

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING (14.5)

- Using three different search tools, search for information on a single topic of your or your instructor's choice. For each tool, note the usefulness of the search tips, the number of "hits" for your topic, the range of hits, the reliability of sites, and so on. Then, in a three- to four-page argument, recommend one of these tools (comparing all three) to a first-time Internet user doing research on your topic.
- Select two of the criteria discussed in this site (i.e., Scope, Authority and Bias, Accuracy, etc.). For each, study one of the linked sites (on the Web site itself) and write a brief, bulleted evaluation of the site in terms of the criterion.
- Write a one-page extended definition of "information," using at least three of the definitional strategies in Chapter 4.
- Write a one-page extended definition of "knowledge," in which you contrast it with "information."

## POLITICS ON THE INTERNET

DOUG BAILEY

*"Politics on the Internet" appeared in the August/September 1999 issue of the Library of Congress magazine Civilization. According to its site on the Web (<http://www.libraryofcongress.gov/civilization>), the magazine is not a political journal, but it encourages strong opinions. Taking its inspiration from the vast holdings of the Library of Congress, Civilization uses the past to increase understanding of the present."*

*Doug Bailey is particularly well-suited to write on the subject of politics on the Internet, as he is the founder and publisher of National Journal's The Hotline, an Internet service offering daily on-line briefings on American politics.*

The jargon classically embodies a corollary to the general law of supply and demand: When the people pick the music, they're much more likely to listen to it. So while some of us may dread the prospect of democratization of democracy via the Internet—and some may cringe at the thought that an on-line campaign by core supporters helped lift Jesse Ventura off the mat and into the Minnesota governor's chair—make no mistake: The full interactive potential of the Internet offers a real chance to restore some purpose to our politics by restoring some power to our people.

Of course, there already have been a number of well-publicized abuses of democracy on-line—and there will be plenty more. E-mail campaigns organized by interest groups will dog congressional computers. Politicians will scarcely be in a position to restrain themselves from sending e-mail spam—it being as free as the franking privilege. Phony sites will fool the gullible. Some members of Congress will even use the web to raise campaign contributions the night before a big floor vote. All that, and more, is inevitable.

Individual empowerment, of course, is most likely to give advantage to those who seek it—including relatively small-scale but highly motivated, true-believing interests. And even the most ubiquitous availability of technology is unlikely to empower those on the bottom rungs in a free-enterprise economy. It's a new millennium, not nirvana.

information  
tracks  
handouts  
forms

Issues:  
organization  
vision and  
site

clude page or site by-  
ness of the site's orga-  
nization/example sections,  
ay, or may not, impact  
feel. If a citation of the  
ers will visit the site,  
; annotated to include  
; site presentation and  
is very difficult to use,  
of use it as a reference.

ization for the appro-

1 textual references  
f graphics and multi-  
sections appropriately  
provided back to start-  
of content pages

Literacy: "The Web Is Not  
An Encyclopedia."  
<http://www.eduweb.org/literacy/>

links/literacy/.  
recommendations  
erhaps? To intro-  
e leads you to

ing the most out  
ng from what you  
ion, discuss, with  
recommendations.  
imilar pages on a  
similar one the prin-  
presented here?

5 But the convergence of television and on-line capability is opening up extraordinary new opportunities in entertainment, communications, and education, and it will likely also mean a welcome fresh start for our politics. Interactive video-on-demand will not just let you instantly replay *Leano* one-liners, choose optional database reports to accompany the news, and view a ball game from the camera angle of your choice. It will also enable voters to dial up candidates they want to hear from—on issues they want to hear about—all at times they choose themselves.

6 Even in the absence of a fully two-way conversation, it will be the voters who ask the questions and control the conversation. The voters in control. Hmmmm. What a revolutionary idea.

7 The contrast with today's world of 30-second TV spots could not be greater. No one watches TV for the ads; the challenge is to be entertaining enough or confrontational enough or bizarre enough to keep the viewer from clicking elsewhere or going for a beer. For the most part, only negative ads make contact—so that's what we get.

