

*What are Indymedia's long-term goals?*

That's a big question, one that every Indymedia organizer would likely answer in a different way. Indymedia endeavors to empower people to become the media by present honest, accurate, powerful independent reports. One vague long-term goal would be to foster and facilitate the development of as much independent media as possible around the world. Some come to their Indymedia organizing with a deeper goal, to enable people, while they're "becoming the media", to realize they can take control of other aspects of their lives that they previously left up to 'experts' or 'professionals.' On a practical level, some who are involved with Indymedia are working toward the development of national and/or international television or radio networks, and others are working toward the establishment of an international independent regular newspaper and others projects that will assure the public has access to independent news reports.

*How is Indymedia associated with the 'anti-globalization' movement?*

While Indymedia is not a conscious mouthpiece of any particular point of view, many Indymedia organizers and people who post to the Indymedia newswires are supporters of the "anti-globalization" (alternative globalization, anti-corporatization) movement. Corporate media often describe those who protest so-called "free trade" conferences and agreements as being "anti-globalization", ostensibly against the process of breaking down national borders to create what pro-globalization economists claim will be a more profitable world. This misrepresents the reality of the international movement for social justice, which advocates not the "free trade" of powerful governments (trade that allows goods and services to flow across national borders, often in a way that allows producers to move their manufacturing plants to countries where they can pay workers a pittance), but "fair trade" that opens borders to goods and people as a way of sharing the earth's natural and manufactured resources in a way that will benefit all. Today's social justice activists are not against globalization of community, justice and resources, they protest the economic globalization coordinated by the powerful few that results in their profiting from the work of the majority of the world's population. They sometimes prefer to call themselves "alternative globalization" activists, or those who are against the increasing corporatization of society and culture. What draws many of these activists to Indymedia? Perhaps people who protest the power multinational corporations, faceless international financial institutions and inaccessible governments have over their lives found encouragement in Indymedia's news wire, which encourages them to present their own account of what is happening in the world. People participating in protests that question the very tenets of corporate domination of their lives

*Everyone is a witness,  
everyone is a journalist.*

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### *What is Indymedia?*

**D**istilled from our mission statement: **Indymedia is a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage.**

Indymedia is a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate telling of truth. There are currently about over fifty **Independent Media Centers** around the world. Each IMC is an autonomous group that has its own mission statement, manages its own finances and makes its own decisions through its own processes. To learn more about each IMC, visit its web page. You will find links to IMC web sites on the left column of the main Indymedia page -

**<http://www.indymedia.org>**

Most of the information below answers questions that site visitors frequently ask about "indymedia.org", an organization of independent media activists from around the world who are working to coordinate international independent media projects. The **indymedia.org** group manages an international **Indymedia** page and coordinates technical and editorial policy issues that affect all IMCs that are associated with the Indymedia network.

### *How did the IMC project get started?*

Indymedia is the collective effort of hundreds of independent media makers from around the world who are dedicated to providing a forum for independent reporting about important social and political issues. Several hundred media activists, many of whom have been working for years to develop an active independent media through their own organizations, came together in late November, 1999 in Seattle to create an Independent Media Center to cover protests against the World Trade Organization. The Seattle IMC provided coverage of the WTO through both a printed publication called "The Blind Spot" and the first IMC web site. The web site received almost 1.5 million hits during the WTO protests. In February of 2000 a small IMC formed in Boston to cover the Biodevastation Convergence, and a larger one came together in Washington D.C. to cover the A16 protests against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. After that request from local groups interested in forming their own IMCs started to pour in. There are now over one hundred local Independent Media Centers around the world and more are on the way. You will find a list of local IMCs on the left column of the **www.indymedia.org** site.

been some changes. Most local sites are now more closely monitored, with articles ranked. As well, a Newswire Working Group clears duplicate posts, commercial messages and moves posts to 'hidden articles'<sup>4</sup>. In response to the harassment, and also as a way to reinforce the global diversity and unity, the centre column now features stories selected from the entire Network. Each of these changes has elicited controversy, as many have argued against any new gate-keeping protocols. This trend towards selection, or at least ranking, of content, could lead to a professionalisation of news writing and editing, or to a much more peer to peer network, in which audiences are actively enlisted in ranking and curating stories. The question posed by Sheri Herndon of the original Seattle IMC, is whether the IMC crews should be editors or librarians?

### *Conclusion*

As the neoliberal project has fostered the **extension of corporate media world-wide**, it has also created **conditions of radical possibility**. In four short years, the IMC has grown a world-wide information Network that provides a vital resource for the global social justice movements amidst the encroaching global corporate enclosure of media. This qualitative shift from a praxis of media 'alternatives' grew from the collective intelligence of old and new media producers and artists, who shared their technologies and techniques. The IMC prefigures a form of '**autonomous communications**,' which is not only **independent** of the ownership of global corporations and governments, but also **of the logics and languages of the mainstream stenographers to power**.<sup>5</sup>

The challenge of the global IMC is to develop a global communications commons by extending the Network throughout all the regions of the world and deeper into the communities. While protest-based news will continue to fire up both producers and viewers alike, the Network needs also to develop more long-term relations with ongoing social justice movements and communicators. This will necessarily require much more development of the Network through global decision-making as well as collaborative work among other constituencies on a local, regional and global basis.

## *The IMC - A New Model*

*Don't hate the media, be the media*



*Indymedia*

*First published in March 2004  
for the Indymedia Growth In Africa Project*

V 1.0

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communities with a diversity of traditions of alternative media and social justice movement organizing, and there has been no shortage of resourcefulness in dealing with these challenges. For example, in Chiapas, as in many southern centres, the Internet is mostly used as a distribution conduit, with local production primarily via audiotapes and radio. In Brazil, the Internet is used primarily to gather and circulate news, which is then sent to a network of free and community radio stations. In Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo, the local crews take video documentaries back out to the communities where they were produced to foster discussion. Many Brazilian Centres also distribute printed news-sheets that are photocopied and posted on walls all over the city, because of lack of funds for printed copies .

The Argentina IMC also works both on and off-line. Begun during the surge of organizing against the national government, and IMF policies, in 2001, the Buenos Aires collective coordinates shows of videos and photos, workshops on the Internet, and journalism and popular education with groups of workers, neighbourhood assemblies, and among the traditional left parties and independent political and cultural organizations.

### *The commoner's burden<sup>3</sup>*

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the IMC has been to create a more accessible open and democratic communications model for the grassroots within the increasingly enclosed system of the corporate media. The IMC Network, as do all other alternative media, operate in an environment saturated with the mainstream prototypes of info-tainment, or state sponsored messaging, well-massaged in easy sound-bites. The global social justice movement and the IMC were formed partly in response to the impact of this growing corporate media presence. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to break the ties of those conventions of media use. Even if the digital access question was solved, most people still do not have the time to produce their own stories, nor to read Indymedia with the critical eye and self-motivated searching that the site demands.

The IMC's daring experiment has been to open the communications system through the rapid admission of new member groups, the sharing of the code and the development of Open Publishing architecture. This strategic decision has not been without consequences. Several sites, especially the global Israel and Palestine IMC's, have been systematically hacked and attacked, and there is a continuing plague of racist, right-wing or hate-filled commentaries throughout the Network. As well, while the rapid open-ended development has elicited a bounty of material, the quality is very uneven. Many of the stories are written by and for other activists, with little attempt to provide background information and context.

While the main plank of the strategy of openness remains, there have

continues to grow, and to sustain itself through reliance on volunteers, donated computer server space, and minimal cash donations.

The IMC's high **visibility during mass protests** has also made it **more vulnerable to external threat**. Centres have been raided by national and international security agencies in the US, Canada, Italy and Spain, and their web-sites spammed by hackers from State security forces, right-wing organizations and individuals. In advance of the meetings of the European Union in Barcelona, Spain, in 2002, the Spanish police announced they were tracking the IMC and other alternative information networks. IMC Netherlands was **shut down by authorities** temporarily because of a link to a German site which authorities there had closed for posting an article detailing **methods for stopping trains carrying nuclear waste**.

Remarkably, the Network continues to morph as a result of adding new people and centres with different approaches, changes within the social movements themselves, and, in response to shifting geo-politics. The IMC still features international coverage of major counter-meetings of the WTO. The Bush regime's war-making has provided another impetus as sites reported on the massive peace demonstrations around the world. Many of the centres and the global site also combine a protest focus with coverage of ongoing local, national, and international peace and social justice campaigns. Most provide links to other alternative and independent media 'in an effort to diversify content and promote alternative media as a whole'. Several have also widened their representation to include activist groups outside the white-dominated global justice movement.

Although there are many difficulties coordinating efforts throughout the entire Network, other kinds of links have formed between project-based groups, or between specific regions. As well, the IMC Network has begun to play a role in the emerging international media democracy movement. Most recently, activists with IMC roots have become involved in media reform campaigns in North America, Europe and South Africa, and internationally in the lead-up to the World Summit on the Information Society.

### *Strength in diversity*

The tremendous power of the convergent and networked architecture shrunk the battles over resources, but by no means eliminated them. Telephone lines, computers, Internet access and volunteer expertise and time remain unequally distributed between rich and poor, and particularly between the northern Atlantic and everywhere else. As Luz Ruiz of Chiapas Media puts it, '**most people in Chiapas don't have access to water, let alone the Internet.**' Nor do most poor people, and especially women, have the free time to volunteer.

However, the Network's strength is its global reach into many different

## *Acknowledgements*

*The IMC network is developing very quickly. It is possible that some of information about the network, such as contact e-mail addresses for projects or IMC mailing lists may have changed since publication.*

*Special thanks to all the indymedia activists who volunteered their resources and energy to write the texts that form the greater part of this handbook. Especially to Dr. Blimfield who did the layout. We equally express our appreciation to C.T. Butler and his team from Food Not Bombs Publishing who put together the Guide To Formal Consensus included herein; appreciations as well to WACC from whom we copied a couple of articles about Indymedia included here as well.*

*Particular thanks are due to Urbana-Champaign IMC who sponsored the first printing of this book for the Indymedia Growth in Africa Project, March 2004.*

*Most of the text here is from indymedia network online resources which has been the main platform of most of indymedia documentation and activity. Some of the indymedia volunteers who wrote these texts wrote mainly for online use. The short time available to assemble this version of the handbook did not allow for adapting all these texts for print. Hope you don't mind that or any other shortcomings of this Handbook.*

*SphinX - 29 Jan 2004*

## *The Independent Media Center: A New Model*

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Section 1

to passive audiences through the branded channels of corporate media. However, their approach was only one of two distinct media paradigms that emerged in Seattle. The other approach was best represented by the professional communicators of the international non-governmental organizations. They carefully trained a corps of communicators to speak back to power using a similar rational appeal in formal meetings and press conferences .

In contrast, the IMC's approach paralleled the direct action in the streets. They not only wanted to publicize counter-information, but **to change the relations of production and reception** too. The goal was to create a very different kind of synergy between producers and audiences, as encapsulated in an early banner on the Italian site: '*Don't Hate the Media – Become the Media.*' The IMC promoted a do-it-yourself approach for both media producers and audiences with a minimum of gate-keeping. Instead of passive consumers of information, audiences were encouraged to actively surf the site's unbounded riches of information, and act as their own news editors.

#### *Growing pains*

The IMC Network has grown very rapidly from the downtown Seattle shop-front in the midst of the anti-WTO mobilizations. As the wave of protests against corporate globalisation grew, so did the Network, as centres joined on their own, or with the boost of international support teams in hot spots such as Chiapas, Palestine, and Iraq. The rapid growth was also due to the dynamism of the model, which was very cheap and easily reproducible. Many centres share servers and the operating code, and the decentralized networked structure is designed so that each centre manages itself, after signing on to a common agreement with the Network, making central overhead costs minimal.

This astonishing pace of development has not been without growing pains. Like many of the precursor alternative media, the IMC Network continually deals with problems of sustainability, uneven and unequal distribution of resources around the globe, attacks from hostile governments and individuals, as well as the difficulties inherent in creating and sustaining a more democratic communications model in an increasingly enclosed corporate media environment.

The Network was initially propelled by the heady days of protest against corporate globalisation. The focus on days of action, dispersed around the globe, helped share the work among small, closely-knit teams working all-out for short periods. Yet this carnivalesque pace of production and dependence on individual volunteers is hard to sustain. As well, volunteers tend to represent young, white, professional class men, from countries of the North, and this remains a constant concern.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless the Network

## *Conjuncture of social forces and a convergence of technologies*

The IMC was no accident, but the result of the historical conjuncture of an emerging global social movement, and two groups of skilled workers both operating with heritages of collective intelligence, and using the new digital technologies. Since its birth in the high-tech incubator of Seattle, home of Microsoft and others, the IMC has enlisted many young, talented techies from around the world who developed their expertise in the high-tech centres and in the peer to peer networks of the Open Source movement. With sophisticated problem-solving skills, and as importantly, an ethos of collaboration, they built a digital environment featuring free software and open source code, which, in large measure, spurred the Network's rapid growth as centres everywhere could quickly share the resource<sup>1</sup>. The global tech crew remains indispensable, sharing the support and improvement of sites and the network as a whole via cyberspace, and often from day jobs in the corporate world.

The Seattle IMC also drew on cross-generational and cross-craft collaboration between younger and older media activists and artists from community and micro-radio, independent video and access TV, 'zine makers and the independent press'. This initial collaboration continues in the regional video, radio and print teams, as well as the features working group, which responsible for the web-site's global centre column. News producers have also taken advantage of the global distribution of consumer priced digital audio and video recorders, which are lighter, easier to use, and whose signals can be streamed instantaneously (*where the bandwidth exists*). As well, many centres combine the new media with older print, radio and video formats, the mainstream media for many working class and poorer communities, in both north and south.

Finally, the IMC Network grew out of the emerging global social justice movement. Many IMC centres took first breath in the counter-planning to meetings of global corporate capital such as the WTO in Seattle, the G8 in Genoa, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Quebec and Brazil. A key common understanding of this new movement, as Dee Dee Halleck has noted, is that the **'informational/entertainment oligarchy is one of the pillars of global capital'** which produced a passive consumer culture, and did not address issues that challenged the status quo. Part of the new movement's **solution to the corporate oligarchy** was to recognize the **utility of alternative media** and the **importance of new ways of communicating**.

### *Become the media*

The IMC Network, like many earlier alternative media, rejected the commercial media model, in which information is commodified and sold

Section 1

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A DEMOCRATIC MEDIA OUTLET FOR THE CREATION OF  
RADICAL, ACCURATE, AND PASSIONATE TELLING OF TRUTH



## Independent Media Centre

### IMCs

Africa  
ambazonia  
estrecho /  
madiaq  
nigeria  
south africa

Canada  
alberta  
hamilton  
maritimes  
montreal  
ontario  
ottawa  
quebec  
thunder bay  
vancouver  
victoria  
windsor

East Asia  
japan  
manila  
qc

Europe  
andorra  
athens  
austria  
barcelona  
belgium  
belgrade  
bristol  
croatia  
cyprus  
estrecho /  
madiaq  
euskal herria  
galiza  
germany  
hungary

ireland  
istanbul  
italy  
la plana  
liege  
lille  
madrid  
nantes  
netherlands  
nice  
norway  
paris  
poland  
portugal  
prague  
russia  
sweden  
switzerland  
thessaloniki  
united kingdom  
west vlaanderen

Latin  
America  
argentina  
bolivia  
brasil  
chiapas  
chile  
colombia  
ecuador  
mexico  
peru  
puerto rico  
qollasuyu  
rosario  
sonora  
tijuana  
uruguay

Oceania  
adelaide  
aotearoa  
brisbane  
jakarta

manila  
melbourne  
perth  
qc  
sydney

South Asia  
india  
mumbai

United States  
arizona  
arkansas  
atlanta  
austin  
baltimore  
boston  
buffalo  
charlottesville  
chicago  
cleveland  
colorado  
danbury, ct  
dc  
hawaii  
houston  
idaho  
ithaca  
la  
madison  
maine  
michigan  
milwaukee  
minneapolis/st.  
paul  
new hampshire  
new jersey  
new mexico  
new orleans  
north carolina  
north texas  
ny capital  
nyc  
oklahoma  
philadelphia

pittsburgh  
portland  
richmond  
rochester  
rogue valley  
san diego  
san francisco  
san francisco bay  
area  
santa cruz, ca  
seattle  
st louis  
tallahassee-red  
hills  
tennessee  
urbana-  
champaign  
utah  
vermont  
western mass

West Asia  
beirut  
israel  
palestine

### Actions

Bush 2003  
DSEi 2003  
Evian G8  
May Day 03  
No War F15  
Thessaloniki EU  
WSIS 2003

Actions 2004  
European Social  
Forum  
May Day 04  
Actions 2005

### Projects

oceania  
print  
radio  
satellite tv  
video

### Topics

Analysis  
Animal Liberation  
Anti-militarism  
Anti-racism  
Bio-technology  
Culture  
Ecology  
Education  
Free Spaces  
Gender  
Globalisation  
Health  
Indymedia  
Migration  
Repression  
Social Struggles  
Technology  
Zapatista

### Process

discussion  
fbi/legal updates  
indymedia faq  
mailing lists  
process & imc  
docs  
tech  
volunteer

## The Independent Media Center: A New Model

Dorothy Kidd

Since its birth in Seattle in late 1999, during demonstrations against the World Trade Organization, the Independent Media Center Network has grown to over one hundred and ten autonomous centres in thirty-five countries. With half a million to two million page views a day, these multi-media sites provide an important source of counter information about struggles against corporate-led globalisation, as well as local, national and international campaigns for peace and social justice. Operating with very little cash, the Network sustains itself on volunteer labour and donations, and as importantly, news and information from its audience through 'open publishing.'

The IMC was not the first network of alternative media to counter the messaging of the dominant corporate and state media; nor to support the growing international opposition to the neo-liberal agenda promoted by the WTO and other multilateral agencies. Neither was it the first to emphasize collectivist self-management, nor to work closely with social movements, or to produce information by and for those usually excluded by the dominant media.

However, the scope and scale of the IMC Network surpasses these earlier media projects, minimizing many of the enormous costs and difficulties of production and distribution via its global digital platform. The IMC operates simultaneously at local, regional and international levels, via multi-media on-line and through older media channels off-line. The Network has also created new forms of participatory media-making and reception. Its innovative **Open Publishing** format encourages 'people to become the media' by posting their own articles, analyses and information to the site... **from any computer that is connected to the Internet**'. Audiences can become their own news editors, using multiple networking and interactive options to select information from a wide diversity of news sources, resource links, and discussion opportunities from around the world.

On my first encounter during the WTO protests in Seattle I was impressed with the IMC. As a veteran of community video and radio, I'd say that the IMC's networked resource of sophisticated technology and crews, its do-it-yourself mode of media-making for news creators and readers, and its connection to a developing global social justice movement, combine to create a new watershed of autonomous communications. In this article, I will review some of their successes and failures and the challenges they face.

[www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)

PRODUCED BY GRASSROOTS MEDIA MAKERS,  
OFFERING NON-CORPORATE COVERAGE OF  
STRUGGLES, ACTIONS AND CELEBRATIONS.



## New IMC Application Form

*Proposed Name of new IMC*

*City*

*State/Province*

*Country*

*Contact Name (required)*

*Email (required)*

*Phone*

*Technical Contact Name*

*Email*

*Phone*

*Supporting Groups*

*Regional Focus*

*Issue Focus*

*Event Focus*

*Critical Dates?*

*What kind of resources can you contribute, in terms of server/bandwidth/technical and organizing skills?*

*What kind of outreach have you done to bring together a diverse group of people?*

*Please write an introductory statement about why you want to participate in the Indymedia Network (see above).*

*Send It!*

Section II

understand why their issues are unlikely to receive honest consideration in the corporate-owned media. Activists planning an alternative globalization/anti-corporatization event can assure a safe space for presenting non-corporate news by forming a local IMC to provide coverage of the event, or posting news to the site of a local IMC that currently exists.

### *If each IMC is autonomous, how do you make global Indymedia decisions?*

Indymedia is currently developing a global decision-making process that will enable all IMCs to make decisions that affect the whole network. The current proposal is for Indymedia to form a "global spokescouncil" that will confirm decisions on global Indymedia issues that local IMCs have made through their own decision-making processes. When this process develops, you will find information about it on the Indymedia sites. If you would like to be involved in developing the spokescouncil idea or working on other Indymedia process issues you may subscribe to the **imc-process@indymedia.org** e-mail list through the **http://lists.indymedia.org** page. If you've been involved in Indymedia for a while and would like to participate in the decision-making working group, the group that's focussing attention and work on developing the a global decision-making process, subscribe to **imc-dmwg@indymedia.org** through the lists page.

### *Do you really organize via the Internet?*

Yes. While people in local IMCs organize face-to-face, many IMC projects have international involvement and discussion about them happens primarily through e-mail lists. You may view the archives of all Indymedia e-mail lists by going to **http://lists.indymedia.org**, clicking on the name of the list you would like to explore, and clicking on the link that takes you to the archive of that list. Another collaborative resource is the Indymedia Twiki (**http://docs.indymedia.org**), a content management system which basically works like an open-access website. Sometimes people who are organizing Indymedia projects "meet" on-line in chat rooms on the Indymedia IRC (Internet Relay Chat) server (**http://irc.indymedia.org**) to communicate in real time. Some international IMC working groups, such as the Imc-Print team, have weekly IRC meetings.

### *What is the address/phone #/fax # of Indymedia's office?*

Believe it or not, the Indymedia has no central office, and therefore we have no address, phone number or fax. That said, many Indymedia centers have offices. You can find Indymedia contact information for local IMCs at **www.indymedia.org/contact.php3**.

*What is the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) newswire?*

*Why are there sometimes hate-filled articles on the newswire?*

The [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) newswire works on the principle of "open publishing", an essential element of the Indymedia project that allows independent journalists and publications to publish the news they gather instantaneously on a globally accessible web site. The Indymedia newswire encourages people to become the media by posting their own articles, analysis and information to the site. Anyone may publish to the newswire, from any computer that is connected to the Internet, by clicking the 'publish' link on the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) page and following the easy instructions. Indymedia relies on the people who post to the Indymedia newswire to present their information in a thorough, honest, accurate manner. While Indymedia reserves the right to develop sections of the site that provide edited articles, there is no designated Indymedia editorial collective that edits articles posted to the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) newswire. An Indymedia 'Newswire Working Group' has formed to keep track of what's been posted and clear the newswire of duplicate posts, commercial messages, and other posts that don't fit within Indymedia's editorial guidelines. Soon you will be able to contact the Newswire Working Group via e-mail to voice your opinions about the articles it has chosen to remove from the front page of the newswire. All articles moved from the front of the newswire will continue to remain publicly accessible through the "editorial administration" and the "hidden articles" areas of the Indymedia site, which you can reach through the "publish" link. You will soon find the current Indymedia editorial guidelines at the top of the page you reach after clicking the "publish" link. If you disagree with the content of a particular article that someone has posted on Indymedia, you may comment on the article through the "add your own comments" link at the bottom of each post.

*Can you tell me more about "open publishing"?*

For more information about open publishing, check out Indymedia tech volunteer Matthew Arnison's essay on the topic at <http://www.physics.usyd.edu.au/~matthewa/catk/openpub.html>.

