

Book Proposal (DRAFT: 11-26-2005)

Josh Koenig (joshk@outlandishjosh.com)

Mike Connery (mike.connery@gmail.com)

What We Will Write About

We will write and co-edit a collaborative volume of polemic and philosophy exploring the confluence of progressive left-wing politics with the emerging movements of open source technology and internet/participatory culture.

It will outline in plain language what democracy should mean in the 21st-Century, plotting the progressive course forward.

In considering 21st Century democracy, we will address the following:

1. How technology is changing our means and forms of social organization: the decline of monolithic media and the growth of more network-like social bodies.
2. What traditional core ethics and values (such as equality, justice, transparency, community, opportunity) mean in this context. What these changes mean in terms of how power is distributed, checked and balanced.
3. Trends that are already defining the citizen-culture of the 21st century e.g a recent Pew study showing more than 1/2 of online teens are content creators, not just consumers; the drive towards universal internet access; the rethinking of intellectual property.

The writing will draw on a diverse set of experiences and skills, approaching the subjects from both practical and learned standpoints. We will contribute a significant amount of core content, as well as serving as frontline editors for contributed writings.

Who Are We?

We are co-founders of the national political non-profit Music For America, which fused contemporary youth culture with progressive political values to reach over 2 million young voters in the 2003-2004 election cycle. Together we produced the organization's website -- which served as both its public face and central organizing hub -- as well as all associated literature, message, and editorial content.

Mike has is currently the Web Editor for the Opportunity Agenda, a start-up progressive research, policy and communications organization. His writing has been published in *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *Time Out New York* and *Popular Mechanics*.

Josh has been a professional open-source developer for five years, and currently writes software and offers online campaign consulting through Trellon.com. He also blogs furiously (5,000 words a week on average) at outlandishjosh.com.

Both Mike and Josh's writings have been featured around the blogosphere on the frontpages of popular progressive sites like the Daily Kos and MyDD.

Who Will Read This?

The market for this book has several facets. First and foremost we intend to appeal to the large population of readers who are broadly interested in the social implications of technology and technologically-mediated behavior. Readers like these purchase books like *Emergence*, *The World Is Flat*, *Bowling Alone*, and so on.

In addition to that general class of opinion-leaders who are following the broad trends, there are a series of niche markets the book could appeal to:

- Those with a practical interest in the intersection of politics and technology (e.g. *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, Markos Zuniga and Jerome Armstrong's forthcoming book)
- Those following the changing dynamics in media (e.g. *Blog*, *We the Media*, *Free Culture*)
- Progressives in search of new ideas (*Don't Think of an Elephant*, *Another World Is Possible*)
- Younger readers in search of a political/social paradigm that resonates with the new realities of internet media and participatory culture (potentially a large and influential market, currently untapped)
- The academic market for media studies and related fields.

We see the book as having a long shelf life. By focusing on underlying principles, long-run trends, lofty polemic and street-level practical advice, we believe we can create something which will retain its relevance throughout our lives.

How Will We Write This?

We see this book as the standard-bearer and intellectual backbone of a larger ongoing inquiry which will take place primarily online, with a website launching well in advance of the book itself. As practical experts, we would build and maintain this site ourselves. This will allow us to both widen and deepen the scope of our efforts, as well as helping to draft and distill the highest quality writing for publication.

By developing and nurturing a diverse community of writers who can provide peer-review and feedback to one-another, we will establish a common vocabulary across disciplines, a shared vision for our work. The resulting collection of content will then be less of a typical anthology or reader – merely compiling stand-alone pieces around a topic -- and more of a true collaboration, with an emphasis on continuity between sections.

The larger publishing effort will help develop a core readership for the book. It will also produce further opportunities in the world of offline publishing:

- Excerpts and adaptations of book/web-content for periodical publication
- News stories about the book and the process in and of itself

- Ongoing and extended writing from the authors after publication of the book

Finally, the book could include an interactive cd-rom to increase its value. This could contain supplemental text, media, links to online resources/citations and other auxiliary materials.

In terms of literally how it will be written, we envision a structured process in which we act as junior editors and “shepherds” for our contributors, helping them develop their sections and making sure they integrate well. We will also contribute a significant amount of original content ourselves, as well as drafting interstitial content between contributed sections to give the volume a sense of wholeness.

Who Will We Ask To Contribute?

Our list of potential contributors is large and growing. In theory there is room for infinite contributions to the online/ongoing publishing effort, but below is a short list of the people we are actively hoping to contribute content that will be in The Book:

- Holmes Wilson, Nicholas Reville and Tiffany Chang from DownhillBattle, a leading organization in the participatory culture movement
- Leighton Woodhouse, Labor organizer, Fellow at the New Progressive Coalition
- Thenmozhi Soundararajan, thirdworldmajority.org
- Franz Hartl, MFA co-founder and student of Religion, Ethics and Law
- Clay Sirky, NYU Prof and general open-source genius
- David Weinberger, co-author "Cluetrain Manifesto"

Other contributors will be practical experts and scholars from a broad range of fields including economics, international relations, social sciences, etc.