8 And for any TV audience, even on today's niche channels, the demographics are still broad enough that a campaign risks boring the public, or worse, by making ads issue-specific instead of taking up the character issue or other emotionally charged themes. There's a reason why elevator music bores its captive audience: *Muzak* doesn't connect because it's for everyone and thus for no one.

9 That has been the politics of passive television. Everything changes in the world of video-on-demand, in which the subject is chosen by the voters themselves—not by candidates, consultants, or admakers. When you click to see candidate Clinton's position on police brutality, you want Clinton, not marching bands. And you want his comments on police brutality, not on Hillary Rodham Clinton's role in Whitewater. And if you don't get what you want, you and your vote may just go elsewhere.

Video-on-demand is just another example of people on-line taking charge of their lives. They trade the stocks they want, the middleman is out. They order their own airline tickets, the middleman is out. They deliver their own mail, the middleman is out. With video-on-demand, the voters will set the agenda; the candidates will respond, and the middleman consultant will be out—or at least humbled. Is it a paradox? Of course not. Will it change things? Count on it.

The 30-second revolution ad won't disappear. Not a chance. But prepaged direct answers to PIRGs (that's e-speak for "frequently asked questions") on the issues will be more important. Praising may still be a crucial part of most campaigns, but when it comes to financing the on-line playing field is as level as they come. There are few lower overheads in campaign strategy than the cost of going on-line.

Voting may even increase a little. When we can pick the music, we're also more likely to dance. At the very least, those who vote are likely to know more about who they are voting for, and why.

Every day, more Americans are on-line, and most who are on-line vote. Every day, each computer sold has greater capacity for video streaming. Every day, more broadband options are available for quicker and clearer video images on-line. This convergence is about to rock our world with a cultural change nearly as great as television itself.

And video-on-demand will be only the beginning. Video e-mail is around the next corner. And users will become their own Peter Jennings, downloading their own nightly news reports directly to their computers, uniquely tailored to their own interests, needs, and whims. On-line registration and on-line voting, each with video-*in*print safeguards, seem inevitable.

There's enough time—and good reason—to ponder and worry about all that. But video-on-demand in simple forms is already with us now, and is sure to produce some winners in 2000.

can  
dan  
peol

DIS

1.1

1

1

2.

3.

4.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

5.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

And politics so loves a winner that by the campaign of 2004, it seems certain to be dancing to an interactive beat—with the people calling the tune.

Source: Doug Bailey, "Politics on the Internet," in *Orbitation: Library of Congress*, August/September 1999, p. 71.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In this causal argument predicting the effect of the Internet on political campaigns and voting behavior, what is the behavioral principle linking cause and effect? Is the principle a plausible one that can be accepted without support?
2. This argument does not contain much in the way of concrete factual support. Does this weaken its effectiveness? Why or why not?
3. With two or three classmates, discuss the effectiveness of the supporting comparisons in Par. 10.
4. Make a list of characteristics you think apply to the intended audience of this argument (e.g., income, education, computer literacy, gender, political persuasion, ethnic background, etc.).
5. What purpose(s) does the extended analogy comparing the Internet with a jukebox serve? What are the similarities between the Internet and the jukebox? The differences? Do the differences undermine the effectiveness of the analogy? (See Chapter 10 for a discussion of the strengths and limitations of analogy in written argument.)

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING (14.6)

1. In Par. 15, Bailey predicts a number of Internet-based innovations. Research and write a four-page causal argument demonstrating the likelihood or unlikelihood of one of these innovations.
2. Every argument in this section on the Internet contains metaphor and/or analogy. Brainstorm with a classmate about the possible reasons for such heavy reliance on figurative language in arguments on this subject. Then write a two-page causal argument that speculates on the reasons for this tendency.
3. In a four-to-five-page argument, compare the impact that television and the Internet have had on your life. Your instructor will specify the audience for this argument.
4. In a two-page factual argument, describe the Internet to someone who has never used it. Use at least two analogies in your description.

good res:  
all that  
rns is al  
produce