*Will you post my article/story/etc.?*

If you are convinced your own story is of international relevance, then please publish your story to the Indymedia newswire by clicking on the "publish" link on the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) page and following the easy instructions. If you send your story to the imc-editorial list or any other e-mail list people on those lists will most likely ask you to post the story yourself. If you think your own story is more appropriate for residents of a city/region/country or people interested in that city/region/country, then it would be better to post to the appropriate local IMC newswire by going to

- ▶ <http://tech.indymedia.org> for those more tech focused.
- ▶ Indymedia Technology Options Site (<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Devel/>) - If you want to know about all the different programs and software packages that have been developed to run and support indymedia sites and what you can choose for your IMC then check out this site.
- ▶ The Global IMC-Tech collective ([imc-tech@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-tech@indymedia.org)) can help provide you with servers and software setup or get you connected with people who can help you. Don't think you're on your own, we're here to help. If you have techies then we could use your help too.

### REGIONAL TECH CONTACTS

- ▶ East Coast US - Deanna ([deanna@indymedia.org](mailto:deanna@indymedia.org))
- ▶ West Coast US - Andy ([nonoboy@peak.org](mailto:nonoboy@peak.org))
- ▶ South America - Pietro ([pietro@indymedia.org](mailto:pietro@indymedia.org))

### NEW IMC FORM

After your collective reviews the above information, please fill out the form below and answer the following questions.

NOTE: All information entered in this form will be publicly archived at <http://lists.indymedia.org/>. Please provide only information that can be made public.

We'd like your group to draft up a statement or essay or short story (any style you'd like) that expresses why you are interested in starting an IMC in your city or region and why you want to join the indymedia network. Later in the process, when we send the application on to the IMC-Process list, we will ask for an introduction to your IMC. You can have this serve both purposes. Or you can revise it for both purposes (nothing is set in stone - we're hopefully always evolving this process and improving it).

Doing this will help us better evaluate your request. A short essay will tell us much more about your ideas for participating in the IMC network than just the form. This should be written with the approval of the collective who wants to start up an IMC.

There is an example reproduced in Chapter 4 of this guide which can also be seen at [http://la.indymedia.org/LA\\_IMC\\_Docs\\_001.html](http://la.indymedia.org/LA_IMC_Docs_001.html)

The form provided on <http://newimc.indymedia.org> asks you for the following information:

## PROVISIONAL IMC NETWORK DOCUMENTS

These are the documents that you will receive once you have sent in the form and introduction on <http://newimc.indymedia.org>. The Principles of Unity and the Membership Criteria are the documents that we ask your collective to carefully review, comment on and send back to the New-IMC list. You should take your time reviewing these documents. This is not a casual step. You are becoming a member of an international network. And while we operate in a decentralized, non-hierarchical way, we are also part of a network that shares resources, solidarity and support. Hopefully these documents will give you a good idea of what Indymedia is all about.

- ▶ Introductory letter
- ▶ Global Indymedia Overview
- ▶ Draft of Principles of Unity
- ▶ Draft of IMC Membership Criteria
- ▶ These documents also available in other languages. See: <http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/DocumentsTranslation>

## IMPORTANT BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

These background and general information documents are useful for any new IMC collective and can be a resource for a long time.

- ▶ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) <http://process.indymedia.org/faq.php3>
- ▶ Index of IMC Process Planning Posts <http://lists.indymedia.org/mailman/public/new-imc/>
- ▶ IMC Contact Page <http://www.indymedia.org/contact.php3>
- ▶ Most recent IMC Summary (tech and non-tech) <http://lists.indymedia.org/mailman/public/imc-summaries/>
- ▶ <http://process.indymedia.org/> for a good idea of IMC "process" (this only scratches the surface)
- ▶ <http://internal.indymedia.org/> the site for IMCers talking to each other
- ▶ IMC Blueprints for Events <http://docs.indymedia.org/twiki/bin/view/Global/SeattleN30Blueprint>

## TECH SIDE OF THINGS

If you would like to see what may be involved in maintaining a site, please refer to:

- ▶ Active Software ([www.active.org.au](http://www.active.org.au)) for information about the software that started it all.

the local site (click the local IMCs link on the left column of the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) site to find it), pushing the "publish" button and following the instructions. This way people who live in the locality and can act on your information or agree or disagree with it are more likely to read your posting than if you post it at the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) newswire.

### *Why isn't Indymedia covering such and such event/issue/topic?*

Indymedia provides a public forum for independent journalists and media organizations to post their own articles about myriad issues, but doesn't determine what those independent journalists cover. If you want to see more coverage of an issue, post more stories about the issue and encourage other newswire readers to do the same.

### *Where do I send my press releases?*

Please e-mail press releases to [pressreleases@indymedia.org](mailto:pressreleases@indymedia.org).

### *How do I get something featured in the center column of the www.indymedia.org site?*

If you think your article or issue has global relevance and would therefore be interesting for people to read as a feature on [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org), please send your feature idea to the features working group at [www-features@indymedia.org](mailto:www-features@indymedia.org). Ideas sent to that group will most likely become features if you present them along with proposed text in the format of most [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) features, with several suggested links, preferably to articles on Indymedia sites, and with an image to use with the feature.

### *How do I search the Indymedia sites?*

You should be able to search the local IMC sites by using the search function found at the top left of every local IMC page. The search function on the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) page itself is often unbearably slow. One suggestion is to search the Indymedia site using an outside search engine such as [Google.com](http://www.google.com). Use the advanced search function to search for articles only on the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) site.

### *Should I believe news I read on Indymedia?*

Should you believe news you read on CNN.com? All reporters have their own biases; governments and massive for-profit corporations that own media entities have their own biases as well, and often impose their views on their reporters (or their reporters self-censor to conform their own biases to those of their employer). You should look at all reports you read on the Indymedia site with a critical eye, just as you should look at all media before you in a discerning manner.

### *Of what are you "independent"?*

No corporation owns Indymedia, no government manages the organization, no single donor finances the project. Indymedia is not the mouthpiece of any political party or organization. People involved with Indymedia have a wide variety of political and personal viewpoints. Anyone may participate in Indymedia organizing and anyone may post to the Indymedia newswires. Political parties or organizations may choose to publish articles on the Indymedia newswires, but in doing so they invite public debate about their positions from any reader of the site; any reader may respond by publishing his/her comments alongside the post in question. True, many Indymedia organizers and people who post to the sites have political opinions that fall along the left side of the political spectrum, yet each individual chooses his/her own level of involvement; there's nothing in any Indymedia mission statement that declares people who are involved must be of any particular mindset, as long as they do not work contrary to the values espoused in Indymedia's mission statement.

### *How do I form an IMC?*

You will find some information about how to form an IMC in your area on the <http://newimc.indymedia.org>. You will also find some advice about how to put together an IMC at the <http://process.indymedia.org> site. Indymedia is currently working to make its instructions for building an IMC and the information provided on the Process site more complete and explicit. Once you have read the information on those sites and explored the other Indymedia sites to get a good idea of what IMCs do, send an e-mail to the New-IMC working group ([new-imc@indymedia.org](mailto:new-imc@indymedia.org)) to tell the group about your interest in forming an IMC. Someone from the working group will contact you with detailed information about how to go about forming an IMC. Though each local IMC is an autonomous organization, there are several simple things each local IMC must do before the Indymedia global group opens its local indymedia.org domain, such as develop a mission statement and editorial policy and assure the Indymedia global group that it is ready to put substantial effort into building a sustainable Independent Media Center.

### *Are you "activists" or "journalists"?*

Some would say "activists," some would say "journalists", some would say both. Each Indymedia reporter/organizer must make this distinction for him/herself. Having a point of view does not preclude Indymedia reporters from delivering truthful, accurate, honest news. Most, if not all, local IMCs, have explicit policies to strongly deter reporters from participating in direct actions while reporting for Indymedia.

However, it cannot be understated that in order for collaboration to occur network wide, there needs to exist a set of guidelines and a process by which we all agree to work. Quite frankly, it is necessary to resist any efforts by a local collective, for example, that wishes to develop a non-participatory, top-down structure, or would like to create a corporation out of a local IMC. To this end, we have developed guidelines for network participation in the form of two crucial documents: the Principles of Unity and the Criteria for Membership. These documents, in a sense, are a pact amongst media activists that allow for the network to exist. It is under these assumptions that we are united yet autonomous.

### *NEW IMC PROCESS - HOW IT WORKS*

So that you can know what to expect, here's a brief description of the current process that the New IMC Working Group follows. Because we're all humans and we rely on our diverse communication styles, this is not designed to be a perfect science, but rather to be democratic, transparent and flexible. This process has been evolving as we continue to improve the process and to incorporate helpful feedback from participants.

Please feel free to ask any questions you have that will help you through this process. You can either email the list or contact any of the people who have sent you either the general information or tech information.

1. Pre-organizing: the first step is to talk with people in your community and try to get the sense if there is interest in forming an IMC.
2. Look at the documents linked at this site (see below).
3. When you think you're really ready to do some good organizing, fill out the form at the bottom of this page.
4. Open a mailing list: [newlist.indymedia.org](http://newlist.indymedia.org)
5. O - R - G - A - N - I - Z - E !!!!
6. With your forming collective, write a mission statement (see below) and editorial policy, maybe contact [imc-tech@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-tech@indymedia.org) at this stage.
7. When you're really ready, and only when you're ready, reply to each of the membership criteria points one by one, and send to [new-imc@indymedia.org](mailto:new-imc@indymedia.org).
8. Your new-imc contact proposes your site to <http://newlist.indymedia.org> and if no one blocks within 3 days, this is passed to <http://lists.indymedia.org/mailman/listinfo/imc-process/> If no one blocks there within 7 days, you become part of the network and are put on the cities.inc list once your web site is ready.
9. The fun begins. Get involved in the global lists and Indymedia discussions and decisions. Offer to work with other IMCs from your area or elsewhere around the world. Do good work.
10. Change the world, for the better of course.  
We wouldn't expect anything less.

## Chapter 2 - Structure

### *New IMC Information*

#### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**T**he New IMC information page has been set up to help YOU<sup>1</sup> learn more about the Indymedia Network. This site is put together and kept up to date by various members of the network, but primarily by the New IMC working group. Our hope is that this information will introduce you to an overview of Indymedia but also to what to expect from the New Imc Process. This working space is ever evolving and is the first step towards understanding not only Indymedia values and the common ground that enables us to be a network, but also a bit about how the network itself works and what that means for each local IMC.

Please have your local collective or the group of people interested in joining the Indymedia Network read over the draft document So you want to start an IMC? before filling out this form. If you have questions, you can send email to the new-imc mailing list. We know that the process can be confusing for newcomers and we're trying to make it as open and transparent a process as possible. Please remember that we are all volunteers who work in indymedia and often are busy with our local IMCs as well.

#### *NETWORK OVERVIEW - THEORY AND PRACTICE*

The strength of the IMC as a concept comes directly from its organizational structure; namely, a decentralized network of autonomous collectives whose shared resources allow for the creation of a social and digital infrastructure that is independent of state and market forces. It is our intention as a media movement to build out this structure so that, on the one hand, we have local IMC's throughout the world that are autonomous in their decision making while, on the other hand, we are united in a network form of organization that allows for collaboration on a level previously reserved for state and corporate interests. To the extent the network is effective in challenging abusive systems of power is directly related to our ability to create decentralized structures. It is our ability to be flexible and simultaneously united that has proven effective.

*There's a problem with my article/press release/story/etc.  
How do I fix it?*

Send an e-mail to [www-newswire@lists.indymedia.org](mailto:www-newswire@lists.indymedia.org) including the URL of the article in question. Because the IMC is a volunteer-run organization, our volunteers work diligently to assist with hundreds of e-mail requests. We ask that you please only ask for assistance when there is a substantial problem.

*How many hits do the Indymedia sites get?*

That's a difficult question to answer. Indymedia sites are spread across many servers and we do not log IP addresses as a way of protecting the privacy of our visitors. This makes creating any concrete logging and traffic information. Indymedia is an activist network and not a dot.com which is dependent on traffic numbers to provide to investors. We work to keep our servers up with a shoestring budget and tracking visitor numbers isn't that important. During times of great traffic (for example, during the week surrounding the Genoa G8 protests, during which Indymedia sites received an estimated 5 million page views), various servers mirror Indymedia content and share traffic, making accurate statistics nearly impossible to accumulate. During the first days of the US/UK invasion of Iraq some Indymedia sites such as Indymedia Italia received about half a million page views a day. When we aren't covering a major action the main [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) site generally gets around 100,000 page views a day as of April 2003. We do not have any firm numbers on Indymedia traffic for the network, but a good guess would be that Indymedia as a whole has between 500,000 and 2 million page views a day.

*How do you pay for all this stuff?*

Indymedia funds all of its activities through donations from people like you. If you would like to support Indymedia financially you may do so through the web page you will find by clicking the 'support indymedia' link at the top of the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) web page. Indymedia supports its entire technical structure on an incredibly minimal budget - only a couple thousand US dollars so far, as opposed to the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars that power the corporate media. Loudeye.com donates substantial server space, especially for hosting multimedia files.

*How do I donate money?*

If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to Indymedia you may do so through our fiscal sponsor, Jam For Justice. You may send a cheque made payable to 'Jam for Justice' to:

**Independent Media Center**  
**1415 Third Avenue**  
**Seattle, WA 98101**  
*Attn: Indymedia Network.*

Please write "**Indymedia Network**" in the memo area of your cheque. Indymedia can use all the financial help it can get. Right now we're waiting to distribute all money donated to the global IMC until we develop a global decision-making process. Until we do so, donations sent explicitly for the global network will wait in our bank account until that happens. You may donate directly to local IMCs and/or IMC projects, each of which should have its own decision-making process and will therefore be able to use your money.

*You can also donate online via paypal using a credit card.*

The finance decisions about money you donate are made by the **imc-finance** working group.

*How do I donate other things?*

If you're interested in donating equipment or anything to a local IMC, please contact that IMC directly by pursuing the contact information you find through its web site. If you are interested in donating server space to the network please contact **imc-tech@indymedia.org**. If you are interested in donating anything else to the network, please e-mail us at **donate@indymedia.org**.

*I want to work for indymedia, and I want to become involved in Indymedia global organizing. Where do I send my resumé?*

Much Indymedia global organizing happens through communication on e-mail lists. You will find our lists at **http://lists.indymedia.org**.

Indymedia currently doesn't have the money to pay anyone, even for the hundreds of hours of work they've done for the network. However, you may certainly be involved in organizing any of Indymedia's associated IMCs and/or international projects. You may do so by communicating with the current organizing groups through e-mail lists you will find at **http://lists.indymedia.org**. For an overview of which lists are most essential to join to become involved in Global Indymedia organizing, take a look at the Global Indymedia Overview at the end of this book..

printable version ' white background with black text ' that should be easier to read.

*Why are upcoming events for Mexico listed in Latin America and not North America?*

Yes, Mexico is in North America, but it's also in Latin America. The socio-political context of organizing a major protest in Mexico is distinctly a Latin American political process. Another reason to put it in Latin America is in Spanish the name 'northamericano' is used to refer to people from the US and Canada, and not Mexicans. Culture and geography don't always line up. We could change 'North America' to be called 'Anglo America' but then where would be put protests in Quebec, which, along with Haiti, and French Guyana are 'Francophone America'? To say nothing of the Surinamese and the category of Dutch America.

There is no perfect way to organize these things. Also putting protests under Latin America means it has more prominence rather than getting buried under a sea of US based protests.

*Can I syndicate indymedia? What RSS and XML feeds for Indymedia content do you provide?*

Yes, we have many RSS feeds and other XML format feeds of Indymedia content. You can read all about it and find the URLs at **www.indymedia.org/syndication.php3**.

*Is Al-Muajaha the Baghdad Indymedia Center?*

This is an often asked question. For a full history of the Al-Muajaha media activist project please read this email. The Al-Muajaha group is not an official Indymedia center because they have started but not finished the new-imc process. Many Indymedia activists have been working to support the Iraqi media activists who have formed Al-Muajaha. The supporters have a mailing list, **imc-iraq-supporters@lists.indymedia.org** which you can join if you are interested supporting Indymedia efforts in Iraq and Al-Muajaha. It is our hope that Al-Muajaha will finish their application and join the Indymedia network. Until that time they are an organization which is being supported by the Indymedia network but not formally part of the network.

*What if the answer to my question isn't in this document?*

If the above frequently asked question file hasn't answered your question, you may contact us at **help@indymedia.org**. Please understand that Indymedia is an all volunteer project and sometimes there are hundreds of messages to go through each day. We will try to get back to you as quickly as possible.

*Thank you.*

in real life print. There is an international imc-print team; they organize via the **imc-print@indymedia.org** list and through the **http://print.indymedia.org** site. Every week the IMC-Print team produces a two page PDF (printable file) summary of Indymedia news, which you should print, copy and distribute in your community.

### *How do I get footage from Seattle/Washington/Prague/Genoa?*

If you're interested in the IMC videos from Seattle, Washington or Genoa, contact Seattle (**seattle.indymedia.org**), Washington D.C. (**dc.indymedia.org**) and Italy (**italia.indymedia.org**) respectively. If you'd like information about the Prague video you can find it at **http://praguevideo.indymedia.org**.

### *How do I get Indymedia news off the computer and into the hands of people in my community?*

Print the Print team's weekly PDF (**http://print.indymedia.org**), copy it and distribute it in your community. You may also print articles from the Indymedia site by clicking the 'print this article' link at the top of the article. Encourage your community radio station to broadcast IMC audio project productions (**http://radio.indymedia.org**). Organize a screening of the Indymedia newsREAL (**http://satellite.indymedia.org**) and/or screen any Indymedia video. TELL PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT YOU SEE ON THE IMC SITES.

### *When's the next protest?*

Though Indymedia itself doesn't plan protests, Indymedia ally **http://www.protest.net** provides a calendar of upcoming protests and other events.

### *Can you link to us?*

You may suggest your link to Indymedia through the **http://www.indymedia.org/links.php3** page. Please understand that Indymedia volunteers are incredibly busy and haven't been able to maintain our links page too well as of late. You may most definitely link to any Indymedia site from your web site.

### *Why is the background of the site too dark? It hurts my eyes.*

People on the **imc-presentation@indymedia.org** working group have heard many complaints that the black background and white text makes reading the site difficult for some people. They have also received many positive comments about the way the site looks. As of now they have made the decision to stay with the current look of the site. If you really have a hard time reading articles with the black background, try clicking the 'print article' link at the top of each article. This will transform the article into a

### *I want to volunteer for indymedia, how do I get involved?*

First go to **http://volunteer.indymedia.org** and fill out the form. That will get a message to a local IMC about your intent to volunteer for them. You should also contact the follow the link on the left column of the **www.indymedia.org** site to get to the web site of the IMC closest to you and contact them directly just to be sure they know to contact you. If you would like to be involved with global Indymedia efforts, you may do so by joining each project's e-mail list through the **http://lists.indymedia.org** page.

*For example:*

Indymedia process discussions: **imc-process@indymedia.org**

Developing Indymedia editorial policy: **imc-editorial@indymedia.org**

The Indymedia translation team: **translation@indymedia.org**

The tech team: **imc-tech@indymedia.org**

The print team: **imc-print@indymedia.org**

You may also view the archives of each Indymedia e-mail list at **http://lists.indymedia.org**. If you would like to volunteer to work on a project that currently doesn't have an e-mail list, please send an e-mail to **help@indymedia.org** to find out how to connect with people who are already working on that project, or to find out how to initiate the project yourself.

### *How do I join/unsubscribe from Indymedia e-mail lists?*

You can join/unsubscribe to Indymedia e-mail lists through **http://lists.indymedia.org**.

### *How do I find technical help?*

You may access the **imc-tech** FAQ at **http://process.indymedia.org/tech/FAQ.php3**.

### *How do I open an e-mail list on the Indymedia server for my IMC to use?*

If you're interested in opening an e-mail list for your IMC project send your request to **listwork@indymedia.org** with a description of the list and why you want to set it up. You or someone else you know should be prepared to be the list administrator - don't worry, it's an easy thing to do. If you would like to open an e-mail list to facilitate organizing your group that's discussing forming an IMC, e-mail **new-imc@indymedia.org** first, to let the **new-imc** working group know your plan, then contact **listwork@indymedia.org**.

### *Where do I find published stories about Indymedia?*

You may find some stories written about Indymedia at **http://www.indymedia.org/stories\_imc.php3**. So many have been written lately that we're losing track. A search through your favorite web search engine (using an 'advanced search' function to tell the search engine not to

return results from any **indymedia.org** domain), will yield a lot of exciting articles.

*I want to interview someone at Indymedia for an article/report/media piece/school paper. How do I find the right person?*

If you would like to interview someone from a local IMC or specific project please contact that IMC/project directly. If you would like to interview someone at IMC-global please e-mail **help@indymedia.org**. Please let us know your deadline. We will try to get back to you as soon as possible. Please understand that Indymedia is a volunteer-run organization and we have a hard time fulfilling all requests.

*How can I get in touch with people in local IMCs?*

Each IMC should have contact information available on its web site, though every IMC replies to e-mail at a different pace. You may contact the Indymedia tech team by sending an e-mail to **imc-tech@indymedia.org**. You may contact people who are working on Indymedia editorial issues by mailing **imc-editorial@indymedia.org**. You may contact the people working on Indymedia process issues by e-mailing **imc-process@indymedia.org**. You may contact the translation team by e-mailing **translation@indymedia.org**. You may contact the IMC print team through **imc-print@indymedia.org**.

*What languages does indymedia.org use?*

There are local IMCs that publish, or are planning to publish, in languages such as English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Flemish, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, Hebrew and Arabic. So far most global Indymedia discussions take place in English, but the Indymedia Translation Team is working to change that. If you would like to join the translation team to help make this possible, join the **translation@indymedia.org** e-mail list through the **http://lists.indymedia.org** page. We have also initiated discussions about facilitating international Indymedia communication by using Esperanto.

*I want to use this article for something. May I?*

All original content posted to Indymedia is free for reprint and rebroadcast, on the net and elsewhere, for non-commercial use, unless otherwise noted by author. If you have questions about whether you may publish a particular article please contact the article's author directly. For more information about open content licenses visit: **http://www.opencontent.org**.

*I'm having problems listening to/viewing things posted on the Indymedia sites. How can I get help?*

Indymedia has provided links to some of the programs you can use to listen to/view things at **http://www.indymedia.org/help.php3**. Follow those links to receive support from the companies that produce the programs, as they will be able to answer specific questions much better than the Indymedia tech team.

*Do you have tee shirts or other promotional materials?*

Indymedia global doesn't have tee shirts or other promotional material available right now. The Seattle (**http://seattle.indymedia.org**) and Washington DC (**http://dc.indymedia.org**) IMCs both apparently have tee shirts. Please contact them through their web sites.

*The site isn't working/my article won't publish/everything is really slow. How do I get help?*

Indymedia is a 100% volunteer network with few resources. Our tech volunteers do an extraordinary job keeping the technical aspects of the web sites flowing. Sometimes, especially during high traffic times, the site is not able to handle all the traffic. We wish we could suggest something other than 'try back in a little while,' but unfortunately that's all we can recommend. If you have technical abilities or server space to offer that would definitely help. Please contact the IMC tech team: **imc-tech@indymedia.org**.

*Can I post to all the IMC newswires or e-mail lists with the touch of one button?*

No. The site is set up to encourage you to post or e-mail your information to the specific newswire/e-mail list that it concerns.

