democracy and local public spheres.

¹ Benjamin Barber, foreword, "Mary Parker Follett as Democratic Hero," *The New State*, by Mary Parker Follett (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State U P, 1998) xiv.

***The Dictograph Era:
Eavesdropping Technologies and the Quest for Social Knowledge
in Progressive Era American Culture***

Woody Register, Sewanee: The University of the South

In late April 1911, the headlines of Ohio newspapers broadcast astonishing revelations of corruption in the state capital. Influential legislators had been caught red-handed taking bribes from a team of undercover private detectives who were posing as well-heeled lobbyists. More sensational still was the evidence the detectives claimed to possess: a stenographic record of the conspirators' clandestine conversations. That record was made possible by a mysterious electronic device called the dictograph—a hand-sized, battery-operated, telephonic apparatus that the detectives had hidden beneath a couch in the hotel room where the deals were struck. The dictograph enabled a court stenographer positioned nearby to listen in on and transcribe every word of the corrupt transaction. The people of Ohio, the *New York Times* reported, were "wild with admiration for the innocent-looking little evidence gatherer."

The Ohio scandal marked the beginning of what *Puck* humorously labeled "The Dictograph Era," the period from 1911 through 1916 when progress-minded politicians and social reformers commonly used the technology to expose graft and terrorize "evil doers" in state capitols and city halls across the nation. At the same time, the device was implanted in popular culture, acting decisively against the forces of social evil in Broadway dramas, vaudeville sketches, popular detective fiction, and motion pictures. By 1916, when published references to the dictograph no longer bothered to define its function, eavesdropping technology was thoroughly integrated into the period's popular political culture.

The use of such technologies today troubles our regard for privacy, but in the Dictograph Era, reactions of wonder vastly outweighed the few expressions of concern. The dictograph was widely admired for its unrivaled ability to discover the truth about who a person was or what the nature of social reality was. The technology thus addressed the concerns of many Progressives who struggled, as Jane Addams put it, to develop a "method by which to discover men." The dictograph was a mechanism of discovery at a time when the acquisition of social knowledge was becoming an essential function of the new agencies of social research and the proto-liberal state. By acting covertly, its advocates believed, the dictograph pierced the veil of illusion that protected systems of corruption. It seemed ideally suited to investigate, expose, and indict organized social evil. These capacities were popularized in two related varieties of "Dictograph Era" stories that I examine in detail: first, those profiling the real-life private detective William J. Burns, whose sensational investigations spread knowledge of the technology's social reform

value; and second, those featuring the fictional “scientific detective” Craig Kennedy, who frequently used dictographs to solve confounding crimes in the many mysteries written by Arthur B. Reeve between 1910 and 1917. These stories argued that systematic deception produced the knowledge essential to the healthy functioning of a modern democratic nation. These arguments articulated a case for clandestine social investigation that still shapes contemporary debates weighing the value of privacy against a democratic public’s interest in knowing the real truth.

***The Trouble with Television:
Understanding Rational Consumption of Mass Media in the Digital Age***

Sam Abrams, Harvard University

Democratic theorists, from Tocqueville to Putnam, have argued that an active, civil society can make the state more effective and representative. In recent decades, however, advanced industrial democracies- most notably the United States- have witnessed a decline in social capital, thinning forms of political participation, and diminishing numbers of people voting on Election Day. Many social scientists have linked the decline of civil society and democratic health to the advent of new technologies such as television and the internet. (Putnam, 1991, 1994) While there has been debate about the particulars associated with "bowling alone"- a generational effect, measurement of social capital, and the "dark side" of civic engagement (Fiorina, 1999;Sunstein, 2004)- this paper will challenge the conventional and prevailing wisdom that television and other forms of so-called "isolating media" have a uniform effect of atomizing the American citizenry. In many cases, they promote and encourage debate and enhance democratic systems.

I argue that television and the internet have the capacity to unify as well as isolate- the key question, however, is understanding the conditions under which the arrow points in a particular direction.

This project takes a cue from the dawn of the television age where Edward R Murrow argued that how we approach and harness the power of technology is essential. If society views television and the .net only as a conduit for pop culture and advertising, mass media "is good for nothing but to entertain, amuse and insulate. “However, this project argues and agrees with Murrow's hope, "This instrument can teach. It can illuminate and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it towards those ends. Otherwise, it is merely wires and lights in a box.”