*What kind of audio/video/print projects do you have?*

There are hundreds of videographers scurrying about the globe who currently take video for Indymedia sites and projects. Some of them communicate via the **video@indymedia.org** e-mail list. Every month FreeSpeech TV (**http://www.freespeech.org**) collects video segments from Indymedia videographers around the world into the 'Indymedia newsREAL.' You can find out more about that project through **http://satellite.indymedia.org**. The European IMCs also produce a monthly video newsreal (**http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/EuropeanNewsReal**) of activist news. Many IMCs have their own radio projects, and several of them broadcast regularly on the Internet. Find out more about IMC radio projects through **http://radio.indymedia.org** and/or join the conversation at **imc-audio@indymedia.org**. Many IMCs have their own print publications, so check local IMC sites to follow along with their adventures

the protest zone or the Mobilization's convergence space. Eddie tried to find a better location but couldn't. We had to share the space with the art gallery, meaning we had to move around our equipment to accommodate gallery hours, and we also had to vacate the premises almost entirely on Friday April 14 for a pre-scheduled party. That was a total pain in the butt. We had to be careful of, and make room for the art. We couldn't hang whiteboards on every wall, for example. The space was open and there was a lot of sound reverberation. The space was therefore very loud. Fortunately there was an elevator shaft that doubled as a quiet radio room. The Media Working Group had to rent a studio space upstairs at a point because the big room was too loud for them to make phone calls.

The IMC made due through the good and the bad, because we had to. Of course the **recommendation** in the future is for the IMC group to **find a perfect space for its general area**, one that is close to the protest zone and the protesters, one that is large enough for everyone to gather and feel like one big group but that also accommodate more intimate work areas, perhaps separated by movable partitions. Also, having a space nearby the protest zone or the protester's convergence area would allow the IMC to make computer terminals available to protesters to post first-person impressions to the web site.

#### *The Biltmore Space:*

A DC web site "architect" donated use of his basement web studio as an off-site editing facility. He very kindly upgraded his systems for us and we were able to do some audio editing there throughout the weekend.

#### *The Alley Space:*

On AI6 the photo team used a photo studio reasonably nearby the protest zone for its negative scanning and photo posting. That worked quite well.

#### *DCTV:*

On AI6 there was a video tape transfer facility available, also fairly close to the protest zone, for use by the video team. However, the video team did not take full advantage of the facility.

#### *The 9th Street Clubhouse:*

There was a sleeping space a couple blocks from the Gallery. This was a good space for 15 or so organizers who planned to spend most of their time at the Gallery to sleep. It came in handy and was a cool place to stay, even though the shower wasn't ready until nearly the 16th.

#### *The Mansion:*

This was a sleeping space in a neighborhood relatively close to the

## *Principles Of Unity*

THIS IS THE CURRENT DRAFT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF UNITY<sup>1</sup>.

The following document is a draft of the Principles of Unity for the entire IMC network. This document was based on principles culled from 18 months of at large interaction on the IMC Process list serve. Those principles were discussed and debated among approximately 70 IMC members from around the world at the Press Freedom Conference in San Francisco on April 27-29, 2000. A working group was formed to present the draft document to all of the local IMC's for feedback.

Although this version is in English, the document has been sent to translations and other languages will be posted as soon as they are available<sup>2</sup>. If you have a specific language request, please let us know.

We are hoping to reach network-wide consensus on this document by mid-July. In order to do that, we ask that one spokesperson from each local IMC facilitate this effort by presenting this document to their group, gathering feedback and reporting that feedback to us (e.g. one spokes from IMC Boston sends one email to the Unity list with concerns, objections or suggestions raised by that local).

PLEASE SEND ALL CONCERNS, OBJECTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS TO  
**IMC-UNITY@INVITRO.CAT.ORG.AU**

This document is a work in progress and an attempt to state the basic principles for which we all stand. As such, please take time in your local meeting to read, debate and discuss it. All bracketed items are part of the principles of unity but have been specifically identified as in need of further definition, clarification and "wordsmithing." Please feel free to contact the working group with any questions. We welcome and look forward to your input.

### PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

- I. The Independent Media Center Network (IMCN) is based upon principles of equality, decentralization and local autonomy. The IMCN is not derived from a centralized bureaucratic process, but from the self-organization of autonomous collectives that recognize the importance in developing a union of networks.

2. All IMC's consider open exchange of and open access to information a prerequisite to the building of a more free and just society.
3. All IMC's respect the right of activists who choose not to be photographed or filmed.
4. All IMC's, based upon the trust of their contributors and readers, shall utilize open web based publishing, allowing individuals, groups and organizations to express their views, anonymously if desired. ►►see appendix: Open Publishing document --> still in proposal phase, at this address:  
<http://lists.indymedia.org/mailman/public/imc-communication/2001-April/001707.html>  
  
<http://lists.indymedia.org/mailman/public/imc-communication/2001-April/000874.html>
5. The IMC Network and all local IMC collectives shall be not-for-profit.
6. All IMC's recognize the importance of process to social change and are committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships, from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics. Therefore, [they] shall organize themselves collectively and be committed to the principle of consensus decision making and the development of a direct, participatory democratic process that is transparent to its membership.
7. All IMC's recognize that a prerequisite for participation in the decision making process of each local group is the contribution of an individual's labor to the group.
8. All IMC's are committed to caring for one another and our respective communities both collectively and as individuals and will promote the sharing of resources including knowledge, skills and equipment.
9. All IMC's shall be committed to the use of free source code, whenever possible, in order to develop the digital infrastructure, and to increase the independence of the network by not relying on proprietary software.
10. All IMC's shall be committed to the principle of human equality, and shall not discriminate, including discrimination based upon race, gender, age, class or sexual orientation. Recognizing the vast cultural traditions within the network, we are committed to building [diversity] within our localities.

When the team coordinators got to DC we all began to worked together to assure that everyone had what they needed in the budget. During A16 I asked that everyone who was going to make an expense clear it through me first, either individually or, preferably, through their team coordinator who would come to me with the request. Throughout the week I didn't have to turn down any requests. Had I felt the need to turn down a request I would only have done so after getting consensus from the team coordinators.

The IMC ended up spending about \$8,000 over the course of the A16 week. Yes, we were under budget. We've reimbursed most of our budgeted expenses though new, valid expenses, such as costs to make and distribute the video, have arisen and believe me, we won't be under budget for long. The budget is available on request from me at [jay@tao.ca](mailto:jay@tao.ca). The Direct Action Media Network acted as the 501c3 group for the IMC-DC.

### EQUIPMENT/FACILITIES

What equipment did we have in DC and what should we have had? This is an essential question to answer in a blueprint document. I can answer questions about the spaces we had available but not about equipment. I'm going to try to get DC team coordinators to write up specific lists of what we have and what we needed. If you're reading this blueprint and need to know this information please feel free to e-mail the coordinators to ask (e-mails listed on page 62).

#### *Space:*

The main IMC-DC space was a warehouse called Studio 66. It used to be an underground party spot and now houses an art gallery in the large room as well as a TV production studio and artists' studios upstairs. Eddie was able to find "the Gallery" through his friends in the DC art/performance scene. We rented the Gallery from April 6 to April 19 for \$2000. We paid \$750 to upgrade the studio's DSL line and laid two banks of phone lines (contact Eddie [ebecker@cni.org](mailto:ebecker@cni.org) for specifics on the phone system). There were some good things and bad things about the Gallery:

#### *Good:*

It was a cool place to have an independent media center, as it had that "alternative" feel. The people who managed the space were willing to work with us throughout the time we had it to handle our technical needs, including upgrading their facilities. Even though there were a ton of people in it, for the most part we were able to have room for everyone in there. For the most part.

#### *Bad:*

The studio was in an area of DC that wasn't particularly close to either

spokescouncil meetings. The IMC space and the Mobilization's convergence space weren't close so few Mobilization people who weren't associated with the IMC or the MWG dropped by. Originally the IMC planned to have our sign-up desk in the Mobilization convergence space but that space proved to be too hectic so the IMC moved its registration desk to the IMC building. The IMC tried to have a representative at the convergence space at all times but that didn't happen, especially after the police closed the Mobilization's convergence space on Saturday, April 15.

The evenings before AI6 and AI7 members of the Mobilization's direct action group came by the IMC and gave some information about the Mobilization's action plans (though the information wasn't exhaustive). Though the IMC and the Mobilization had different sets of walkie talkies, the original plan was for each to monitor the other's activities. When the IMC's walkie talkie system flopped (to be discussed below) the IMC was unable to monitor most of the Mobilization's communications and they didn't monitor ours.

## BUDGET

Before coming to DC we realized how little money the IMC-DC was going to have and decided we'd have to have a "no debt" budget. Basically we were planning to not spend anything, if possible we'd get everything donated and voila, we wouldn't have to spend a cent. Of course we realized that wasn't going to fly, but we got lucky when the Mobilization agreed to help us get going. The Mobilization group gave approximately \$12,000 in a seed grant. All they asked in return is that the IMC would share facilities with the Media Working Group and that we would produce a ten minute version of our video production for them to distribute. In addition to the Mobilization's donation, throughout the week we gathered about \$1400 in donations at the registration table and through the sale of video footage.

I was the budget manager in DC. Before I came to DC I bought an accordion file holder and marked the files "bank information," "incoming," "we owe" and "we paid." I kept careful records on whatever we had coming in (we asked for a donation of \$10 from everyone who registered and received, over the course of the week, about \$1000), what receipts we had to reimburse and what we had already reimbursed. Every time we received or wrote a check I made a copy of the check and stapled it to a copy of the receipt, indicating when and to whom we paid a reimbursement. Of course I encouraged everyone to get a receipt for every purchase, large and small. I kept a running tally of what we had in the account. **I suggest the budget manager of any future IMC set up the bank account as soon as possible.** We had our account open on the 9th but didn't get the Mobilization's check until the 12th. Because ours was a new checking account the check didn't clear until the 15th.

## *Indymedia . Global . Membership Criteria*

### **IMC MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA - DRAFT<sup>1</sup>**

**Each IMC and Global Working Group is expected to:**

- a. Agree in spirit to the NIMC Mission Statement and Principles of Unity, <http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/PrinciplesOfUnity>
- b. Have a committed membership substantial enough to sustain a functional IMC,
- c. Have open and public meetings  
(*no one group can have exclusionary "ownership" of an IMC*),
- d. Work toward developing a local Mission Statement or Statement of Purpose. Network Mission Statement may be adopted or used on an interim basis,
- e. Establish and publish an editorial policy which is developed and functions through democratic process, and with full transparency,
- f. Agree to the use of Open Publishing as described in the NIMC Editorial Policy [*editorial collective comments: "We did agree that the term "Open Publishing" was one that is still being defined by the Global Network Collective, and we would wait and see what the results were before rewriting this criteria*],
- g. Adopt a decision-making policy that is in alignment with consensus principles which include open, transparent and egalitarian processes,
- h. Have a spokesperson(s) willing and capable of participating in the global decision-making process and meetings as a rotating liaison/representative, with a clear understanding of the responsibilities that come with this role,
- i. Participate in the key IMC Network Communication Methods that pertain to the health and vitality of the Network and that contribute to the work of the IMC. Assure that at least one person from your local IMC participates at any given time on the IMC-Communications list,

- j. (NOT FINALIZED): Have no official affiliation with any political party, state or candidate for office (*comments: but individual producers have freedom to do whatever they like and local IMCs can "feature" stories about various political parties and initiatives*),
- k. IMCs shall in no way engage in commercial for-profit enterprises. [We could add: The IMCN is committed to the decommercialization of information and will disassociate from any local IMC that decides to become a for profit media corporation.]
- l. Display a ((i)) logo on your website and literature.
- m. Include the IMC Network Current & Cities List on your site, preferably on the front page.

### NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

1. Network Membership is open to any group that accepts the above criteria for membership. In the case of several requests from the same city or region, we will encourage them to meet and work together.
2. Network Membership in the NIMC will be confirmed by the New IMC Working Group, which is accountable to IMC-Process and ultimately to the NIMC decision-making process.

### DEFINING OUR TERMS

*For clarity and precision, we need to define our terms more carefully so there is less room for misunderstanding. Also explains how we as a culture (the IMC culture) use these terms.*

- ▶ **NIMC** = Network of Independent Media Centers
- ▶ **Open** = means that diverse people and groups are welcome to attend and that no attempt is made to exclude people based on their sex, race, gender, class, age, ability or religion.
- ▶ **Official affiliation** = still being worked on
- ▶ **IMC Network Communication Methods** = international email lists, IRC discussions and logs, phone calls and conference calls, and face-to-face meetings.
- ▶ **Local version** = acknowledges the many variations of the name and the logo that will occur depending on the language and culture of the local IMC.

The DC-IMC was a collectively organized project that ran on principles of consensus. This organizing structure was INEXTRICABLY BOUND to the success of the IMC. The non-hierarchical process encouraged every media maker to contribute his or her best work, and to participate as much as s/he desired.

Two weeks before A16 a few organizers came to Washington. Jade arrived, then Jay, then Evan, Leslie and Jeremy. About a week before A16 the main space opened up and we started to organize there. That's when Adam came, and Arthur who did a tremendous amount of facility organizing, and Jay from PaperTiger TV (Jay with the beard). We decided to have two meetings a day one general meeting each evening and one "spokescouncil" meeting each morning. Each general meeting was a consensus-based meeting with two facilitators (gender parity). Each "spokescouncil" meeting included team coordinators and/or empowered team representatives. Both meetings had decision-making power. At the general meetings we had to reach consensus among everyone present, at the coordinators' meetings only the empowered reps were allowed to participate in the consensus (though everyone else in the room was allowed to be part of the discussion). At the general meetings coordinators introduced themselves so their team members would know to whom they should go if they had concerns. The coordinators brought those concerns to the spokescouncil meetings.

This decision-making process worked quite well. The team coordinators worked well together and made decisions with relative ease. The first few general meetings lagged (for reasons to be discussed below) but when a decision was on the table the facilitators were able to ease it through. Both spokescouncil and general meetings were open to all.

### THE IMC and the MOBILIZATION

The Mobilization for Global Justice's Media Working Group (the protest group's press liason) and the IMC group shared space and facilities though each was autonomous. Though the IMC-DC would have preferred to get its money from sources other than the Mobilization, that didn't seem to be a possibility. A couple weeks before A16 Eddie Becker and Laura Jones from the Mobilization proposed a joint budget to the Mobilization spokescouncil. The Mobilization okayed the budget. The week before A16 Jay negotiated with the Mobilization and the Media Working Group about budget specifics. The Mobilization ended up giving the IMC approximately \$12,000 as a seed grant, cutting the IMC loose from its funding process. The Media Working Group continued to have to answer to the Mobilization for its funding but the IMC was on its own.

Relations between the IMC and the Mobilization were good. An empowered IMC representative went to each of the Mobilization's

print, Evan Henshaw-Plath to head the web team. We had a hard time finding a photo coordinator but eventually Heidi Reijm and Ali Tonak volunteered (Adam Green from DC became involved upon Eddie Becker's urging and stepped into a coordinator role as AI6 grew closer). There were also a couple others who stepped up to coordinate parts of the project. Mansour Jacobi decided to come to DC to work on the tech side. Adam Stenftenagel volunteered to put together a database that would help us coordinate who was coming and who was bringing what equipment. Jeremy Simer volunteered to coordinate translation of the print team's work. Eric took a general coordinating role, as did I. David Russo stepped forward in DC to help with facilities and equipment. Rachel Rinaldo and Robert Wyrod agreed to facilitate the web video team. Lisa Sousa said she would coordinate outreach. Each of the main teams tech, print, video, audio, photo, outreach started organizing on its own e-mail list as AI6 grew closer.

There was little formal decision-making process on the IMC-DC list, or on the individual teams' lists, but each group moved forward according to a general consensus process. Communication was good on some of the lists, such as imc-tech and imc-audio, but there wasn't as much communication on others. At points list volume, especially for the general coordinators, was overwhelming and that led some to retreat from e-mail. About three weeks before AI6 the coordinators shared a massive conference call. Jay facilitated. There were at least 12 people on the line. It worked as well as you can imagine a 12 person conference call could work. Through it each team coordinator let the others know what his/her team was planning and then we cut the conversation to a handful of people who talked with Eddie about his search for a good space for the IMC. More on that later.

The IMC-DC's organizers were all individuals who came to represent either themselves or the organizations with which they work to varying degrees. Some of the coordinators came from organizations like Freespeech TV, Protest.net, Paper Tiger TV, the Direct Action Media Network, Whispered Media, Big Noise Films, etc. Freespeech TV and Protest.net donated server space to the IMC's web site. There were similarly loose relationships between the IMC and other, non-media organizations; a lot of people came representing a lot of groups but when they came to the IMC they generally worked together. There were so many tasks to fill and even with the overwhelming number of people we had in the IMC over the course of the week we didn't have enough people to fill all the roles. Throughout the weekend anyone who wanted to assume any task was able to step up and "bottom-line" that part of the project. With a few exceptions the people who volunteered to "bottom-line" something did so. In the cases where the people who promised to work didn't do so the IMC didn't do quite a good enough job of realizing that we needed someone else to step up to fill that role.

#### DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

## Chapter 3 - Theories

### *Indymedia . Global . BluePrints*

**T**he first couple IMCs to get started wrote up blueprints of how they organized themselves. These blueprints have been a valuable tool in explaining the practical and ideological basis for setting up a functional imc to cover an action. Much of the docs.indy project and best practices section of this site are devoted to extending the information found in these initial blueprints.

### *Indymedia . Global . Seattle N30 Blueprint*

#### *How to Make an Independent Media Center – Blueprint Document*

#### THE BIG LESSONS

##### *Allow Enough Lead-time...*

Communications is critical, and for phone lines you have to rely on the phone company. Of course, before you order phone lines, you need a space to have them in. Have backups: other spaces, lines from other phone companies, cell phones, cellular modems, borrow a neighbors lines, whatever. Have multiple people staying on it.

##### *Inducting New People*

Lots of people show up to help, often at the last minute or in the middle of the big event. If you don't have a well thought out way to bring them up to speed, they will seem like a nuisance. Well-written documents, like an introduction and overview of the operation and lists of specific instructions and contact people, will help things flow a lot better. Also, make good use of your whiteboards and introduce new people to them.

##### *Lots of Whiteboards*

This helps with many aspects of communication. Cover the walls with them. They are the ground on which the shared information base of the organization takes shape. Meetings happen around them, harried volunteers refer to them when they're on the phone, people pick up messages from them.

## FUNCTIONAL AREAS

*How was the IMC organized?*

*What was the decision making structure?*

The IMC has made much use of consensus-based decision making. This is not a process that people just get through intuition. It helps to spell out how it works and remind people as needed. Some work is required to make it a smooth functioning part of the culture of the organization. See the next chapter for a good, detailed description of the consensus process. In Seattle, we have at times approached this ideal, but we are not all fully up to speed on how it works.

*How did the local and visiting people share responsibilities?*

In early meetings, say two months before the WTO, there was structure only of time (weekly meetings of all involved), not of people. As tasks came up, people would volunteer for them. At the next meeting, they would report back on their progress. In part this was a sorting time. People would show up, attracted to something about the project. In the excitement of the moment, they'd volunteer to do something. At the next meeting, they either felt excited because they'd done something or they'd feel embarrassed that they hadn't. Since there wasn't a lot of gratifying discussion to be had without actually doing anything, there was natural self-selection of those who would do stuff and those who really didn't want to or have the time.

Early meetings had a facilitator and note taker, and sometimes a time keeper. We always made an agenda, and even though we routinely blew past our time allotments, it helped to keep track. Meetings were generally long, like three hours or more. It didn't seem realistic to shorten them, what with the difficulty of pulling everyone together.

About a month before the big event, we started developing structure. The people who were most plugged in and doing the most work naturally stayed after meetings and got together outside of the regular meeting times to discuss things. They became the self-appointed core group. This is a weird step for those of us used to critiquing power structures, but it's a natural one. It was mainly uncomfortable to those on the fence between marginal involvement (the people who are generally happy to have someone else take the lead) and solid involvement. It was an on-going problem for those who were seen as too aggressive, too passive, or too self-centered to work well in a tight group. As things progressed, people in the core group kept an eye out for others who showed follow-through, energy, and availability and drafted them into the core group. All this was done in an ad-hoc way. There simply wasn't time to create or deal with a more formal structure. Folks were generally ok with the informality, though some were unhappy with how it was executed.

The core group made most decisions, generally by consensus of whoever

## *Indymedia . Global . Washington A16 Blueprint*

*The Washington DC Independent Media Center to cover the World Bank/IMF protests, April 16 & 17, 2000: Evaluation, Recommendations for other IMCs*

### HOW IT STARTED

**T**he DC-IMC was a temporary autonomous zone to the nth degree. About two months before A16 a couple dozen independent media makers, some of whom had been involved in the Seattle independent media center, started to e-mail each other about the possibility of there being an IMC in DC. Many of those conversations involved the possibility of finding someone to initiate a core group of DC organizers who would move the process forward by having regular planning meetings in town to make things happen. Unfortunately no one from outside DC could find anyone in DC who would take on that role. About six weeks before A16 one enthusiastic indymedia organizer (*okay, it was me, Jay*) went down to DC to a general meeting of the Mobilization, the group that was organizing the protests, to try to find someone who would organize in DC, and hooked up with the Mobilization's Media Working Group. People there understood the importance of having an IMC but didn't have time to organize it themselves. People outside of DC were still enthusiastic about the possibilities and began to organize through the [imc-dc@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-dc@indymedia.org) e-mail list. I and Eric Galatas started gathering the media-producing interests, equipment needs and equipment offers of those who were planning to be in Washington. Eric kept track of the expanding list of promised supporters and encouraged people to step forward and become leaders of the media teams -- tech, video, audio, photo, print. Luckily a bit more than a month before A16 Mike Eisenmenger and/or Joan Sekler contacted Eddie Becker with whom they had organized before and inspired him to take a role. He communicated with Eric, Jay and some of the other organizers over e-mail and we all decided that the most important thing to do was find a good space for the IMC and lay phone lines. All else would have to come when people arrived from outside town.

Over the month before A16 people stepped forward to coordinate the media teams. Eddie volunteered to coordinate the video group (some of whom had already been communicating since Seattle), Jade Paget-Seekins volunteered to coordinate the audio, Leslie Howes stepped forward for

*Which software do we need to be able to make contributions from home, work, and put them on the web site?*

You need software to prepare your contribution (scanner SW for photos, word processor for text, audio or video editors, etc.). Once you're stuff is ready, all you need is a web browser and an internet connection.

*What kind of database do we use? Do we need a lot of investment or is there a lot of ready to use stuff?*

There is a lot of software and a lot of people already in place. There is a fledgling volunteer web site up that has a technology section with several useful pointers to get you started. You can reach it on

<http://indymedia.ragingweb.net/tech.php>.

*What are the details on the phone line / modem / DSL connections?*

Getting the DSL in place took the longest lead-time. Getting enough phone lines was a close second. Get started on these as soon as you can! The phone companies can putz around for weeks on this stuff.

We had a single DSL serving the place, and that was adequate for all out internal web use (some browsing and lots of posting of articles and audio) and the web site. The framework of the web site was hosted at the IMC, using the one DSL, but all the "rich content" (audio and video (photos?)) was hosted at another facility. For this we were fortunate to receive a last-minute donation from encoding.com (now loudeye.com) of lots of server space and huge bandwidth (> 100 Mb/s).

For the time being streaming images are of low quality, we have the idea of overcoming this by making short news bulletins (one minute), which should be downloadable at better quality

*We see that most web sites also propose to sell the videos on tape. Does this work?*

It has worked well for the Seattle IMC - much.

*What support did you have for people getting photos up on the web site?*

We had essentially no support for photographers. We never got the donated scanner working during the WTO, so if anyone got pictures on the site, it was through their own efforts. This was silly, and is not recommended. Scanners are cheap, though you'll want someone around to help with minor image editing (eg, cropping, resizing, changing color depth). Digital cameras are better still, as you leave out the developing step.

was present. People taking a lead role in a certain area were expected to make decisions about that area, and were expected to use their own judgement about what decisions needed the core group's involvement. Again, there wasn't time to spell this out and it worked alright without being formalized. (It's really amazing how much you can do without a formal structure...)

*Getting Things Done*

There was a huge number of things to get done before the WTO started. At meetings, it was hard to prioritize them so we generally didn't. We had big lists of things to do, which people kept adding to, and people would sign up to get them done. We tried to watch for important items that weren't getting done and bring those up with greater urgency. As we got closer, we increasingly asked for people to "bottom line" something (we used this phrase a lot), to do whatever was necessary to make sure it happened, even if that just meant passing it off to someone else and then checking with that person to make sure it happened. The message was, "Here - take the ball and run with it. Do what you need to do, including getting other people to help you, but make sure it gets done - no excuses!" If the people who can't or don't really want to do much have already dropped away, then most people respond pretty well to this pressure.

*How did you bring newcomers up to speed in the midst of chaos? What do you recommend we do?*

Get as much on paper as you can ahead of time. Have plenty of copies to be able to hand people. Document your aims, procedures, concerns, and whom to contact about what issues. Have much of this up on whiteboards as well, especially contact info.

*Any advice on how to integrate the folks who will be coming here for [an event] - both organized production groups and unaffiliated people with camcorders?*

Most of the video coordination for Seattle, involved planning with folks coming from out of town. For whatever reason, there weren't a whole lot of local video folks involved ahead of time, other than videographers who planned to shoot the event. So email was a huge tool in planning who was bringing what equipment, etc. It was really just me and a handful of folks doing all the logistics of setting up the production space and figuring what types of systems would for actually getting footage out to the world. I think that if we had had more time (we had about six weeks to pull it all together) it could have involved a lot more local folks. But in general, Seattle is not a hotbed of videoactivism. If we had had more time, we could have trained people in logging, editing, and shooting, so there could have been a more organized local effort. As it was, a lot of the pre-WTO discussions revolved around how we were going to decide who got access to the edit gear

and what that meant in terms of our goal to see indy media produced by those who don't traditionally get access to the tools of production. Expertise had to be the deciding factor for access to gear, and that meant that a lot of local folks weren't involved. Our goal to produce a half-hour video every night was also very ambitious, and in many ways limiting. It meant that timelines were so tight we didn't have the luxury of letting people noodle around on the edit systems, editing their own stuff.

In your case, I would recommend that you set your sights a little more realistically. Maybe have the goal of producing one big video over the course of the whole week, and in addition to that- have a web site from which you are streaming video clips of events as they happen. Start now by getting folks trained in editing and logging, so that when the event happens, people can be signed up for shifts to log footage and edit short clips for the web site.

In terms of organizing videographers, both those from Seattle and those from out of town, we tried to have a system in place that was simple for everyone. We had a two-page "affiliate sign-up" form which included our mission statement and all the operating rules and guidelines of the IMC. Everyone had to sign on to that form, in order to get an IMC id badge, which folks wore all week. Some folks were adverse to wearing a badge, but it was a good way of knowing that people knew what it meant to be an affiliate of the IMC. And it ended up winning a lot of trust in the street - in many cases the only videographers allowed in to the ranks of those engaged in direct action were those folks with IMC press badges. In addition to the affiliate form we also had a several page videographer info packet. It included tips for good shooting, a map of downtown Seattle, copies of field logging forms (we really encouraged folks to log in the field), and the forms that we used for tracking tapes as they came in to the edit studio. This form included all their contact info, a release they signed giving us permission to use their footage in the video we were producing, and a little tear-off receipt with the tape number on it, so they could retrieve their tape after we had dubbed it. All tapes that came into the edit studio were dubbed to Beta SP and logged before they were returned to videographers. If we had had time to train loggers, the whole process would have gone much more smoothly, and more people would have been able to participate. So this system worked for all videographers, local or otherwise.

*How did the IMC deal with security issues (physical and online)? We could read on the indymedia web site that FBI is putting pressure on the contributors of the web site. Have there been any attacks in independent web site servers? How can we protect ourselves?*

We put a lot of energy into physical security and little into web security. For physical security, we found one guy with some experience doing that kind of work who agreed to set up and run the security aspect. People who

came to the IMC who wanted to work with us had to sign in and become "members". This involved reading and agreeing to a statement of principles, including that their work would be shared with the world over the web for free, and that any subsequent income they may derive from their work (e.g., someone wants to buy a negative) they will split 50/50 with the IMC. In addition, each person had to give local contact information and show us a picture ID. Some of us were concerned that people would be uncomfortable with this, and one in fact was irritated by it, but we generally felt it was a good thing and emphasized that this was not a casual undertaking, and that it involved mutual trust. There was also some problem with people wanting to come for some quick thing (e.g., to use the bathroom) and not wanting to become members just for that. The general answer was that this was not a space for casual users. Sometimes, though, it made sense to let someone come in without signing up, and then we had them escorted by someone who was a member.

Members had badges they wore around their necks at all times while in the space. There were people at the front door checking badges 24 hours a day. We felt it was important that the space feel controlled at all times. There was a lot of tension, a lot of activity, and many people have expensive equipment. The last thing they needed was more worries about who might have wandered in off the street. It wasn't easy to find people to staff the space adequately through the night. We had some ideas about minimal staffing levels, but some of the minimal jobs got combined in a pinch.

### *Software*

For some high-level thoughts on how to do webcasting, see Matthew's essay on the topic, "Crazy Ideas for Webcasting."

<http://cat.org.au/cat/webcast.html>

### *We heard Free Speech provided the web server? How did this work?*

Actually, the IMC bought it, kept it in Seattle for a while, and then sent it down to Boulder where Free Speech is still baby sitting it for us. It worked well, usually. The nice thing about the internet is that people can do most work remotely, though when a server crashes, you sometimes need someone physically there to re-boot it.

### *How did the IMC deal with software licensing issues?*

We used free software for the operating system (Linux), the web server (Apache), and the database (PostgreSQL). This refers to the server. For general use within the IMC, we used MS stuff (Windows 95 or NT, Word, Internet Explorer, etc.). This being a Microsoft town, it's not hard to scrounge up copies of these things, especially if you're willing to use older versions.

## Indymedia . Global . Dispatch Desk Blueprint

*This is a description of what has been done to coordinate the information gathering of various Independent Media Centers in the past, along with suggestions for future IMCs.*

**A**n IMC could save a lot of effort and do a lot more with its content if it did a better job of thinking out its information infrastructure before things heated up. This might entail considering dispatch its own entity with its own planning needs, budget, working group, etc, or it might mean simply having the different working groups coordinate better and plan some kind of strategy in advance.

The website has a lot of material whose power could be enhanced by linking it to similar content. For instance, a print story on a puppet center shutdown could be posted along with an audio and a video clip. This would be easiest to do if there was better coordination between working groups. People have suggested that "teams" be formed to send out to each event with a rep or two from most of the working groups to facilitate the clustering of content.

As I see it there's a couple of things to be done to make this happen. (I'd love to hear additional suggestions.) First, you could run on the dispatch model, where there is one "working group" designated to keep track of teams, direct additional reporters to a team, and work with the media working groups of activist organizations (DAN, IAC, R2K, etc.) to ensure that we have a better sense of what's going on. I'll say more about what we've been doing along these lines in a bit.

Working group and general meetings could be better scheduled to make a decentralized system of assignments easier to run. In Philly, the general meeting was held BEFORE the working group meetings, which struck me as odd. If working groups met first, they could set up assignments then; at the general meeting there could be a brief rundown of the next day's stories and who was covering them from each group. People could then get in touch with team members from other working groups after the general meeting. I think this would give us a much-needed sense of the "big picture" of what we're covering.

I would recommend the dispatch model, myself (although that doesn't necessarily exclude the "decentralized" model). I don't like centralization, but in the case of protests where we are monitoring fast-moving actions and sending reporters out to cover them we may lose time and footage if reporters don't have some way of finding out what's up without coming back and tracking down their working group coordinator.

In Philly the print and photo teams were masterfully well-coordinated—hats off to Amy and all the other folks who made that possible. This was

Biltmore space but far from the Gallery. Eddie had anticipated that this space would be in better condition than it was by A16. It wasn't exactly a great place to stay, though some IMC volunteers, especially video producers, stayed there.

### Suggestions:

Having a large, general space for both gathering and production was exciting because we felt united as a group. However, perhaps having production facilities off site would have enabled more people to do better work.

### SET UP

In retrospect, the days before A16 were a fun, productive time in which organizers who arrived early were able to develop close bonds with each other before the masses arrived. At the time, set up felt like an exhausting period of 'round-the-clock guesswork. We actually had a difficult time setting up the IMC-DC because there were so many people coming from so many places at so many different times with so much equipment. The recommendation, of course, is for your IMC to borrow enough equipment from local activists, non-profits, unions and technology-for-social-change programs that you'll have at least the basics of a network set up when people come. Then you wouldn't have to keep changing the setup every time someone new arrives. Unless you can get tables and chairs donated right away by a church group or union hall you should consider renting them so you have enough when people come they're pretty cheap. Try to get a sense before you start of how much cable you're going to need, and how many network cards, and how many power strips, etc. **KEEP RECEIPTS** so you can return everything at the end of the week.

One other strong recommendation is to strongly, strongly encourage media team coordinators to arrive as far in advance as possible. The time coordinators who came early had to make plans and get to know each other was INVALUABLE. The closer to A16 a coordinator arrived, the more difficult a time s/he had in getting into the swing of things, both with the equipment s/he needed and organizationally.

### COMMUNICATIONS

The IMC-DC's communication system consisted of land lines, cell phones and walkie talkies.

### Land lines.

There were two groups of land lines coming into the Gallery, one for the IMC and another for the Media Working Group. Karl, a friend of Eddie's, generously hooked up the telephones and loaned the IMC a phone switching system. There were four lines available for the MWG and three

for the IMC. The MWG needed all their phone lines and the IMC pretty much maxxed out our phone use too, especially when people started calling in actions from the street. There was a dedicated fax line for the MWG and another for the IMC, which the radio team used for phone interviews.

**Hooking up the land lines took a while**, and getting long distance set up on the lines was nearly impossible. The suggestion to future IMCs is to **start doing that as soon as possible**. We ended up enabling long distance on the MWG's phones but they were unable to use it for most of the time, so their long distance bill ended up being quite low. (I'm personally not sure if we had voicemail on the IMC phones, and if so I don't know what our system was for checking it, if we had one.)

### *Cell phones:*

The IMC bought eleven cell phones for DC and future use by other independent media centers, at least any that exists in a place where Sprint PCS service is available. We initially hoped to buy refurbished telephones from a Sprint dealer in the suburbs but that turned out to be a bust. We ended up buying most of our phones from the Sprint PCS store downtown, which was more expensive but more reliable. **One problem** was that the Direct Action Media Network had **no credit history** (we've just been an "official" group for a few months) so Sprint wouldn't allow the group to put telephones on its bill. Therefore we had to have individuals put the phones on their credit cards. In the Sprint system each individual is limited to having 5 phones under his/her name. We signed each of the phones up for a \$75 plan, some of them for 1000 minutes of long distance and some for 2000 minutes of local use. We weren't clear enough about which phones were local only, so some people used the local phones for long distance calls. We distributed the cell phones among the team coordinators and printed up quarter page phone lists so every reporter would have the contact numbers. The phones were useful but we did have **problems with the phones not working** at times due to network congestion and other factors that effect connection quality. After A16 we immediately put the phones on "vacation" to save on service plan charges.

### *Walkie talkies*

In order to allow the coverage teams to communicate with the IMC and with each other we rented a walkie talkie/radio system, 10 radios and a base station, from BearCom. **Unfortunately** the IMC building was **too far away** from the protest zone and the convergence space for the walkie talkies to reach. We would have been able to **make the system work** had we thought ahead to buy or rent a proper antenna, but we didn't.

Contact Devin [sunbird@thefoundry.org](mailto:sunbird@thefoundry.org) with specific questions about the walkie talkies, why they didn't work and what we can do **next time to make them work**.

Mike Eisenmenger

[eisenmen@tao.ca](mailto:eisenmen@tao.ca) (NYC edit team)

### *Web video:*

Rachel Rinaldo

[rarinald@midway.uchicago.edu](mailto:rarinald@midway.uchicago.edu)

Robery Wyrod:

[rjwyrod@midway.uchicago.edu](mailto:rjwyrod@midway.uchicago.edu)

### *Equipment:*

Adam Stenftenagel

[sten@atombom.com](mailto:sten@atombom.com)

Arthur Foelsche

[avf@together.net](mailto:avf@together.net)

David Russo

[dnrusso@earthlink.net](mailto:dnrusso@earthlink.net)

### *Web/tech:*

Evan Henshaw-Plath

[rabble@protest.net](mailto:rabble@protest.net)

Mansour Jacobi

[jacobi@freespeech.org](mailto:jacobi@freespeech.org)

### *Outreach:*

Lisa Sousa

[macs-coord@media-alliance.org](mailto:macs-coord@media-alliance.org)

and protest-oriented **coverage and context**. Future IMCs must do as much as possible to communicate internally, and to communicate with communities that are rarely represented in the media to involve them in covering these issues which are essential to all communities. Future IMCs should train more people, have better orientations for its volunteers and have a better security system. **In other words, future IMCs have their work cut out for them.**

What future IMCs should not do is anything that would suck the life out of their media effort. **Sometimes a little chaos and excitement is good for an organization.** Sometimes people learn more from having to develop their own systems on the fly than from stepping into someone else's without having to think. **Future IMCs should always keep their sense of humor.** No matter how chaotic and frustrating DC was at time, people had FUN there, met great people and had a chance to be part of a tremendous, growing movement. That's why people are going to keep coming back for more.

**Any questions about this evaluation?** Contact Jay at [jay@tao.ca](mailto:jay@tao.ca) and/or 304-291-1507. Below is a list of the DC coordinators and their e-mail addresses. Please contact them and ask them what equipment they had and/or could have used in DC. That's invaluable information that hasn't yet worked its way into this evaluation.

*General:*

Jay Sand [jay@tao.ca](mailto:jay@tao.ca),  
Eric Galatas programming [2@fstv.org](mailto:2@fstv.org)

*Audio team:*

Jade Paget-Seekins [jademps@sfsu.edu](mailto:jademps@sfsu.edu)

*Photo team:*

Adam Green [a\\_green@mindspring.com](mailto:a_green@mindspring.com),  
Heidi Reijm [ciderly@netzero.net](mailto:ciderly@netzero.net),  
Ali Tonak [992@bard.edu](mailto:992@bard.edu)

*Print team:*

Leslie Howes [leslieh@speakeasy.org](mailto:leslieh@speakeasy.org)

*Translation team:*

Jeremy Simer [jesimer@u.washington.edu](mailto:jesimer@u.washington.edu)

*Video team:*

Eddie Becker: [ebecker@cni.org](mailto:ebecker@cni.org),

*REGISTRATION*

People planning to come to DC were able to register on-line through "[signup.indymedia.org](http://signup.indymedia.org)" through Adam Stenftenagel's database. The database asked for contact information and what equipment they were going to bring. We originally thought we would be able to turn the database into a way to organize who was covering which story, but that didn't work due to the chaos and lack of equipment. Adam set up his database at the IMC a couple days before A16 and we were able to register everyone who came through. **More than 800 names were in the database by A18** (some were duplicates but most weren't). Everyone who signed up received a printed IMC press pass (without photo) that had a number on the back that corresponded to his/her number in the database. The registration desk kept running out of press passes and plastic holders so we had to keep running out to the office supply store to allow everyone to have a pass. The first IMC press passes were not effective in getting IMC reporters across police lines. We devised a system to make photo passes for people who were going to do coverage in the streets. That system didn't get up and running until A17. We understand that police were more inclined to consider people with photo badges "official press".

One suggestion would be to have a database system for registering individuals on-site, making two kinds of passes available one non-photo access pass, which most people would get so they could have access to the IMC space, and a photo pass for those who plan to do street coverage. The photo pass should be available behind the registration desk so reporters can get one as soon as they register.

*WELCOME PACKET*

The first few DC-IMC general **meetings were long**, primarily because we **didn't have our welcome/orientation packet** together until A15. Because there was no orientation material we had to explain everything to everyone at each meeting, which took up a lot of time. **The recommendation is to have a welcome packet available from the first day people show up.** *What should the welcome packet include?*<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ A **general intro of the IMC**, its principles, its decision-making structure (collective? Consensus), etc.
- ▶ Information about each space, including sleeping spaces.
- ▶ **Phone number** of IMC, cell phone numbers of coordinators, legal team phone number, medical phone numbers
- ▶ **Directions around the city** from the IMC to the protest zone, from the IMC to the sleeping spaces, from the IMC to the convergence space, etc. **These should be public transport and driving directions.** Also include recommendations for **cheap/veggie/24 hour food.**

- ▶ **Legal information:** what to do if you're arrested, how to ask questions of protesters without getting them in legal trouble.
- ▶ **Medical information:** what to do in case of tear gas, pepper spray and other problems.
- ▶ **A calendar** of the week's events.
- ▶ **Background information** about the overarching issues and why people are protesting.
- ▶ **Specific information for each team:** each team's licensing/copyright agreement, each team's necessary info (such as where to go for photo developing for the photo team), each team's particular editorial/publishing process

### *IMC "POSTCARD"*

In DC the IMC printed a **very well-designed**, glossy "postcard" with the IMC's **contact information** that our reporters passed out to anyone and everyone they saw in the field who had a camera or witnessed something that would have been interesting for a first-person report. Reporters also carried the cards so they'd have the IMC's contact information themselves. We **printed 5,000** of them and **gave them all out**. Contact Rupert ([dnrusso@earthlink.net](mailto:dnrusso@earthlink.net)) for a template of his excellent design.

### *SECURITY*

The IMC-DC didn't have a consistent physical security coordinator, which led to **security being quite lax**. Most of the time the **IMC had a volunteer** watching both the front and the back door, though few had real security training. Physical security should be a **major priority** for future IMCs.

### *VOLUNTEERS*

The IMC-DC group found **integrating new volunteers** into the mix **fairly difficult**. People who came wanting to be part of a particular media team were able to plug in fairly quickly to whatever system (or lack of system) that team had developed. We had a more difficult time integrating people who came simply to volunteer. Of course there were many places to volunteer security, registration, couriers, etc. We unfortunately didn't have anyone who was regularly available at the registration desk to introduce people to the IMC and figure out how to fit them into the system. The **recommendation** is to have a **volunteer coordinating** team that will always have a **representative at the front desk**, someone who can **welcome newcomers** and explain the IMC to them. The **best case scenario** would be that people could spend time volunteering then participate in ongoing trainings to **learn how to make their own media**.

### *TRAINING*

There was a good deal of informal training that happened at the IMC-

*N<sup>o</sup>*  
of accesses

TOTAL ACCESSES FROM  
*various parts of the net*

7975	.fr	(france)
10635	.uk	(UK)
120377	.edu	
177897	.com	
228069	.net	
10971	.gov	accesses
977	.mil	accesses

### *CLEAN UP*

What happens after the actions are over? Of course **there will be a lot to clean up**. I dragged 21 boxes of office supplies and notebooks and pens and other stuff back home with me after the IMC closed. Rupert and Chris from DC have boxes of clothes that people left behind. **People should all consider staying a couple days after the actions** are over for pure clean up purposes. However, the more important reason that people should consider staying is that after most actions are over, is that **there will still be people** (perhaps IMC reporters) **in jail and/or in the hospital**. IMC reporters, especially, should appreciate the fact that **activists need support well after the protests are over**.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS/CONGRATULATIONS*

The DC IMC was an **exciting, invigorating place to be** during the exciting, invigorating A16 protests. The **independent media movement is GROWING and getting stronger** as we speak. We are building a viable alternative institution that is built upon a solid foundation of collective organizing. We are building **independent media that represents us and the way we want to see the world work**. That's pretty cool.

Of course there are a lot of things we did wrong in DC that **future IMCs should do better**. Future IMCs should have a better idea of what equipment they need to "bottom line" each media team and be absolutely sure they have it on hand, whether or not that means they have to rent some computers for a few days. Future IMCs should do a better job of **getting the indymedia news out** to the people on the streets and in the communities by doing things like showing IMC videos with projectors in alleyways, passing out frequent half-page "Blind Spot" updates to keep people updated about what's happening in the streets and by renting some bullhorns and giving hourly "Indymedia news" reports to passersby. Future IMCs should have more dry erase boards available to post important information in the IMC building. Future **IMCs should do as much background reporting as possible** before the big protest event so they can offer both **issue-oriented**



SOME OF THE INTERESTING DOMAINS  
that accessed the DCIMC A16 web site (cont.)

<i>Most Interesting and relevant to DC (cont.)</i>	
52	Pentagon ( <b>pentagon.mil</b> )
864	DC government ( <b>dcgov.org</b> )
<i>Interesting Companies</i>	
1510	<b>microsoft.com</b>
6	<b>monsanto.com</b>
8	<b>nike.com</b>
7	<b>gap.com</b>
<i>News Agencies</i>	
103	<b>nytimes.com</b>
35	<b>coxnews.com</b>
134	<b>latimes.com</b>
11	<b>msnbc.com</b>
4	<b>cnbc.com</b>
<i>Other Governments</i>	
94	UK gov ( <b>suffolkcc.gov.uk</b> , <b>devon-cc.gov.uk</b> , <b>edinburgh.gov.uk</b> , and <b>gsi.gov.uk</b> )
35	parliament people in New Zealand ( <i>these appear to be two distinct people: Margaret Turner and Kate Deberry</i> )
274	Australian government ( <b>gov.au</b> )
42	Philidelphia gov ( <b>phila.gov</b> )
301	Canadian Government
<i>US Government agencies</i>	
11	FCC ( <b>fcc.gov</b> )
196	EPA ( <b>epa.gov</b> )
740	National Institute of Health ( <b>nih.gov</b> )
1482	Department of the Treasury ( <b>treas.gov</b> )
325	US patent office ( <b>uspto.gov</b> )
233	federal reserve bank ( <b>frb.gov</b> )
1319	National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) ( <b>noaa.gov</b> )
372	US census bureau ( <b>census.gov</b> )
1848	US department of labor employment and training administraction ( <b>doleta.gov</b> )
12	Federal Bureau of Prisons
212	Department of Transportation ( <b>dot.gov</b> )

DC but there was no formal training program. The **recommendation** would be to have a **training director** who would **organize** ongoing trainings **before** and **during the event** to assure that people are familiar with the available equipment and techniques.