Accordingly, I build on a reputation based, “status” model of political participation in which mass media consumption is central (Abrams, Iversen, and Soskice 2006) and will show that the effects of the rise of mass media have been far from homogenous. Pre-existing social conditions shape our media consumption habits and subsequently inform, engage, and, in particular cases, isolate the electorate.

The Golden Age of socialization has not ended. In reality, Americans engage in political talk and social gatherings more regularly now than a number of generations ago. The content and nature of what is being discussed has changed.

This paper will show that the how citizenry approaches television, the internet, and other forms of mass communication is a function of the local norms and attitudes toward participation

within their particular socio-political communities. Thus, I offer a reconceptualization of the rational choices people make when they decide whether to vote or inform themselves about politics. People do not acquire information and go to the polls, I argue, because they are particularly dutiful or because they are fooled into thinking their vote matters. Rather, they do so because such behavior is sometimes an important source of respect and standing in the groups and networks to which people belong. This is an idea that has recently attracted attention in economic theory (Brenner and Pettit 2004), and it has a long pedigree in sociology. Nonetheless, it has not been incorporated into a rational choice understanding of voter turnout and political knowledge acquisition.

In short, this approach can advance our understanding of consumption of political information and who reads and watches in our current digital age.

***Faxing in Politics:
Revolutionary or Reinforcing Technology?***
Jonathan Coopersmith, Texas A&M University

Do new technologies change the practice of politics? Does the introduction of new tools of communication enable more people to become politically active? Is technological change in politics the same process as other areas of society?

This paper uses the introduction of the fax machine into politics in America and other countries to examine these questions. Three stages of faxing's inclusion into politics emerged:

- An early innovative use by outsiders, which generated much excitement.
- Integration into normal political activities and organizations, which benefitted from fax's efficiencies. The standards of expected competence (normal behavior) rose, so the non-user was seen as the odd duck.
- Efforts at large-scale exploitation, which favored those with larger resources (e.g., blast faxing and astroturf campaigns).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, early adopters initially employed faxing quite innovatively and successfully, enabling outside groups to organize more effectively than before, expand their base, and score some noticeable political successes. These innovative applications generated much excitement about fax's potential as a revolutionary tool.

Very quickly more established organizations and institutions adopted faxing, gaining operational efficiencies but using the communication technology more traditionally as a faster, better, and sometimes cheaper way than what came before (such as mass mailings). By the mid-1990s, faxing was a normal and essential part of political campaigns and daily political activities. From a technology of wonder, it had evolved into a tool of toil.

Just as corporations became the largest users of fax machines, so too did larger political organizations embrace faxing. Even as volunteers for small groups spent hours over a standalone fax machine, better funded candidates hired firms to "blastfax" thousands of press releases in an hour. Lobbyists used faxing to create astroturf campaigns that appeared local in origin. The revolutionary potential of faxing had largely vanished.

But not completely: In certain cases – Panama and Thailand , faxing proved essential in overthrowing the existing order or preventing its return. In two other cases, China in 1989 and Saudi Arabia, faxing was used to incite revolution, but failed. In all cases, faxing helped exiles communicate among each other and to regular citizens (faxing blindly or spamming). In the latter cases, however, that spamming proved ineffective for reasons ranging from state security (e.g, there were so few fax machines in China that the state could monitor them) to a populace not ready to revolt.

One of the most significant consequences of faxing was a compression of the news cycle from hours or days to minutes. Campaigns and correspondents had to respond more quickly. By accelerating the news cycle, faxing has contributed to a de-emphasis of contemplative coverage as reporting has changed to more of the ‘he said, she said’ variety that allows less thinking and more reaction.

Significantly, the three stages of faxing’s integration can be seen with more recent technologies, including email, websites, blogging, and, most recently, podcasting. According to the Bivings Report, 96% of the 2006 U.S. Senate candidates have active Web sites, 23% are blogging, 18% have an RSS feed, and 5% are podcasting. The number of channels for political organizations to communicate internally and externally has risen, as have the resources needed to harness them. Tactics and strategies, however, still lag behind.