#### OFFICE SUPPLIES

As you'll see in the budget, the IMC-DC spent a lot of money on office supplies. We also had a lot of office supplies left over at the end, some of which we bought because we didn't know what supplies were available (such as several staplers). The **recommendation** is for there to be a **person** in charge of **knowing what office supplies are needed** and what are **available** in the IMC building.

#### COPIERS

**Recommendation: get someone**, perhaps a labor union or a non-profit group, **to donate a WORKING photocopier** to the IMC. In DC we had three copiers in the IMC at various points but two broke and the other could only handle a single page at a time.

#### FAX MACHINES

**Test your fax machine** before the busiest days begin, and make sure you have an extra print cartridge handy. In DC we had a **broken** fax machine and another that **ran out** of ink. **Bad.**

#### COURIERS

In DC we tried to hook up with the Mobilization's bike courier team to shuttle coverage back and forth between reporters in the field and the IMC, but that didn't work. We did use IMC volunteers with cars to shuttle people back and forth. **This system would have gone better had the radio communication equipment worked.** The suggestion is to have a courier team coordinator who will work with the dispatch/assignments team to be in constant communication with the reporters.

#### SAFTEY OF REPORTERS

Be sure to make medical and legal information available to all reporters who are going out into the field. Make sure each reporter has a copy of the important IMC phone numbers, as well as a legal support number. In DC we **printed stickers with the important phone numbers** so people could put them on their clothes and encouraged people to write legal support numbers on their arms. Let the reporter know that s/he should remember his/her IMC badge number for use if s/he is arrested, is participating in jail solidarity, and gets to call the IMC. Before reporters go into the field they should check in with the assignments/dispatch team so the dispatchers know, in general terms, where the reporters are. If reporters are arrested or

injured, SUPPORT THEM. Make sure to have first aid equipment available in the IMC and perhaps some gas masks/vinegar/saline solution to enable reporters to handle pepper spray/tear gas.

### *DEALING WITH THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA*

The IMC is "a story" in and of itself, at least according to the mainstream media; any IMC will no doubt have **mainstream media crawling all over it trying to twist the phenomenon** in whatever way serves them. In DC the mainstream media were most interested in visiting the week before AI6 in order **to get their stories ready** in time for AI6 itself. Our outreach coordinator, Lisa, came on the 13th so Jeremy and Jay (with the beard) served as interim outreach coordinators. They handled all mainstream media requests to do stories about the IMC until Lisa came.

*The DC-IMC developed a few rules for how to handle the mainstream media:*

- a) We tried to get mainstream media to schedule times to come to the IMC so we could **let everyone know they were coming**. If they just showed up at the door we asked them to come back in an hour if possible so people could know they'd be coming. If possible, we tried to clear a scheduled mainstream media visit through a general meeting.
- b) All mainstream media doing articles on the IMC had to register as mainstream media we gave them **special little badges to wear** while they were in the IMC
- c) Someone from the outreach team **accompanied mainstream media at all times** when they were in the IMC
- d) Everyone, not just mainstream media, had to **ask permission** of anyone who was going to be in the range of their cameras **before** they could **take a photo** or shoot video.

We actually got some decent coverage in the mainstream media, especially from local stations and internet-based publications.

**A tip:** Print up a **poster-sized IMC logo**, with the **web site address** beneath it, to put as the backdrop for anyone who is being interviewed **on TV**.

There were a couple of independent/alternative film crews that asked if they could do coverage of what was happening in the IMC. We decided their level of access in our general meetings on a case by case basis.

The concept of **how to relate to the mainstream media** in other ways is **more complicated**. Should the IMC try to feed coverage to the mainstream? Is getting some IMC coverage into the mainstream media a "success?" That's a question for each IMC to ask and answer on its own. The media teams should all discuss that though, before the actions begin what happens if the mainstream media want to buy some coverage? Will we

Though some aspects of the video team worked well, and the "Breaking the Bank" video is being well received, there were some difficulties within the video group during AI6. Eddie Becker had volunteered to be video coordinator but was overwhelmed with his facilities work so he had to step back from that task. That left somewhat of a gap in the video group. The web-video team was not able to post video clips to the indymedia site for part of the weekend because there was not enough equipment available for group use. Some videographers even felt a skills-based and gender-based bias against them while in DC. *(These aren't fun things to bring up, but they happened.)* There are many issues to work through for future IMC projects and with more communication the video team will no doubt be able to solve any problems it may have had in Washington.

### *THE WEB TEAM*

**The whole world was watching Indymedia.org during AI6.** The news wire again proved itself an **exciting and inspiring** experiment in new world independent media. As there were in Seattle, there were discussions about whether or not there should be an editorial policy for the news feed. The web team did develop and employ the capacity to feature articles on the front page of the **indymedia.org** site though the **editorial policy** was **somewhat fuzzy**. The question of whether/how to edit newswire content is still open and **indymedia.org** will likely develop a coherent policy toward that issue in the future.

**Over the days surrounding AI6 the indymedia.org web site got over a million hits.** In addition, more than **700 site visitors watched the live webcast** of the press conference held in the IMC on AI6.

**Micah Anderson gathered the following stats on some of the more interesting domains that accessed the web site:**

*N<sup>o</sup>*  
of accesses

SOME OF THE INTERESTING DOMAINS  
that accessed the **DCIMC AI6** web site

<i>Most Interesting and relevant to DC:</i>	
546	<b>worldbank.org</b>
33	<b>imf.org</b>
157	US Trade Representative's office ( <b>ustr.gov</b> - <i>this is Charlene Barschefskey's office</i> )
61	South African government ( <b>gov.za</b> )
664	US senate ( <b>senate.gov</b> )
19	Superior court of DC ( <b>http://www.dcsc.gov/</b> )

practical to post on the web. The coordinators decided to encourage the DC photo team to post as good images as possible to the indymedia.org news wire. The photo team in DC arranged for two one-hour photo places to do bulk, therefore reasonably cheap, photo processing for IMC photographers. This worked well, but one photo shop was in the protest zone and police restricted access, thereby trapping some developed rolls of film. The photo team had a negative scanner at the Alley Studio which they used on AI6. During AI7 they used a computer and a flatbed scanner in the IMC. The photo team had four or five photographers "on assignment" throughout the protest time to assure the IMC would get coverage at every large event. The IMC paid for developing for those photographers (and film too?). All other photographers paid for their own film and developing. The photo team may be considering developing photo exhibits based upon AI6 to show in galleries.

### *THE RADIO TEAM*

The radio team in DC did a good job of getting audio news from the streets. They did **live interviews with protesters**, recorded interviews and seminars about the World Bank and IMF and were able to put a **regular stream of audio clips** up to the indymedia.org web site. They also produced five days of daily audio wrap ups (five minutes each). A dozen or so radio stations in the US broadcast the radio team's daily wrap ups. KPFA and the **Canadian Broadcast Corporation aired some live interviews with indymedia reporters**, Democracy Now aired an indymedia audio montage and about **30 stations around Australia aired the daily wrap ups** after an Australian broadcaster put them up on a satellite.

### *THE VIDEO TEAM*

The video team came into DC having produced **several hours of excellent, powerful coverage of the Seattle WTO protests**. The producers who had worked together in Seattle to put together four days of coverage to go up to satellite, 1/2 hour each day, decided to not pursue that frantic pace in Washington. They realized that too **few people watched the daily coverage to make the exhausting work worth the trouble**, but that **tens of thousands of people have seen the Seattle videos in screenings** after the WTO protests. They also realized that the 1/2 hour segments lost a bit of quality because of the rush to produce them, but that later, more edited versions of the Seattle coverage were better. The video producers decided to gather coverage throughout AI6 by transferring it from the videographers' cameras onto digital tapes and bring those tapes (about 50 hours worth) to New York City to edit an hour-long video to be aired on satellite on April 21. They called this video "**Breaking the Bank**", and it'll be coming soon to a video screening near you. The editing process in New York was apparently intense and incredibly successful.

sell it? How much from the sale should go to the IMC? The Seattle IMC had media makers give back 50% of what they made in selling coverage. In DC **each media team made its own policy**, or at least was *allowed* to. Some didn't.

### *ASSIGNMENTS/DISPATCH*

As AI6 came closer the general meetings turned in assignment meetings. At the end of each general meeting those who were planning to do coverage the next day signed up on a big sheet of butcher paper to cover particular stories. Not all people who were planning to do coverage showed up for the assignment meetings though. The night before AI6, after the general meeting, there was a big assignment meeting to determine coverage for the next day. Media teams developed around the direct action protesters' action plan to divide the city into "pie slices." Some media makers connected with direct action affinity groups but most didn't. The assignment coverage was confusing and connecting media teams with "pie slices" didn't work too well. The next night we attempted to break reporters into issue-based teams but that didn't work too well either. We need to develop a better system for assigning coverage teams to areas or issues.

When the radio communication system broke down the IMC lost a substantial amount of its ability to dispatch media teams. The dispatch system was therefore incredibly confusing at first. In the spirit of collective initiative, those who volunteered to work on the dispatch system developed the mess into a viable system within a day. The dispatch team copied large maps of the city so they could track the protesters. Once we were able to get a telephone line near the dispatch area we were able to get telephone calls from the field and mark the protesters' movements on the big maps with post-it notes. The assignment team from the IMC worked with the Media Working Group which was also getting tips from the protesters on where they were going and what they were doing. **The recommendation is, of course, to assure a working a walkie talkie or cell phone communication system.**

### *FOOD*

For three days the IMC-DC was able to get free food from the Seeds of Peace group that was serving at the Mobilization's convergence space. When **police shut down the convergence space** that arrangement **didn't work anymore**. For the most part people arranged their own food but there were several times when the IMC bought food and brought it in for everyone. **The recommendation is that if the IMC buys food you should collect donations before going out to purchase the food or else you'll be stuck with a food bill**, despite asking for donations afterward.

### *PRESS CONFERENCE*

Upstairs from the IMC part of the Gallery was a **TV production studio**,

Planet Vox, that had a **fiber optic** cable installed on April 15 in order to be able to **broadcast live-to-satellite** from their facility. They offered use of it to the IMC for a live press conference. The Media Working Group was especially excited about the possibility for having a **live-to-satellite press conference** and presented the idea to the Mobilization, which agreed to provide four speakers for a Sunday afternoon, April 16 press conference. The IMC coordinators talked about the possibility of having the conference and realized having it would be a **tremendous inconvenience** but reached consensus on **taking advantage of the opportunity**. Having the conference meant clearing out most people from the IMC during peak production hours on AI6. The video team volunteered to put together a five minute edited version of some of the coverage they had gathered to kick off the live broadcast, and a couple individual editors consolidated use of the video-ready computers for much of the day to produce that piece. The press conference itself was exciting. Jeff Perlstein from the IMC was the "MC" and spoke about independent media before introducing the four Mobilization speakers. **Several mainstream media film crews came to the IMC to ask their silly mainstream media questions**. Mobilization speakers were "on message" and were able to **respond freely and coherently to the mainstream media's questions**. The press conference gave the movement a valuable chance to set the agenda for coverage; **many media outlets, including CNN, pulled down the feed**. It was also a way to promote the IMC itself through the video clips, Jeff's introduction and the big Indymedia.org posters we had printed and put on the wall behind the speakers. On the other hand, clearing out the IMC during the peak production time was difficult and in a sense counter-productive, allowing the mainstream media to have a several hour jump on putting out their coverage. The press conference was **both a good thing and a frustrating one**.

### *MEDIA TEAMS/COVERAGE*

Every independent media maker had to decide for him or herself the **appropriate level of "professionalism"** that s/he desired in his/her personal productions. The DC media teams held themselves to the highest professional standards and each produced quality material. Though people no doubt discussed these matters, we did not have meetings to talk about whether IMC reporters should consider themselves "activists" or "media" or both. Should an IMC reporter who is also a protester wear his/her press badge in a blockade? These are essential issues to discuss, yet in DC we **deferred judgement** on these issues **to each individual**.

As for the tenor of coverage, the IMC DC tried to coordinate issue-based coverage teams before AI6 in order to **encourage reporters to do work about the IMF and World Bank themselves, not just the protesters**. That wasn't a very successful program, though media makers did produce a

substantial amount of contextualizing information throughout the AI6 week. There was also an attempt to get coverage from the Global South about the **effects of the IMF and World Bank** in their countries. That program was somewhat more successful, though **most articles posted** to indymedia.org were still of the **"protesters vs. police"** variety. A recommendation would be to start conceiving coverage very far in advance of an event and doing a lot of background reporting before the actions begin so there can be context available for the protest coverage (other, upcoming IMCs are already doing that type of advance work). **Another suggestion would be** for the reporters who arrive in advance to take some time to **interview the "experts"** provided by the protest group's press liaisons. "Experts" don't tell the whole story but they can provide some context. Also, the reporters themselves were not very diverse racially none of the organizers of the IMC were. We as an independent media movement have to actively pursue involvement from communities that will be able to speak to different shades of economic and racial prejudice again, upcoming IMCs in Los Angeles and Philadelphia seem to be doing this kind of essential outreach.

Each of the media teams printed its own document about licensing issues and had its own policy about who would own what part of the coverage and how they would cut the IMC in if they were able to sell it. For more information on each team's agreement contact the team leaders (e-mails below).

### *THE PRINT TEAM*

In DC the print team produced **two editions of "Blind Spot."** They had intended to produce three but there were some problems with their desk top publishing equipment; they had some internal difficulties as well. At a point we conceived the possibility of printing the Blind Spot on newspaper, but we were not able to do so, so we photocopied the publication. At points we had at least **three photocopiers** in the IMC **but two broke** and one could **only handle a single sheet at a time**. The two local Kinkos were closed (police pressure? Fear of riots?) so we had to copy the issues at a Kinkos fairly far away. We **printed 1,000 copies of each**, if I'm not mistaken. Each edition came out in the afternoon/evening, one on the evening of AI6 and the other on the afternoon of AI7. When they were printed we sent reporters out to the **protest zone to distribute** them. We had intended to **produce pdf versions** of the Blind Spot for distribution on-line and to translate them into several languages

### *PHOTO TEAM*

In our coordinators discussions on e-mail before AI6, those who had been involved in Seattle realized that the Seattle IMC had given somewhat short shrift to still photographs, even though they are very powerful and

the doer. We must criticize the act, not the person. Even if you think the person is the problem, responding that way never resolves anything.

### *Unity of Purpose*

Unity of purpose is a basic understanding about the goals and purpose of the group. Of course, there will be varying opinions on the best way to accomplish these goals. However, there must be a unifying base, a common starting point, which is recognized and accepted by all.

### *Nonviolence*

Nonviolent decision-makers use their power to achieve goals while respecting differences and cooperating with others. In this environment, it is considered violent to use power to dominate or control the group process. It is understood that the power of revealing your truth is the maximum force allowed to persuade others to your point of view.

### *Self Empowerment*

It is easy for people to unquestioningly rely on authorities and experts to do their thinking and decisionmaking for them. If members of a group delegate their authority, intentionally or not, they fail to accept responsibility for the group's decisions. Consensus promotes and depends upon self empowerment. Anyone can express concerns. Everyone seeks creative solutions and is responsible for every decision. When all are encouraged to participate, the democratic nature of the process increases.

### *Cooperation*

Unfortunately, Western society is saturated in competition. When winning arguments becomes more important than achieving the group's goals, cooperation is difficult, if not impossible. Adversarial attitudes toward proposals or people focus attention on weakness rather than strength. An attitude of helpfulness and support builds cooperation. Cooperation is a shared responsibility in finding solutions to all concerns. Ideas offered in the spirit of cooperation help resolve conflict. The best decisions arise through an open and creative interplay of ideas.

### *Conflict Resolution*

The free flow of ideas, even among friends, inevitably leads to conflict. In this context, conflict is simply the expression of disagreement. Disagreement itself is neither good nor bad. Diverse viewpoints bring into focus and explore the strengths and weaknesses of attitudes, assumptions, and plans. Without conflict, one is less likely to think about and evaluate one's views and prejudices. There is no right decision, only the best one for the whole group. The task is to work together to discover which choice is

because they kept a database with information, entered the night before or even days in advance, on who was going to cover which stories and who they'd be teaming up with. The audio team also tended to plan things out a day in advance and knew who'd be where. Video, by contrast, seemed to run on a more decentralized model- it was my impression that the group was already broken down into teams working on a number of small projects. These projects tended to take care of their own business, and they weren't always able to give dispatch a sense of who was where as a result.

In the past, a big IMC-wide list of stories has been written out on a large piece of paper (usually in the evening or morning) and posted on the wall to give people a sense of what's being covered on a given day. The advantages to this system were that it was easy for people to plug in-all they had to do was go to the wall and see what was there-and it was relatively uncomplicated.

Dispatch in DC and Philly also tracked activity on paper logs kept by the phones. The logs had space for people to record the who, what, where, and when of the information we received--calls we got from folks in the field, R2K, and live mainstream media coverage. We stuck post-its to a blown-up map of the city to give us a good sense of where things were happening when we needed to give folks directions.

Between the big paper and the little papers, this system was maddeningly messy. So in a fit of pique in Philly, I ditched the paper system, frustrated with its drawbacks. Some of those being:

- a) you can't make the paper wall list grow, shrink, or spontaneously erase errors or completed events, so the information quickly outgrows the paper;
- b) the paper phone logs also have little room for expansion and
- c) they're not easy to search (*if we wanted to tell anyone anything useful about where a protest was we had to dig through mounds of old records*);
- d) It's hard to make sure that people actually use the wall list;
- e) Dispatch is frequently not close enough to the wall list to make use of it; *and*
- f) the map quickly gets clogged with old post-its.

I cobbled together a *FileMaker Pro* database instead. The database had space for the date, time, and location of an event; a brief description of the event; contact information for organizers involved with the event and IMC folks knowledgeable about it; and a field for information on who from each working group - print, photo, video, and audio - was working on that story.

Within each record there was also space to write in updates on an event as it happened-new information on location and police activity, indexed by time. This was achieved by means of a multi-celled record, a feature which more recent versions of Filemaker might not have. In the future I'd like to

have this feature work on a relational database, which I'd forgotten how to do in Filemaker at the time.

We also made up a database of cellphone numbers (and we should have made one up for who had a car-in places like Los Angeles a drivers list is going to be SO VITAL, as LA folks have probably found out), but I don't think we used it well. If I had my druthers the main database would be relational and draw this information out of the cel and car databases.

There were two ways to view the information in the database. The first was by record, sort of a Rolodexy view of all the information pertaining to one event. The second was a listing of selected information on a series of events—say, time, name of event, and who was going to it. The latter was supposed to lend itself to searching current events, viewing at a glance where we needed more coverage, and printing out a transparency which was going to be projected on the wall, which people could use to sign up much in the way they could add to the old paper wall list. (I would love to hear from Holly whether that part was ever useful or even used; in fact, Holly, if you're out there and could give me a rundown on what you felt were the weaknesses or difficulties presented by the database in general that would be swell.) Obstacles to the transparency system: we had trouble finding a working printer or copier, and I think the overhead bulb may have burned out once or twice.

People were confused as to why we'd replaced the paper list with a transparency, which would have worked in a similar way and in the end was worse because of technical difficulties. My idea was simply to make dispatch's list of the events correspond with the list everyone else could see. If you print out a transparency once an hour, let people sign up on it (so they don't have to come to you and bug you if they're going out), add their written info back into the database, and make sure that new events come through you and don't go direct to the transparency, keeping track of what's going on should be a little neater.

This Filemaker-and-transparency model was not my ideal, but it worked ok. Really what I would have liked to have is a video projector which could be hooked up to a computer showing a real-time listing of stories at all times—some view of the database which could be updated by dispatch and reflect the updates just after they happened. I would suggest we have one computer and a video projector dedicated to displaying a report on the events of the hour on the wall at all times.

To make things slightly more complex, we might also try making a tipline on the web as well as on the phones, whose info would then get dumped directly into a web/networked story tracking DB. This way people could access and at least look at the story suggestions from various terminals without having to talk to dispatch, if they didn't actually sign up themselves. Problems with this might be crashed DBs and data corrupted by people entering multiple records/ adding erroneous data.

make the proposal stronger.

This understanding of conflict may not be easily accepted by the members of a group. Our training by society undermines this concept. Therefore, it will not be easy to create the kind of environment where differences can be expressed without fear or resentment. But it can be done. It will require tolerance and a willingness to experiment. Additionally, the values and principles which form the basis of commitment to work together to resolve conflict need to be clearly defined, and accepted by all involved.

If a group desires to adopt Formal Consensus as its decisionmaking process, the first step is the creation of a Statement of Purpose or Constitution. This document would describe not only the common purpose, but would also include the definition of the group's principles and values. If the group discusses and writes down its foundation of principles at the start, it is much easier to determine group versus individual concerns later on.

The following are principles which form the foundation of Formal Consensus. A commitment to these principles and/or a willingness to develop them is necessary. In addition to the ones listed herein, the group might add principles and values which are specific to its purpose.

#### *Foundation Upon Which Consensus Is Built*

For consensus to work well, the process must be conducted in an environment which promotes trust, respect, and skill sharing. The following are principles which, when valued and respected, encourage and build consensus.

#### *Trust*

Foremost is the need for trust. Without some amount of trust, there will be no cooperation or nonviolent resolution to conflict. For trust to flourish, it is desirable for individuals to be willing to examine their attitudes and be open to new ideas. Acknowledgement and appreciation of personal and cultural differences promote trust. Neither approval nor friendship are necessary for a good working relationship. By developing trust, the process of consensus encourages the intellectual and emotional development of the individuals within a group.

#### *Respect*

It is everyone's responsibility to show respect to one another. People feel respected when everyone listens, when they are not interrupted, when their ideas are taken seriously. Respect for emotional as well as logical concerns promotes the kind of environment necessary for developing consensus. To promote respect, it is important to distinguish between an action which causes a problem and the person who did the action, between the deed and

are unresolved, the facilitator is obligated to declare that consensus cannot be reached at this meeting, that the proposal is blocked, and move on to the next agenda item.

### *The Rules of Formal Consensus*

These guidelines and techniques are flexible and meant to be modified. Some of the guidelines, however, seem almost always to be true.

#### **These are the Rules of Formal Consensus:**

1. Once a decision has been adopted by consensus, it cannot be changed without reaching a new consensus.  
If a new consensus cannot be reached, the old decision stands.
2. In general, only one person has permission to speak at any moment. The person with permission to speak is determined by the group discussion technique in use and/or the facilitator. (The role of Peacekeeper is exempt from this rule.)
3. All structural decisions (i.e., which roles to use, who fills each role, and which facilitation technique and/or group discussion technique to use) are adopted by consensus without debate. Any objection automatically causes a new selection to be made. If a role cannot be filled without objection, the group proceeds without that role being filled. If much time is spent trying to fill roles or find acceptable techniques, then the group needs a discussion about the unity of purpose of this group and why it is having this problem, a discussion which must be put on the agenda for the next meeting, if not held immediately.
4. All content decisions (i.e., the agenda contract, committee reports, proposals, etc.) are adopted by consensus after discussion. Every content decision must be openly discussed before it can be tested for consensus.
5. A concern must be based upon the principles of the group to justify a block to consensus.
6. Every meeting which uses Formal Consensus must have an evaluation.

### 3 ON CONFLICT AND CONSENSUS

Conflict is usually viewed as an impediment to reaching agreements and disruptive to peaceful relationships. However, it is the underlying thesis of Formal Consensus that nonviolent conflict is necessary and desirable. It provides the motivations for improvement. The challenge is the creation of an understanding in all who participate that conflict, or differing opinions about proposals, is to be expected and acceptable. Do not avoid or repress conflict. Create an environment in which disagreement can be expressed without fear. Objections and criticisms can be heard not as attacks, not as attempts to defeat a proposal, but as a concern which, when resolved, will

Such a DB, I suppose, could eventually spit the completed story/associated materials back out onto the web? I don't know if it would be wise to give the tech team any more stress, though; they usually have their hands full. If we were working off a story tracking system having it suddenly go down would suck, so perhaps keeping it to a few simple networked computers with Filemaker would be ideal.

Philly seemed to work pretty well without even making the database visible to everyone. When people wanted a story, they'd check in with me or Holly, and using the database we could look up info, add info if they had any, and help them hook up with the other folks on the story they planned to cover.

In sum: I would recommend that any large IMC plan to provide at least one computer and a printer for a dispatch team.

In formalizing the "assignment" process I'd be concerned with losing some of the delightful messiness and spontaneity of an IMC. I know I feel comfortable at the IMC precisely because there's a lack of structure; I wouldn't want people to feel tied down because of their assignments. At the same time, I think we waste a lot of energy in duplicated coverage and lose a lot when we miss events that reporters haven't flocked to.

#### **Update:**

to get an overview of how dispatch could work, have an look at Dispatch Working Group

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/DispatchWorkingGroup>

## On Conflict and Consensus

### THE ADVANTAGES OF FORMAL CONSENSUS

**T**here are many ways to make decisions. Sometimes, the most efficient way to make decisions would be to just let the manager (or CEO, or dictator) make them. However, efficiency is not the only criteria. When choosing a decisionmaking method, one needs to ask two questions. Is it a fair process? Does it produce good solutions?

To judge the process, consider the following: Does the meeting flow smoothly? Is the discussion kept to the point? Does it take too long to make each decision? Does the leadership determine the outcome of the discussion? Are some people overlooked?

To judge the quality of the end result, the decision, consider: Are the people making the decision, and all those affected, satisfied with the result? To what degree is the intent of the original proposal accomplished? Are the underlying issues addressed? Is there an appropriate use of resources? Would the group make the same decision again?

Autocracy can work, but the idea of a benevolent dictator is just a dream. We believe that it is inherently better to involve every person who is affected by the decision in the decisionmaking process. This is true for several reasons. The decision would reflect the will of the entire group, not just the leadership. The people who carry out the plans will be more satisfied with their work. And, as the old adage goes, two heads are better than one.

This chapter presents a particular model for decisionmaking we call Formal Consensus. Formal Consensus has a clearly defined structure. It requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening, and respect for the contributions of every member. Likewise, every person has the responsibility to actively participate as a creative individual within the structure.

Avoidance, denial, and repression of conflict is common during meetings. Therefore, using Formal Consensus might not be easy at first. Unresolved conflict from previous experiences could come rushing forth and make the process difficult, if not impossible. Practice and discipline, however, will smooth the process. The benefit of everyone's participation and cooperation is worth the struggle it may initially take to ensure that all voices are heard.

### *Questions Which Clarify the Concern*

The facilitator asks for any questions or comments which would further clarify the concern so everyone clearly understands it before discussion starts.

### *Discussion Limited to Resolving One Concern*

Use as many creative group discussion techniques as needed to facilitate a resolution for each concern. Keep the discussion focused upon the particular concern until every suggestion has been offered. If no new ideas are coming forward and the concern cannot be resolved, or if the time allotted for this item has been entirely used, move to one of the closing options described below.

### *Call for Consensus*

Repeat this process until all concerns have been resolved. At this point, the group should be at consensus, but it would be appropriate to call for consensus anyway just to be sure no concern has been overlooked.

### *Closing Options: Send to Committee*

If a decision on the proposal can wait until the whole group meets again, then send the proposal to a committee which can clarify the concerns and bring new, creative resolutions for consideration by the group. It is a good idea to include on the committee representatives of all the major concerns, as well as those most supportive of the proposal so they can work out solutions in a less formal setting. Sometimes, if the decision is needed before the next meeting, a smaller group can be empowered to make the decision for the larger group, but again, this committee should include all points of view. Choose this option only if it is absolutely necessary and the whole group consents.

### *Stand Aside (Decision Adopted with Unresolved Concerns Listed)*

When a concern has been fully discussed and cannot be resolved, it is appropriate for the facilitator to ask those persons with this concern if they are willing to stand aside; that is, acknowledge that the concern still exists, but allow the proposal to be adopted. It is very important for the whole group to understand that this unresolved concern is then written down with the proposal in the record and, in essence, becomes a part of the decision. This concern can be raised again and deserves more discussion time as it has not yet been resolved. In contrast, a concern which has been resolved in past discussion does not deserve additional discussion, unless something new has developed. Filibustering is not appropriate in Formal Consensus.

### *Declare Block*

After having spent the allotted agenda time moving through the three levels of discussion trying to achieve consensus and concerns remain which

## LEVEL TWO: IDENTIFY CONCERNS

### *List All Concerns*

At the beginning of the next level, a discussion technique called brainstorming is used so that concerns can be identified and written down publicly by the scribe and for the record by the notetaker. Be sure the scribe is as accurate as possible by checking with the person who voiced the concern before moving on. This is not a time to attempt to resolve concerns or determine their validity. That would stifle free expression of concerns. At this point, only concerns are to be expressed, reasonable or unreasonable, well thought out or vague feelings. The facilitator wants to interrupt any comments which attempt to defend the proposal, resolve the concerns, judge the value of the concerns, or in any way deny or dismiss another's feelings of doubt or concern. Sometimes simply allowing a concern to be expressed and written down helps resolve it. After all concerns have been listed, allow the group a moment to reflect on them as a whole.

### *Group Related Concerns*

At this point, the focus is on identifying patterns and relationships between concerns. This short exercise must not be allowed to focus upon or resolve any particular concern.

## LEVEL THREE: RESOLVE CONCERNS

### Resolve Groups of Related Concerns

Often, related concerns can be resolved as a group.

### *Call for Consensus*

If most of the concerns seem to have been resolved, call for consensus in the manner described earlier. If some concerns have not been resolved at this time, then a more focused discussion is needed.

### *Restate Remaining Concerns (One at a Time)*

Return to the list. The facilitator checks each one with the group and removes ones which have been resolved or are, for any reason, no longer of concern. Each remaining concern is restated clearly and concisely and addressed one at a time. Sometimes new concerns are raised which need to be added to the list. However, every individual is responsible for honestly expressing concerns as they think of them. It is not appropriate to hold back a concern and spring it upon the group late in the process. This undermines trust and limits the group's ability to adequately discuss the concern in its relation to other concerns.

It is often said that consensus is time-consuming and difficult. Making complex, difficult decisions is time-consuming, no matter what the process. Many different methods can be efficient, if every participant shares a common understanding of the rules of the game. Like any process, Formal Consensus can be inefficient if a group does not first assent to follow a particular structure. This codifies a formal structure for decisionmaking.

Methods of decisionmaking can be seen on a continuum with one person having total authority on one end to everyone sharing power and responsibility on the other.

The level of participation increases along this decisionmaking continuum. Oligarchies and autocracies offer no participation to many of those who are directly affected. Representative, majority rule, and consensus democracies involve everybody, to different degrees.

### *Group Dynamics*

A group, by definition, is a number of individuals having some unifying relationship. The group dynamic created by consensus process is completely different from that of Parliamentary Procedure, from start to finish. It is based on different values and uses a different language, a different structure, and many different techniques, although some techniques are similar. It might be helpful to explain some broad concepts about group dynamics and consensus.

### *Conflict*

While decisionmaking is as much about conflict as it is about agreement, Formal Consensus works best in an atmosphere in which conflict is encouraged, supported, and resolved cooperatively with respect, nonviolence, and creativity. Conflict is desirable. It is not something to be avoided, dismissed, diminished, or denied.

### *Majority Rule and Competition*

Generally speaking, when a group votes using majority rule or Parliamentary Procedure, a competitive dynamic is created within the group because it is being asked to choose between two (or more) possibilities. It is just as acceptable to attack and diminish another's point of view as it is to promote and endorse your own ideas. Often, voting occurs before one side reveals anything about itself, but spends time solely attacking the opponent! In this adversarial environment, one's ideas are owned and often defended in the face of improvements.

### *Consensus and Cooperation*

Consensus process, on the other hand, creates a cooperative dynamic. Only one proposal is considered at a time. Everyone works together to make it the best possible decision for the group. Any concerns are raised and

resolved, sometimes one by one, until all voices are heard. Since proposals are no longer the property of the presenter, a solution can be created more cooperatively.

### *Proposals*

In the consensus process, only proposals which intend to accomplish the common purpose are considered. During discussion of a proposal, everyone works to improve the proposal to make it the best decision for the group. All proposals are adopted unless the group decides it is contrary to the best interests of the group.

### *Characteristics of Formal Consensus*

Before a group decides to use Formal Consensus, it must honestly assess its ability to honor the principles described in Chapter Three. If the principles described in this book are not already present or if the group is not willing to work to create them, then Formal Consensus will not be possible. Any group which wants to adopt Formal Consensus needs to give considerable attention to the underlying principles which support consensus and help the process operate smoothly. This is not to say each and every one of the principles described herein must be adopted by every group, or that each group cannot add its own principles specific to its goals, but rather, each group must be very clear about the foundation of principles or common purposes they choose before they attempt the Formal Consensus decisionmaking process.

### *Formal Consensus is the least violent decisionmaking process.*

Traditional nonviolence theory holds that the use of power to dominate is violent and undesirable. Nonviolence expects people to use their power to persuade without deception, coercion, or malice, using truth, creativity, logic, respect, and love. Majority rule voting process and Parliamentary Procedure both accept, and even encourage, the use of power to dominate others. The goal is the winning of the vote, often regardless of another choice which might be in the best interest of the whole group. The will of the majority supersedes the concerns and desires of the minority. This is inherently violent. Consensus strives to take into account everyone's concerns and resolve them before any decision is made. Most importantly, this process encourages an environment in which everyone is respected and all contributions are valued.

## LEVEL ONE: BROAD OPEN DISCUSSION

### *General Discussion*

Discussion at this level ought to be the broadest in scope. Try to encourage comments which take the whole proposal into account; i.e., why it is a good idea, or general problems which need to be addressed. Discussion at this level often has a philosophical or principled tone, purposely addressing how this proposal might affect the group in the long run or what kind of precedent it might create, etc. It helps every proposal to be discussed in this way, before the group engages in resolving particular concerns. Do not allow one concern to become the focus of the discussion. When particular concerns are raised, make note of them but encourage the discussion to move back to the proposal as a whole. Encourage the creative interplay of comments and ideas. Allow for the addition of any relevant factual information. For those who might at first feel opposed to the proposal, this discussion is consideration of why it might be good for the group in the broadest sense. Their initial concerns might, in fact, be of general concern to the whole group. And, for those who initially support the proposal, this is a time to think about the proposal broadly and some of the general problems. If there seems to be general approval of the proposal, the facilitator, or someone recognized to speak, can request a call for consensus.

### *Call for Consensus*

The facilitator asks, "Are there any unresolved concerns?" or "Are there any concerns remaining?" After a period of silence, if no additional concerns are raised, the facilitator declares that consensus is reached and the proposal is read for the record. The length of silence ought to be directly related to the degree of difficulty in reaching consensus; an easy decision requires a short silence, a difficult decision requires a longer silence. This encourages everyone to be at peace in accepting the consensus before moving on to other business. At this point, the facilitator assigns task responsibilities or sends the decision to a committee for implementation. It is important to note that the question is not "Is there consensus?" or "Does everyone agree?". These questions do not encourage an environment in which all concerns can be expressed. If some people have a concern, but are shy or intimidated by a strong showing of support for a proposal, the question "Are there any unresolved concerns?" speaks directly to them and provides an opportunity for them to speak. Any concerns for which someone stands aside are listed with the proposal and become a part of it.

### *The Flow of the Formal Consensus Process*

In an ideal situation, every proposal would be submitted in writing and briefly introduced the first time it appears on the agenda. At the next meeting, after everyone has had enough time to read it and carefully consider any concerns, the discussion would begin in earnest. Often, it would not be until the third meeting that a decision is made. Of course, this depends upon how many proposals are on the table and the urgency of the decision.

### *Clarify the Process*

The facilitator introduces the person presenting the proposal and gives a short update on any previous action on it. It is very important for the facilitator to explain the process which brought this proposal to the meeting, and to describe the process that will be followed to move the group through the proposal to consensus. It is the facilitator's job to make sure that every participant clearly understands the structure and the discussion techniques being employed while the meeting is in progress.

### *Present Proposal or Issue*

When possible and appropriate, proposals ought to be prepared in writing and distributed well in advance of the meeting in which a decision is required. This encourages prior discussion and consideration, helps the presenter anticipate concerns, minimizes surprises, and involves everyone in creating the proposal. (If the necessary groundwork has not been done, the wisest choice might be to send the proposal to committee. Proposal writing is difficult to accomplish in a large group. The committee would develop the proposal for consideration at a later time.) The presenter reads the written proposal aloud, provides background information, and states clearly its benefits and reasons for adoption, including addressing any existing concerns.

### *Questions Which Clarify the Presentation*

Questions are strictly limited by the facilitator to those which seek greater comprehension of the proposal as presented. Everyone deserves the opportunity to fully understand what is being asked of the group before discussion begins. This is not a time for comments or concerns. If there are only a few questions, they can be answered one at a time by the person presenting the proposal. If there are many, a useful technique is hearing all the questions first, then answering them together. After answering all clarifying questions, the group begins discussion.

### *Formal Consensus is the most democratic decisionmaking process.*

Groups which desire to involve as many people as possible need to use an inclusive process. To attract and involve large numbers, it is important that the process encourages participation, allows equal access to power, develops cooperation, promotes empowerment, and creates a sense of individual responsibility for the group's actions. All of these are cornerstones of Formal Consensus. The goal of consensus is not the selection of several options, but the development of one decision which is the best for the whole group. It is synthesis and evolution, not competition and attrition.

### *Formal Consensus is based on the principles of the group.*

Although every individual must consent to a decision before it is adopted, if there are any objections, it is not the choice of the individual alone to determine if an objection prevents the proposal from being adopted. Every objection or concern must first be presented before the group and either resolved or validated. A valid objection is one in keeping with all previous decisions of the group and based upon the commonly-held principles or foundation adopted by the group. The objection must not only address the concerns of the individual, but it must also be in the best interest of the group as a whole. If the objection is not based upon the foundation, or is in contradiction with a prior decision, it is not valid for the group, and therefore, out of order.

### *Formal Consensus is desirable in larger groups.*

If the structure is vague, decisions can be difficult to achieve. They will become increasingly more difficult in larger groups. Formal Consensus is designed for large groups. It is a highly structured model. It has guidelines and formats for managing meetings, facilitating discussions, resolving conflict, and reaching decisions. Smaller groups may need less structure, so they may choose from the many techniques and roles suggested in this book.

### *Formal Consensus works better when more people participate.*

Consensus is more than the sum total of ideas of the individuals in the group. During discussion, ideas build one upon the next, generating new ideas, until the best decision emerges. This dynamic is called the creative interplay of ideas. Creativity plays a major part as everyone strives to discover what is best for the group. The more people involved in this cooperative process, the more ideas and possibilities are generated. Consensus works best with everyone participating. (This assumes, of course, that everyone in the group is trained in Formal Consensus and is actively using it.)

*Formal Consensus is not inherently time-consuming.*

Decisions are not an end in themselves. Decisionmaking is a process which starts with an idea and ends with the actual implementation of the decision. While it may be true in an autocratic process that decisions can be made quickly, the actual implementation will take time. When one person or a small group of people makes a decision for a larger group, the decision not only has to be communicated to the others, but it also has to be acceptable to them or its implementation will need to be forced upon them. This will certainly take time, perhaps a considerable amount of time. On the other hand, if everyone participates in the decisionmaking, the decision does not need to be communicated and its implementation does not need to be forced upon the participants. The decision may take longer to make, but once it is made, implementation can happen in a timely manner. The amount of time a decision takes to make from start to finish is not a factor of the process used; rather, it is a factor of the complexity of the proposal itself. An easy decision takes less time than a difficult, complex decision, regardless of the process used or the number of people involved. Of course, Formal Consensus works better if one practices patience, but any process is improved with a generous amount of patience.

*Formal Consensus cannot be secretly disrupted.*

This may not be an issue for some groups, but many people know that the state actively surveilles, infiltrates, and disrupts nonviolent domestic political and religious groups. To counteract anti-democratic tactics by the state, a group would need to develop and encourage a decisionmaking process which could not be covertly controlled or manipulated. Formal Consensus, if practiced as described in this book, is just such a process. Since the assumption is one of cooperation and good will, it is always appropriate to ask for an explanation of how and why someone's actions are in the best interest of the group. Disruptive behavior must not be tolerated. While it is true this process cannot prevent openly disruptive behavior, the point is to prevent covert disruption, hidden agenda, and malicious manipulation of the process. Any group for which infiltration is a threat ought to consider the process outlined in this book if it wishes to remain open, democratic, and productive.

**2 ON DECISION-MAKING**

Decisions are adopted when all participants consent to the result of discussion about the original proposal. People who do not agree with a proposal are responsible for expressing their concerns. No decision is adopted until there is resolution of every concern. When concerns remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree by acknowledging that they have unresolved concerns, but consent to the proposal anyway and

allow it to be adopted. Therefore, reaching consensus does not assume that everyone must be in complete agreement, a highly unlikely situation in a group of intelligent, creative individuals.

Consensus is becoming popular as a democratic form of decisionmaking. It is a process which requires an environment in which all contributions are valued and participation is encouraged. There are, however, few organizations which use a model of consensus which is specific, consistent, and efficient. Often, the consensus process is informal, vague, and very inconsistent. This happens when the consensus process is not based upon a solid foundation and the structure is unknown or nonexistent. To develop a more formal type of consensus process, any organization must define the commonly held principles which form the foundation of the group's work and intentionally choose the type of structure within which the process is built.

*The Structure of Formal Consensus*

Many groups regularly use diverse discussion techniques learned from practitioners in the field of conflict resolution. Although this book does include several techniques, the book is about a structure called Formal Consensus. This structure creates a separation between the identification and the resolution of concerns. Perhaps, if everybody in the group has no trouble saying what they think, they won't need this structure. This predictable structure provides opportunities to those who don't feel empowered to participate.

Formal Consensus is presented in levels or cycles. In the first level, the idea is to allow everyone to express their perspective, including concerns, but group time is not spent on resolving problems. In the second level the group focuses its attention on identifying concerns, still not resolving them. This requires discipline. Reactive comments, even funny ones, and resolutions, even good ones, can suppress the creative ideas of others. Not until the third level does the structure allow for exploring resolutions.

Each level has a different scope and focus. At the first level, the scope is broad, allowing the discussion to consider the philosophical and political implications as well as the general merits and drawbacks and other relevant information. The only focus is on the proposal as a whole. Some decisions can be reached after discussion at the first level. At the second level, the scope of the discussion is limited to the concerns. They are identified and publicly listed, which enables everyone to get an overall picture of the concerns. The focus of attention is on identifying the body of concerns and grouping similar ones. At the third level, the scope is very narrow. The focus of discussion is limited to a single unresolved concern until it is resolved.

### *Stacking*

If many people want to speak at the same time, it is useful to ask all those who would like to speak to raise their hands. Have them count off, and then have them speak in that order. At the end of the stack, the facilitator might call for another stack or try another technique.

### *Pacing*

The pace or flow of the meeting is the responsibility of the facilitator. If the atmosphere starts to become tense, choose techniques which encourage balance and cooperation. If the meeting is going slowly and people are becoming restless, suggest a stretch or rearrange the agenda.

### *Checking the Process*

If the flow of the meeting is breaking down or if one person or small group seems to be dominating, anyone can call into question the technique being used and suggest an alternative.

### *Silence*

If the pace is too fast, if energies and tensions are high, if people are speaking out of turn or interrupting one another, it is appropriate for anyone to suggest a moment of silence to calm and refocus energy.

### *Taking a Break*

In the heat of discussion, people are usually resistant to interrupting the flow to take a break, but a wise facilitator knows, more often than not, that a five minute break will save a frustrating half hour or more of circular discussion and fruitless debate.

### *Call For Consensus*

The facilitator, or any member recognized to speak by the facilitator, can call for a test for consensus. To do this, the facilitator asks if there are any unresolved concerns which remain unaddressed. (See page 13.)

### *Summarizing*

The facilitator might choose to focus what has been said by summarizing. The summary might be made by the facilitator, the notetaker, or anyone else appropriate. This preempts a common problem, in which the discussion becomes circular, and one after another, speakers repeat each other.

### *Reformulating the Proposal*

After a long discussion, it sometimes happens that the proposal becomes modified without any formal decision. The facilitator needs to recognize this and take time to reformulate the proposal with the new information,

most acceptable to all members.

Avoid blaming anyone for conflict. Blame is inherently violent. It attacks dignity and empowerment. It encourages people to feel guilty, defensive, and alienated. The group will lose its ability to resolve conflict. People will hide their true feelings to avoid being blamed for the conflict.

Avoidance of conflicting ideas impedes resolution for failure to explore and develop the feelings that gave rise to the conflict. The presence of conflict can create an occasion for growth. Learn to use it as a catalyst for discovering creative resolutions and for developing a better understanding of each other. With patience, anyone can learn to resolve conflict creatively, without defensiveness or guilt. Groups can learn to nurture and support their members in this effort by allowing creativity and experimentation. This process necessitates that the group continually evaluate and improve these skills.

### *Commitment to the Group*

In joining a group, one accepts a personal responsibility to behave with respect, good will, and honesty. Each one is expected to recognize that the group's needs have a certain priority over the desires of the individual. Many people participate in group work in a very egocentric way. It is important to accept the shared responsibility for helping to find solutions to other's concerns.

### *Active Participation*

We all have an inalienable right to express our own best thoughts. We decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. Since consensus is a process of synthesis, not competition, all sincere comments are important and valuable. If ideas are put forth as the speaker's property and individuals are strongly attached to their opinions, consensus will be extremely difficult. Stubbornness, closedmindedness, and possessiveness lead to defensive and argumentative behavior that disrupts the process. For active participation to occur, it is necessary to promote trust by creating an atmosphere in which every contribution is considered valuable. With encouragement, each person can develop knowledge and experience, a sense of responsibility and competency, and the ability to participate.

### *Equal Access to Power*

Because of personal differences (experience, assertiveness, social conditioning, access to information, etc.) and political disparities, some people inevitably have more effective power than others. To balance this inequity, everyone needs to consciously attempt to creatively share power, skills, and information. Avoid hierarchical structures that allow some individuals to assume undemocratic power over others. Egalitarian and accountable structures promote universal access to power.

### *Patience*

Consensus cannot be rushed. Often, it functions smoothly, producing effective, stable results. Sometimes, when difficult situations arise, consensus requires more time to allow for the creative interplay of ideas. During these times, patience is more advantageous than tense, urgent, or aggressive behavior. Consensus is possible as long as each individual acts patiently and respectfully.

### *Impediments To Consensus Lack of Training*

It is necessary to train people in the theory and practice of consensus. Until consensus is a common form of decisionmaking in our society, new members will need some way of learning about the process. It is important to offer regular opportunities for training. If learning about Formal Consensus is not made easily accessible, it will limit full participation and create inequities which undermine this process. Also, training provides opportunities for people to improve their skills, particularly facilitation skills, in a setting where experimentation and role-plays can occur.

### *External Hierarchical Structures*

It can be difficult for a group to reach consensus internally when it is part of a larger group which does not recognize or participate in the consensus process. It can be extremely frustrating if those external to the group can disrupt the decisionmaking by interfering with the process by pulling rank. Therefore, it is desirable for individuals and groups to recognize that they can be autonomous in relation to external power if they are willing to take responsibility for their actions.

### *Social Prejudice*

Everyone has been exposed to biases, assumptions, and prejudices which interfere with the spirit of cooperation and equal participation. All people are influenced by these attitudes, even though they may deplore them. People are not generally encouraged to confront these prejudices in themselves or others. Members of a group often reflect social biases without realizing or attempting to confront and change them. If the group views a prejudicial attitude as just one individual's problem, then the group will not address the underlying social attitudes which create such problems. It is appropriate to expose, confront, acknowledge, and attempt to resolve socially prejudicial attitudes, but only in the spirit of mutual respect and trust. Members are responsible for acknowledging when their attitudes are influenced by disruptive social training and for changing them. When a supportive atmosphere for recognizing and changing undesirable attitudes exists, the group as a whole benefits.

Experience has shown this role to be far more useful than it might at first appear, so experiment with it and discover if meetings can become more pleasant and productive because of the friendship and care which is expressed through the simple act of greeting people as they arrive at the meeting.

## 6 TECHNIQUES

### *Facilitation Techniques*

There are a great many techniques to assist the facilitator in managing the agenda and group dynamics. The following are just a few of the more common and frequently used techniques available to the facilitator. Be creative and adaptive. Different situations require different techniques. With experience will come an understanding of how they affect group dynamics and when is the best time to use them.

### *Equalizing Participation*

The facilitator is responsible for the fair distribution of attention during meetings. Facilitators call the attention of the group to one speaker at a time. The grammar school method is the most common technique for choosing the next speaker. The facilitator recognizes each person in the order in which hands are raised. Often, inequities occur because the attention is dominated by an individual or class of individuals. This can occur because of socialized behavioral problems such as racism, sexism, or the like, or internal dynamics such as experience, seniority, fear, shyness, disrespect, ignorance of the process, etc. Inequities can be corrected in many creative ways. For example, if men are speaking more often than women, the facilitator can suggest a pause after each speaker, the women counting to five before speaking, the men counting to ten. In controversial situations, the facilitator can request that three speakers speak for the proposal, and three speak against it. If the group would like to avoid having the facilitator select who speaks next, the group can self-select by asking the last speaker to pass an object, a talking stick, to the next. Even more challenging, have each speaker stand before speaking, and begin when there is only one person standing. These are only a handful of the many possible problems and solutions that exist. Be creative. Invent your own.

### *Listing*

To help the discussion flow more smoothly, those who want to speak can silently signal the facilitator, who would add the person's name to a list of those wishing to speak, and call on them in that order.

The written record, sometimes called notes or minutes, can help settle disputes of memory or verify past decisions. Accessible notes allow absent members to participate in ongoing work. Useful items to include in the notes are:

- ▶ date and attendance
- ▶ agenda
- ▶ brief notes (*highlights, statistics...*)
- ▶ reports
- ▶ discussion
- ▶ verbatim notes
- ▶ proposals (*with revisions*)
- ▶ decisions (*with concerns listed*)
- ▶ announcements
- ▶ next meeting time and place
- ▶ evaluation comments

After each decision is made, it is useful to have the notetaker read the notes aloud to ensure accuracy. At the end of the meeting, it is also helpful to have the notetaker present to the group a review of all decisions. In larger groups, it is often useful to have two notetakers simultaneously, because everyone, no matter how skilled, hears information and expresses it differently. Notetakers are responsible for making sure the notes are recorded accurately, and are reproduced and distributed according to the desires of the group (e.g. mailed to everyone, handed out at the next meeting, filed, etc.).

### *Doorkeeper*

Doorkeepers are selected in advance of the meeting and need to arrive early enough to familiarize themselves with the physical layout of the space and to receive any last minute instructions from the facilitator. They need to be prepared to miss the first half hour of the meeting. Prior to the start of the meeting, the doorkeeper welcomes people, distributes any literature connected to the business of the meeting, and informs them of any pertinent information (the meeting will start fifteen minutes late, the bathrooms are not wheelchair accessible, etc.).

A doorkeeper is useful, especially if people tend to be late. When the meeting begins, they continue to be available for latecomers. They might briefly explain what has happened so far and where the meeting is currently on the agenda. The doorkeeper might suggest to the latecomers that they refrain from participating in the current agenda item and wait until the next item before participating. This avoids wasting time, repeating discussion, or addressing already resolved concerns. Of course, this is not a rigid rule. Use discretion and be respectful of the group's time.

### *On Degrees of Conflict*

Consensus is a process of nonviolent conflict resolution. The expression of concerns and conflicting ideas is considered desirable and important. When a group creates an atmosphere which nurtures and supports disagreement without hostility and fear, it builds a foundation for stronger, more creative decisions.

Each individual is responsible for expressing one's own concerns. It is best if each concern is expressed as if it will be resolved. The group then responds by trying to resolve the concern through group discussion. If the concern remains unresolved after a full and open discussion, then the facilitator asks how the concern is based upon the foundation of the group. If it is, then the group accepts that the proposal is blocked.

From this perspective, it is not decided by the individual alone if a particular concern is blocking consensus; it is determined in cooperation with the whole group. The group determines a concern's legitimacy. A concern is legitimate if it is based upon the principles of the group and therefore relevant to the group as a whole. If the concern is determined to be unprincipled or not of consequence, the group can decide the concern is inappropriate and drop it from discussion. If a reasonable solution offered is not accepted by the individual, the group may decide the concern has been resolved and the individual is out of order for failure to recognize it.

Herein lies a subtle pitfall. For consensus to work well, it is helpful for individuals to recognize the group's involvement in determining which concerns are able to be resolved, which need more attention, and, ultimately, which are blocking consensus. The pitfall is failure to accept the limit on an individual's power to determine which concerns are principled or based upon the foundation of the group and which ones are resolved. After discussion, if the concern is valid and unresolved, it again falls upon the individual to choose whether to stand aside or block consensus.

The individual is responsible for expressing concerns; the group is responsible for resolving them. The group decides whether a concern is legitimate; the individual decides whether to block or stand aside.

All concerns are important and need to be resolved. It is not appropriate for a person to come to a meeting planning to block a proposal or, during discussion, to express their concerns as major objections or blocking concerns. Often, during discussion, the person learns additional information which resolves the concern. Sometimes, after expressing the concern, someone is able to creatively resolve it by thinking of something new. It often happens that a concern which seems to be extremely problematic when it is first mentioned turns out to be easily resolved. Sometimes the reverse happens and a seemingly minor concern brings forth much larger concerns.

The following is a description of different types of concerns and how they affect individuals and the group.

Concerns which can be addressed and resolved by making small changes in the proposal can be called minor concerns. The person supports the proposal, but has an idea for improvement.

When a person disagrees with the proposal in part, but consents to the overall idea, the person has a reservation. The person is not completely satisfied with the proposal, but is generally supportive. This kind of concern can usually be resolved through discussion. Sometimes, it is enough for the person to express the concern and feel that it was heard, without any actual resolution.

When a person does not agree with the proposal, the group allows that person to try and persuade it to see the wisdom of the disagreement. If the group is not persuaded or the disagreement cannot be resolved, the person might choose to stand aside and allow the group to go forward. The person and the group are agreeing to disagree, regarding each point of view with mutual respect. Occasionally, it is a concern which has no resolution; the person does not feel the need to block the decision, but wants to express the concern and lack of support for the proposal.

A blocking concern must be based on a generally recognized principle, not personal preference, or it must be essential to the entire group's well-being. Before a concern is considered to be blocking, the group must have already accepted the validity of the concern and a reasonable attempt must have been made to resolve it. If legitimate concerns remain unresolved and the person has not agreed to stand aside, consensus is blocked.

#### 4 THE ART OF EVALUATION

Meetings can often be a time when some people experience feelings of frustration or confusion. There is always room for improvement in the structure of the process and/or in the dynamics of the group. Often, there is no time to talk directly about group interaction during the meeting. Reserve time at the end of the meeting to allow some of these issues and feelings to be expressed.

Evaluation is very useful when using consensus. It is worth the time. Evaluations need not take long, five to ten minutes is often enough. It is not a discussion, nor is it an opportunity to comment on each other's

The peacekeeper may always, of course, point out when the group did something well. People always like to be acknowledged for positive behavior.

#### *Advocate*

Like the peacekeeper, advocates are selected without discussion at the beginning of the meeting. If, because of strong emotions, someone is unable to be understood, the advocate is called upon to help. The advocate would interrupt the meeting, and invite the individual to literally step outside the meeting for some one-on-one discussion. An upset person can talk to someone with whom they feel comfortable. This often helps them make clear what the concern is and how it relates to the best interest of the group. Assume the individual is acting in good faith. Assume the concern is in the best interest of the group. While they are doing this, everyone else might take a short break, or continue with other agenda items. When they return, the meeting (after completing the current agenda item) hears from the advocate. The intent here is the presentation of the concern by the advocate rather than the upset person so the other group members might hear it without the emotional charge. This procedure is a last resort, to be used only when emotions are out of control and the person feels unable to successfully express an idea.

#### *Timekeeper*

The role of timekeeper is very useful in almost all meetings. One is selected at the beginning of the meeting to assist the facilitator in keeping within the time limits set in the agenda contract. The skill in keeping time is the prevention of an unnecessary time pressure which might interfere with the process. This can be accomplished by keeping everyone aware of the status of time remaining during the discussion. Be sure to give ample warning towards the end of the time limit so the group can start to bring the discussion to a close or decide to rearrange the agenda to allow more time for the current topic. There is nothing inherently wrong with going over time as long as everyone consents.

#### *Public Scribe*

The role of public scribe is simply the writing, on paper or blackboard, of information for the whole group to see. This person primarily assists the facilitator by taking a task which might otherwise distract the facilitator and interfere with the overall flow of the meeting. This role is particularly useful during brainstorming, reportbacks from small groups, or whenever it would help the group for all to see written information.

#### *Notetaker*

The importance of a written record of the meetings cannot be overstated.

inappropriate or unreasonable, adjustments may be made. Once the whole agenda has been reviewed and consented to, the agenda becomes a contract. The facilitator is obligated to follow the order and time limits. This encourages members to be on time to meetings.

### *Good Will*

Always try to assume good will. Assume every statement and action is sincerely intended to benefit the group. Assume that each member understands the group's purpose and accepts the agenda as a contract.

Often, when we project our feelings and expectations onto others, we influence their actions. If we treat others as though they are trying to get attention, disrupt meetings, or pick fights, they will often fulfill our expectations. A resolution to conflict is more likely to occur if we act as though there will be one. This is especially true if someone is intentionally trying to cause trouble or who is emotionally unhealthy. Do not attack the person, but rather, assume good will and ask the person to explain to the group how that person's statements or actions are in the best interest of the group. It is also helpful to remember to separate the actor from the action. While the behavior may be unacceptable, the person is not bad. Avoid accusing the person of being the way they behave. Remember, no one has the answer. The group's work is the search for the best and most creative process, one which fosters a mutually satisfying resolution to any concern which may arise.

### *Peacekeeper*

The role of peacekeeper is most useful in large groups or when very touchy, controversial topics are being discussed. A person who is willing to remain somewhat aloof and is not personally invested in the content of the discussion would be a good candidate for peacekeeper. This person is selected without discussion by all present at the beginning of the meeting. If no one wants this role, or if no one can be selected without objection, proceed without one, recognizing that the facilitator's job will most likely be more difficult.

This task entails paying attention to the overall mood or tone of the meeting. When tensions increase dramatically and angers flare out of control, the peacekeeper interrupts briefly to remind the group of its common goals and commitment to cooperation. The most common way to accomplish this is a call for a few moments of silence.

The peacekeeper is the only person with prior permission to interrupt a speaker or speak without first being recognized by the facilitator. Also, it is important to note that the peacekeeper's comments are always directed at the whole group, never at one individual or small group within the larger group. Keep comments short and to the point.

statements. Do not reopen discussion on an agenda item. Evaluation is a special time to listen to each other and learn about each other. Think about how the group interacts and how to improve the process.

Be sure to include the evaluation comments in the notes of the meeting. This is important for two reasons. Over time, if the same evaluation comments are made again and again, this is an indication that the issue behind the comments needs to be addressed. This can be accomplished by placing this issue on the agenda for the next meeting. Also, when looking back at notes from meetings long ago, evaluation comments can often reveal a great deal about what actually happened, beyond what decisions were made and reports given. They give a glimpse into complex interpersonal dynamics.

### *Purpose of Evaluation*

Evaluation provides a forum to address procedural flaws, inappropriate behavior, facilitation problems, logistical difficulties, overall tone, etc. Evaluation is not a time to reopen discussion, make decisions or attempt to resolve problems, but rather, to make statements, express feelings, highlight problems, and suggest solutions in a spirit of cooperation and trust. To help foster communication, it is better if each criticism is coupled with a specific suggestion for improvement. Also, always speak for oneself. Do not attempt to represent anyone else.

Encourage everyone who participated in the meeting to take part in the evaluation. Make comments on what worked and what did not. Expect differing opinions. It is generally not useful to repeat other's comments. Evaluations prepare the group for better future meetings. When the process works well, the group responds supportively in a difficult situation, or the facilitator does an especially good job, note it, and appreciate work well done.

Do not attempt to force evaluation. This will cause superficial or irrelevant comments. On the other hand, do not allow evaluations to run on. Be sure to take each comment seriously and make an attempt, at a later time, to resolve or implement them. Individuals who feel their suggestions are ignored or disrespected will lose trust and interest in the group.

For gatherings, conferences, conventions or large meetings, the group might consider having short evaluations after each section, in addition to the one at the end of the event. Distinct aspects on which the group might focus include: the process itself, a specific role, a particular technique, fears and feelings, group dynamics, etc.

At large meetings, written evaluations provide a means for everyone to respond and record comments and suggestions which might otherwise be lost. Some people feel more comfortable writing their evaluations rather than saying them. Plan the questions well, stressing what was learned, what was valuable, and what could have been better and how. An evaluation

committee allows an opportunity for the presenters, facilitators, and/or coordinators to get together after the meeting to review evaluation comments, consider suggestions for improvement, and possibly prepare an evaluation report.

Review and evaluation bring a sense of completion to the meeting. A good evaluation will pull the experience together, remind everyone of the group's unity of purpose, and provide an opportunity for closing comments.

### *Uses of Evaluation*

There are at least ten ways in which evaluation helps improve meetings.

#### **Evaluations:**

- ▶ **Improve the process by analysis of what happened, why it happened, and how it might be improved**
- ▶ **Examine how certain attitudes and statements might have caused various problems and encourage special care to prevent them from recurring**
- ▶ **Foster a greater understanding of group dynamics and encourage a method of group learning or learning from each other**
- ▶ **Allow the free expression of feelings**
- ▶ **Expose unconscious behavior or attitudes which interfere with the process**
- ▶ **Encourage the sharing of observations and acknowledge associations with society**
- ▶ **Check the usefulness and effectiveness of techniques and procedures**
- ▶ **Acknowledge good work and give appreciation to each other**
- ▶ **Reflect on the goals set for the meeting and whether they were attained**
- ▶ **Examine various roles, suggest ways to improve them, and create new ones as needed**
- ▶ **Provide an overall sense of completion and closure to the meeting**

### *Types of Evaluation Questions*

It is necessary to be aware of the way in which questions are asked during evaluation. The specific wording can control the scope and focus of consideration and affect the level of participation. It can cause responses which focus on what was good and bad, or right and wrong, rather than on what worked and what needed improvement. Focus on learning and

techniques. In this sense, they do lead the group. However, they do not give their personal opinions nor do they attempt to direct the content of the discussion. If they want to participate, they must clearly relinquish the role and speak as an individual. During a meeting, individuals are responsible for expressing their own concerns and thoughts. Facilitators, on the other hand, are responsible for addressing the needs of the group. They need to be aware of the group dynamics and constantly evaluate whether the discussion is flowing well. There may be a need for a change in the discussion technique. They need to be diligent about the fair distribution of attention, being sure to limit those who are speaking often and offering opportunities to those who are not speaking much or at all. It follows that one person cannot simultaneously give attention to the needs of the group and think about a personal response to a given situation. Also, it is not appropriate for the facilitator to give a particular point of view or dominate the discussion. This does not build trust, especially in those who do not agree with the facilitator.

### *Clarity of Process*

The facilitator is responsible for leading the meeting openly so that everyone present is aware of the process and how to participate. This means it is important to constantly review what just happened, what is about to happen, and how it will happen. Every time a new discussion technique is introduced, explain how it will work and what is to be accomplished. This is both educational and helps new members participate more fully.

### *Agenda Contract*

The facilitator is responsible for honoring the agenda contract. The facilitator keeps the questions and discussion focused on the agenda item. Be gentle, but firm, because fairness dictates that each agenda item gets only the time allotted. The agenda contract is made when the agenda is reviewed and accepted. This agreement includes the items on the agenda, the order in which they are considered, and the time allotted to each. Unless the whole group agrees to change the agenda, the facilitator is obligated to keep the contract. The decision to change the agenda must be a consensus, with little or no discussion.

At the beginning of the meeting, the agenda is presented to the whole group and reviewed, item by item. Any member can add an item if it has been omitted. While every agenda suggestion must be included in the agenda, it does not necessarily get as much time as the presenter wants. Time ought to be divided fairly, with individuals recognizing the fairness of old items generally getting more time than new items and urgent items getting more time than items which can wait until the next meeting, etc. Also, review the suggested presenters and time limits. If anything seems

*Standard Agenda*

Agenda Item	Presenter	Time
INTRODUCTION	Facilitator	5 min
AGENDA REVIEW	Facilitator	5 min
REVIEW NOTES	Notetaker	5 min
REPORTS		20 min
Previous activities		
Standing committees		
PROPOSALS		15 min
Old business		
BREAK		5 min
REPORTS		10 min
Informational		
PROPOSALS		30 min
New business		
ANNOUNCEMENTS		5 min
Pass hat		
Next meeting		
REVIEW DECISIONS	Notetaker	5 min
EVALUATION		10 min
CLOSING	Facilitator	5 min
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2 hours</b>

*Facilitator*

The word facilitate means to make easy. A facilitator conducts group business and guides the Formal Consensus process so that it flows smoothly. Rotating facilitation from meeting to meeting shares important skills among the members. If everyone has firsthand knowledge about facilitation, it will help the flow of all meetings. Co-facilitation, or having two (or more) people facilitate a meeting, is recommended. Having a woman and a man share the responsibilities encourages a more balanced meeting. Also, an inexperienced facilitator may apprentice with a more experienced one. Try to use a variety of techniques throughout the meeting. And remember, a little bit of humor can go a long way in easing tension during a long, difficult meeting.

*Good facilitation is based upon the following principles:*

*Non-Directive Leadership*

Facilitators accept responsibility for moving through the agenda in the allotted time, guiding the process, and suggesting alternate or additional

growing. Avoid blaming. Encourage diverse opinions.

*Some sample questions for an evaluation:*

- ▶ Were members uninterested or bored with the agenda, reports, or discussion?
- ▶ Did members withdraw or feel isolated?
- ▶ Is attendance low? If so, why?
- ▶ Are people arriving late or leaving early? If so, why?
- ▶ How was the overall tone or atmosphere?
- ▶ Was there an appropriate use of resources?
- ▶ Were the logistics (such as date, time, or location) acceptable?
- ▶ What was the most important experience of the event?
- ▶ What was the least important experience of the event?
- ▶ What was the high point? What was the low point?
- ▶ What did you learn?
- ▶ What expectations did you have at the beginning and to what degree were they met? How did they change?
- ▶ What goals did you have and to what degree were they accomplished?
- ▶ What worked well? Why?
- ▶ What did not work so well? How could it have been improved?
- ▶ What else would you suggest be changed or improved, and how?
- ▶ What was overlooked or left out?

## 5 ROLES

A role is a function of process, not content. Roles are used during a meeting according to the needs of the situation. Not all roles are useful at every meeting, nor does each role have to be filled by a separate person. Formal Consensus functions more smoothly if the person filling a role has some experience, therefore is desirable to rotate roles. Furthermore, one who has experienced a role is more likely to be supportive of whomever currently has that role. Experience in each role also encourages confidence and participation. It is best, therefore, for the group to encourage everyone to experience each role.

*Agenda Planners*

A well planned agenda is an important tool for a smooth meeting, although it does not guarantee it. Experience has shown that there is a definite improvement in the flow and pace of a meeting if several people get together prior to the start of the meeting and propose an agenda. In smaller groups, the facilitator often proposes an agenda.

The agenda planning committee has six tasks:

- ▶ **collect agenda items**
- ▶ **arrange them**
- ▶ **assign presenters**
- ▶ **brainstorm discussion techniques**
- ▶ **assign time limits**
- ▶ **write up the proposed agenda**

There are at least four sources of agenda items:

- ▶ **suggestions from members**
- ▶ **reports or proposals from committees**
- ▶ **business from the last meeting**
- ▶ **standard agenda items, including:**
  - ▶ **introduction**
  - ▶ **agenda review**
  - ▶ **review notes**
  - ▶ **break**
  - ▶ **announcements**
  - ▶ **decision review**
  - ▶ **evaluation**

Once all the agenda items have been collected, they are listed in an order which seems efficient and appropriate. Planners need to be cautious that items at the top of the agenda tend to use more than their share of time, thereby limiting the time available for the rest. Each group has different needs. Some groups work best taking care of business first, then addressing the difficult items. Other groups might find it useful to take on the most difficult work first and strictly limit the time or let it take all it needs. The following are recommendations for keeping the focus of attention on the agenda:

- ▶ **alternate long and short, heavy and light items**
- ▶ **place reports before their related proposals**
- ▶ **take care of old business before addressing new items**
- ▶ **consider placing items which might generate a sense of accomplishment early in the meeting**
- ▶ **alternate presenters**
- ▶ **be flexible**

Usually, each item already has a presenter. If not, assign one. Generally, it is not wise for facilitators to present reports or proposals. However, it is convenient for facilitators to present some of the standard agenda items.

For complex or especially controversial items, the agenda planners could suggest various options for group discussion techniques. This may be helpful to the facilitator.

Next, assign time limits for each item. It is important to be realistic, being careful to give each item enough time to be fully addressed without being unfair to other items. Generally, it is not desirable to propose an agenda which exceeds the desired overall meeting time limit.

The last task is the writing of the proposed agenda so all can see it and refer to it during the meeting. Each item is listed in order, along with its presenter and time limit.

The following agenda is an example of how an agenda is structured and what information is included in it. It shows the standard agenda items, the presenters, the time limits and the order in which they will be considered. It also shows one way in which reports and proposals can be presented, but each group can structure this part of the meeting in whatever way suits its needs. This model does not show the choices of techniques for group discussion which the agenda planners might have considered.

access to news databases, including audio and video, available 24 hours a day), and that online news fosters and caters for new global communities of interest.

**Bit 9** When these phenomena are taken together, the result for Burnett and Marshall is 'a shifted boundary of what constitutes news'. But this concept of informational news is largely cast in terms of reception and consumption: the practices of the new informational news researchers are discussed in terms of information retrieval, not production — even newsgroups and Weblogs are considered as additional sources for information retrieval, rather than as new avenues for new kinds of journalists to develop and publish new kinds of news. Burnett and Marshall are, I believe, right in their identification of changes to the nature of news, and their analysis is an important contribution. But what I want to emphasise in this article is that there is also a corresponding ongoing shift in the boundary of what constitutes newsmakers.

**Bit 10** The Indymedia movement offers clear examples of this, in its spectacular growth and in its promotion of open publishing models. As a forum for non-professional journalists of all stripes, Indymedia's development is a vivid example of the shifting boundary around who gets to make the news. By now, many readers will perhaps be familiar with Indymedia to some degree. But it's worth briefly reviewing both the scope of the movement and the speed with which it's developed.

**Bit 11** The first Indymedia Website was established for the Seattle demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation meeting in November 1999. Its key feature was offering news coverage supplied by anyone who wanted to contribute, using free software and ideas from the Australian activists who had created the Active network. As events in Seattle gathered pace, the nascent Indymedia drew a claimed 1.5 million hits; this success led to the site being refocused around several subsequent protests, before local collectives began to appear and form their own Indymedia centres. Within a year, this original Indymedia site was just one of a new network of more than 30. At the time of writing, a little over three years on from the movement's inception, there are more than 100 Indymedia centres around the world — there are both Israeli and Palestinian Indymedia; Indymedia is established in Mumbai, Jakarta and Buenos Aires; there are centres in Poland, Colombia and South Africa. By any measure, this is a remarkable achievement for a decentralised project run entirely by volunteers and donations. Like any other complex phenomenon, the story of this development can be told in many different ways, each adding a different dimension. Three are especially relevant here.

**Bit 12** The first version would centre around the Active software developed by Sydney's Catalyst tech collective. This was devised to create the Active Sydney site, an online hub for Sydney activists to promote events from direct actions to screenings and seminars. Launched in January 1999,

modifications, or deletions. Then the proposal is presented to the group so that everyone can be clear about what is being considered. Again, this might be done by the facilitator, the notetaker, or anyone else.

### *Stepping out of Role*

If the facilitator wants to become involved in the discussion or has strong feelings about a particular agenda item, the facilitator can step out of the role and participate in the discussion, allowing another member to facilitate during that time.

### *Passing the Clipboard*

Sometimes information needs to be collected during the meeting. To save time, circulate a clipboard to collect this information. Once collected, it can be entered into the written record and/or presented to the group by the facilitator.

### *Polling (Straw Polls)*

The usefulness of polling within consensus is primarily clarification of the relative importance of several issues. It is an especially useful technique when the facilitator is confused or uncertain about the status of a proposal and wants some clarity to be able to suggest what might be the next process technique. Polls are not decisions, they are non-binding referenda. All too often, straw polls are used when the issues are completely clear and the majority wants to intimidate the minority into submission by showing overwhelming support rather than to discuss the issues and resolve the concerns. Clear and simple questions are best. Polls that involve three or more choices can be especially manipulative. Use with discretion.

### *Censoring*

*(This technique and the next are somewhat different from the others. They may not be appropriate for some groups.)* If someone speaks out of turn consistently, the facilitator warns the individual at least twice that if the interruptions do not stop, the facilitator will declare that person censored. This means the person will not be permitted to speak for the rest of this agenda item. If the interrupting behavior has been exhibited over several agenda items, then the censoring could be for a longer period of time. This technique is meant to be used at the discretion of the facilitator. If the facilitator censors someone and others in the meeting voice disapproval, it is better for the facilitator to step down from the role and let someone else facilitate, rather than get into a discussion about the ability and judgement of the facilitator. The rationale is the disruptive behavior makes facilitation very difficult, is disrespectful and, since it is assumed that everyone observed the behavior, the voicing of disapproval about a censoring indicates lack of confidence in the facilitation rather than support for the disruptive behavior.

### *Expulsion*

If an individual still acts very disruptively, the facilitator may confront the behavior. Ask the person to explain the reasons for this behavior, how it is in the best interest of the group, how it relates to the group's purpose, and how it is in keeping with the goals and principles. If the person is unable to answer these questions or if the answers indicate disagreement with the common purpose, then the facilitator can ask the individual to withdraw from the meeting.

### *Group Discussion Techniques*

It is often assumed that the best form of group discussion is that which has one person at a time speak to the whole group. This is true for some discussions. But, sometimes, other techniques of group discussion can be more productive and efficient than whole group discussion. The following are some of the more common and frequently used techniques. These could be suggested by anyone at the meeting. Therefore, it is a good idea if everyone is familiar with these techniques. Again, be creative and adaptive. Different situations require different techniques. Only experience reveals how each one affects group dynamics or the best time to use it.

### *Identification*

It is good to address each other by name. One way to learn names is to draw a seating plan, and as people go around and introduce themselves, write their names on it. Later, refer to the plan and address people by their names. In large groups, name tags can be helpful. Also, when people speak, it is useful for them to identify themselves so all can gradually learn each others' names.

### *Whole Group*

The value of whole group discussion is the evolution of a group idea. A group idea is not simply the sum of individual ideas, but the result of the interaction of ideas during discussion. Whole group discussion can be unstructured and productive. It can also be very structured, using various facilitation techniques to focus it. Often, whole group discussion does not produce maximum participation or a diversity of ideas. During whole group discussion, fewer people get to speak, and, at times, the attitude of the group can be dominated by an idea, a mood, or a handful of people.

### *Small Group*

Breaking into smaller groups can be very useful. These small groups can be diads or triads or even larger. They can be selected randomly or self-selected. If used well, in a relatively short amount of time all participants have the opportunity to share their own point of view. Be sure to set clear time limits and select a notetaker for each group. When the larger group reconvenes, the notetakers relate the major points and concerns of

the telegraph. A key legacy of this impact is the rise to primacy of CNN and its imitators, offering round-the-clock news coverage made possible by satellite transmission. This too changed the nature of news. As McKenzie Wark has pointed out, a 24-hour continuous news service is not ideally compatible with the established narrative strategies of news. Rather than cutting and shaping events to fit familiar narrative forms, CNN instead introduced an emphasis on what Wark calls 'the queer concept of "live" news coverage — an instant audiovisual presence on the site of an event'.

**Bit 5** This focus on speed and immediacy, on being the first on the scene, leads to news that is all event and no process. More than this, it leads at times to revealing moments when CNN-style coverage becomes obvious as a component part of the event it purports to cover. In his analysis of the Tiananmen Square crisis of 1989 Wark argues that the media event appeared as 'a positive feedback loop'. The Beijing students' perceptions of Western accounts of their demands and motives became caught up in the students' own accounts of their own motives, their own demands: Western interpretations of what was happening in Beijing, Wark writes, 'fed back into the event itself via a global loop encompassing radio, telephone, and fax vectors. They impacted back on the further unfolding of the event itself'.

**Bit 6** Both the telegraph and the satellite contributed to major shifts in the production, distribution and reception of news. And both made possible new types of media institution, from Western Union and Reuters to CNN. This is not to argue that technologies determine the nature of news or of news organisations, but rather that certain developments are made possible by both the adoption and the adaptation of new technologies. Institutional and cultural factors, of course, affect the nature of news, but technology also both enables and constrains. The medium might not be the message — but it does matter.

**Bit 7** So with such precedents as those above in mind, what might be the key impacts of the Net on the nature of news? In an important analysis of the online news environment, Robert Burnett and P. David Marshall introduce the concept of 'informational news,' defined as 'the transformation of journalism and news in Web culture where there is a greater involvement of the user and news hierarchies are in flux'. News, they argue, has become 'a subset of a wider search for information by Web users' and this 'has led to a shift in how we recontextualise news around a much larger search for information'.

**Bit 8** In this analysis, audience members are transformed into researchers. These researchers become comfortable with getting their news from a broader range of sources, while at the same time searching for new ways to hierarchise those sources, to establish some as more legitimate than others. Adding to the complexity are Burnett and Marshall's observations that new media forms offer enhanced flexibility (with, for example, archival

## *Articles About Indymedia:*

### *Indymedia And The New Net News*

Graham Meikle

**Bit 1** Scores of farm workers on hunger strike in the US. A campaigner for affordable housing abducted in Cape Town. Tens of thousands of anti-war demonstrators marching in Istanbul. None of those stories made my daily paper — instead, I read them all this morning on the global Indymedia network. Developments in communication technologies have often enabled new approaches to the production, distribution and reception of news. In this article, using Carey's analysis of the impacts of the telegraph and Burnett and Marshall's discussion of 'informational news' as starting points, I want to offer some examples from the brief history of the Indymedia movement to show how the Net is making possible a significant shift in who gets to make the news.

**Bit 2** The telegraph offers a number of useful perspectives from which to consider the impacts of the Net, and there are some striking parallels between the dot.com boom of the 1990s and the dot.dash boom of the 19th century. Telegraphy, writes James Carey, 'permitted for the first time the effective separation of communication from transportation'. The telegraph was not only an instrument of business, but 'a thing to think with, an agency for the alteration of ideas'. And a consideration of the telegraph offers a number of examples of the relationships between technological form and the nature of news.

**Bit 3** One such example, in Carey's analysis, was the impact of the telegraph on the language and nature of journalism. 'If the same story were to be understood in the same way from Maine to California,' he writes, 'language had to be flattened out and standardised'. Local colour was bleached out of news reports to make them saleable in a market unconstrained by geography. 'The origins of objectivity,' Carey argues, 'may be sought, therefore, in the necessity of stretching language in space over the long lines of Western Union'. The telegraph didn't just affect the quality of news — it greatly increased the quantity of it as well, forcing greater attention to be paid to the management of newsrooms. News became a commodity; not only that, just like cattle or wheat, news was now subject to all the vagaries of any other commodity business, from contracts and price gouging to outright theft. And in Western Union, the telegraph made possible the prototype of today's transnational media firms.

**Bit 4** As the telegraph solved problems of communicating across space, it opened up time as a new arena for expansion. In this sense, the gradual emergence of 24-hour broadcasting schedules is traceable to the impact of

their group. Sometimes, notetakers can be requested to add only new ideas or concerns and not repeat something already covered in another report. It is also helpful for the scribe to write these reports so all can see the cumulative result and be sure every idea and concern gets on the list.

#### *Brainstorming*

This is a very useful technique when ideas need to be solicited from the whole group. The normal rule of waiting to speak until the facilitator recognizes you is suspended and everyone is encouraged to call out ideas to be written by the scribe for all to see. It is helpful if the atmosphere created is one in which all ideas, no matter how unusual or incomplete, are appropriate and welcomed. This is a situation in which suggestions can be used as catalysts, with ideas building one upon the next, generating very creative possibilities. Avoid evaluating each other's ideas during this time.

#### *Go-rounds*

This is a simple technique that encourages participation. The facilitator states a question and then goes around the room inviting everyone to answer briefly. This is not an open discussion. This is an opportunity to individually respond to specific questions, not to comment on each other's responses or make unrelated remarks.

#### *Fishbowl*

The fishbowl is a special form of small group discussion. Several members representing differing points of view meet in an inner circle to discuss the issue while everyone else forms an outer circle and listens. At the end of a predetermined time, the whole group reconvenes and evaluates the fishbowl discussion. An interesting variation: first, put all the men in the fishbowl, then all the women, and they discuss the same topics.

#### *Active Listening*

If the group is having a hard time understanding a point of view, someone might help by active listening. Listen to the speaker, then repeat back what was heard and ask the speaker if this accurately reflects what was meant.

#### *Caucusing*

A caucus might be useful to help a multifaceted conflict become clearer by unifying similar perspectives or defining specific points of departure without the focus of the whole group. It might be that only some people attend a caucus, or it might be that all are expected to participate in a caucus. The difference between caucuses and small groups is that caucuses are composed of people with similar viewpoints, whereas small group discussions are more useful if they are made up of people with diverse viewpoints or even a random selection of people.

## GLOSSARY

**agenda contract**

The agenda contract is made when the agenda is reviewed and accepted. This agreement includes the items on the agenda, the order in which they are considered, and the time allotted to each. Unless the whole group agrees to change the agenda, the facilitator is obligated to keep to the contract. The decision to change the agenda must be a consensus, with little or no discussion.

**agreement**

Complete agreement, with no unresolved concerns.

**block**

If the allotted agenda time has been spent trying to achieve consensus, and unresolved legitimate concerns remain, the proposal may be considered blocked, or not able to be adopted at this meeting.

**concern**

A point of departure or disagreement with a proposal.

**conflict**

The expression of disagreement, which brings into focus diverse viewpoints, and provides the opportunity to explore their strengths and weaknesses.

**consensus**

A decisionmaking process whereby decisions are reached when all members present consent to a proposal. This process does not assume everyone must be in complete agreement. When differences remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree, that is, give their consent by standing aside, and allow the proposal to be accepted by the group.

**consent**

Acceptance of the proposal, not necessarily agreement. Individuals are responsible for expressing their ideas, concerns and objections. Silence, in response to a call for consensus, signifies consent. Silence is not complete agreement; it is acceptance of the proposal.

**decision**

The end product of an idea that started as a proposal and evolved to become a plan of action accepted by the whole group.

- ▶ set the filter you would like to apply, or None, and click OK
- ▶ click Video Size...
- ▶ click Use Custom Size; Width: 160 and Height: 120 (or other resolutions in the Horizontal/Vertical Resolution section above)
- ▶ click OK
- ▶ click Sound Settings...
  - ▶ Compressor: None
  - ▶ set Rate: to the sample rate of your source material - for DV this will usually be 48.000 kHz
  - ▶ Size: 16 bit
  - ▶ Use: Mono unless your clip could benefit from stereo sound
  - ▶ click OK
  - ▶ click OK
  - ▶ type a .mov file name and click Save

At "postage stamp" size, a video clip will take up about half the space of the same clip in DV format - about 1GB per 10 minutes. It can now be imported into the free RealProducer for creation of a RealMedia (.rm) file.

*Definitions of 2-pass and VBR*

Two-pass encoding increases quality of output video by analyzing video data for transitions and overall complexity before encoding the input video. VBR encoding enables the video codec to vary the bit rate throughout the clip; more bits are spent on high-action scenes, taking away bits from low-action scenes. This drastically improves quality for both narrowband and broadband video. For best results, turn on both of these features, as they complement each other to greatly improve video quality.

*Feedback*

Questions or comments?

E-mail Michigan IMC

[imc@michiganimc.org](mailto:imc@michiganimc.org)

or Santa Cruz IMC

[imc-sc@lists.indymedia.org](mailto:imc-sc@lists.indymedia.org)

or Thunder Bay IMC

[imc-thunderbay@lists.indymedia.org](mailto:imc-thunderbay@lists.indymedia.org)

audio or video collective

with questions or comments

Higher resolutions render as a "slide show" effect.

(standard)	(widescreen)
4:3	16:9
144x108	192x108
160x120	
176x132	
192x144	256x144
208x156	
224x168	
240x180	320x180
256x192	
272x204	
288x216	384x216
304x228	
320x240	

These are the standard resolutions. But if you're using Media Cleaner Pro, don't be afraid to crop your video to a different aspect ratio! Before compressing for the web, always get rid of any excess frame real estate - for instance, turn your video into a dramatic widescreen presentation by cropping off the top and/or bottom.

### *Exporting an Uncompressed QT movie*

The free RealProducer cannot resize video down to a web-ready "postage stamp" size. You may be able to use the \$30 QuickTime Pro to export video created by your video capture or video editing application. Or, such an application may be able to perform a QuickTime export itself (in iMovie, for instance, click "expert" in the quicktime dialog). Here are the options to select in the QuickTime export dialog box:

- ▶ File menu > Export...
- ▶ click Export: Movie to QuickTime Movie
- ▶ click Options...
- ▶ the Video, Allow Transcoding, and Sound boxes should be checked; the Prepare for Internet Streaming box should not be checked.
- ▶ click Video Settings...
  - ▶ set Compressor to None and Millions of Colors
  - ▶ set Quality to Best
  - ▶ set Motion to 29.97 Frames per second
  - ▶ click OK
  - ▶ If you need to adjust the brightness, color balance, or contrast, click Video Filter...

### **evaluation**

A group analysis at the end of a meeting about interpersonal dynamics during decisionmaking. This is a time to allow feelings to be expressed, with the goal of improving the functioning of future meetings. It is not a discussion or debate, nor should anyone comment on another's evaluation.

### **meeting**

An occasion in which people come together and, in an orderly way, make decisions.

### **methods of decisionmaking:**

#### **autocracy:**

one person makes the decisions for everyone

#### **oligarchy:**

a few people make the decisions for everyone

#### **representative democracy:**

a few people are elected to make the decisions for everyone

#### **majority rule democracy :**

t he majority makes the decisions for everyone

#### **consensus:**

everyone makes the decisions for everyone

### **proposal**

A written plan that some members of a group present to the whole group for discussion and acceptance.

### **stand aside**

To agree to disagree, to be willing to let a proposal be adopted despite unresolved concerns.

## Chapter 4 - Become The Media

### *Make Media Guide:*

### *How to Write News for Indymedia:*

#### *A short pamphlet by the Michigan Independent Media Center*

**D**on't take this chapter too seriously. It's only an attempt to explain some of the basics of how to write news, with the goal of making you feel more comfortable having what you write be read by lots of people. The power of Indymedia and other forms of participatory media is that it allows for a much wider range of voices than other types of media.

So don't feel limited by what you read in this pamphlet.

**Write how you feel like writing, in your own voice, from your own experiences.**

#### *BEFORE YOU START WRITING*

Think about what you're going to write about and how you're going to write about it before you start writing it. What's your angle? How long does the story need to be? How in-depth does your reporting need to be to tell the story you're trying to tell? Who's your readership and how much background do they need? Write a simple outline to help organize your thoughts if you think that will help.

#### *INFORMATION: WHERE DO YOU GET IT?*

There's lot of ways to get background information. With a few minutes of intensive Google-searching you can usually gather enough information to use as background for your article. If you're writing about an event, make sure you bring some pens and paper to take notes at the event.

#### *INTERVIEWING*

Interview methods will differ depending on what you need from your interview and what kind of article you're writing. Sometimes you will have an article mostly written and you just want to support a statement with a quote (although this is the way that corporate media does it à using quotes only to support articles which are basically pre-written - so this should be seen as a last resort). Quotes are important and help add personality and legitimacy to an article. On the other hand, the content of some articles can be mostly quotes, with all that you end up writing is a small amount of

- ▶ Turn off autofocus, unless you need it. On many cameras, autofocus will perform slight changes on the focus almost constantly. Each change of focus will probably change every pixel on the screen - it's just as bad as zooming. So, if you can, set focus manually and keep it there.
- ▶ Turn off auto iris (aka auto exposure), unless you need it. Likewise, your camera's slight changes in the iris will cause every pixel in the image to get lighter or darker - it's just as bad as auto-focus. So, if you can, set the exposure manually and keep it there.

#### *Encoding Web Video using RealProducer*

If you are using RealProducer, you will definitely want to turn on several video codec options to improve your image quality: RealVideo 8 (which offers superior video quality compared to RealVideo G2), 2-pass encoding, variable bit rate (VBR) encoding, and loss protection. Combining 2-pass and VBR (see definitions of these terms below) delivers a huge improvement in video quality, but don't be surprised if it also doubles your encoding time!

Professional (that is, not free) encoding software allows you, among other things, to re-size your video from full 640x480 pixels down to more web-friendly sizes such as 160x120. If you are using the free RealProducer, you will have to export your clip at the final intended ("postage stamp") size in uncompressed .avi or .mov format before importing it into RealProducer. Remember to choose horizontal and vertical resolutions that are both divisible by 4 (e.g. 176x132 but not 180x135), and in a ratio of 4:3 (or 16:9 for widescreen DV) - see Horizontal/Vertical Resolution, below. QuickTime Pro, \$30, is useful for exporting video - see Exporting an Uncompressed QT movie, below.

#### *Media Cleaner*

Media Cleaner encodes streaming audio and video faster and better than other programs. We recommend acquiring it yourself, or visit Media Alliance in San Francisco and use it there; then you can upload your video over their T1 internet connection.

Individual captured clips (for example, from an iMovie project's Media folder) can usually be imported directly into Media Cleaner. This will save you the trouble of exporting from your capture program, unless you need rendered transitions or titles.

#### *Horizontal/Vertical Resolution*

Higher resolutions will give you more image detail but lower frame rates (jerkier motion). Talking heads should be smaller so the image has finer detail and the lips move smoothly; long shots with signs that need to be readable may require higher resolutions and jerkier motion.

single ISDN, and dual ISDN. Additional higher bitrates are an excessive waste of disk space and bandwidth.

If you are using Cleaner 5, use the Settings Wizard to set up your RealMedia encode: WWW > Real > Realtime Streaming > 28.8k, 33.6k Modem; 56k Modem, ISDN (Single); ISDN (Double) > etc. Click on the frame to crop your movie as desired.

### *QuickTime*

We do not serve QuickTime via a streaming server; instead, progressive download allows full-quality QuickTime video to be viewed even by those with slow connections. Users may have to wait for most of the QuickTime movie to download, but it will often be of higher quality than a streaming RealVideo. The Sorenson codec offers the best quality (choose "Fast Start - Compressed Header"); the Cinepak codec is more cross-platform compatible (choose "Fast Start").

If you are using Cleaner 5, use the Settings Wizard to set up your QuickTime encode: WWW > QuickTime > Progressive Streaming (high quality) > T1, Cable Modem, xDSL, LAN ('Broadband') > etc. Click on the frame to crop your movie as desired.

### Other Formats

You can also upload Flash (.swf), MPEG (.mpg), and SMIL (.smi) files. Flash movies can include animation, interactivity, and sound. MPEG video includes the Video CD (MPEG-1) and DVD-Video (MPEG-2) formats. SMIL ("smile," Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language) is similar to HTML, and is compatible with Internet Explorer 5.5, QuickTime 4.1, RealPlayer 8, and other software.

### *Shooting for the Web*

Before you start shooting video for the web, it is important to understand that most video codecs work by creating a series of "delta frames" - packets of data telling the viewing application how the current frame differs from the previous frame. The more the image changes from frame to frame, the more data will have to be crammed into each delta frame. This means that fewer frames can be sent, and less image detail can be described for each frame.

So, your goal is to make each frame almost exactly the same as the frame before! How do you do this? There are four simple techniques:

- ▶ Use a tripod. By avoiding shaking, the background will be almost identical from frame to frame.
- ▶ Avoid unnecessary camera movement, including zooms. Every time you pan or zoom, your web video will drop frames and image quality will degrade.

text for context and to move from one topic to the next.

When interviewing, let the subject know what you're writing about. If they know your angle, it will help put them at ease and let them know that they can trust you. You should present yourself differently to the CEO of a large corporation than to a union organizer.

### *THE INVERTED PYRAMID STYLE OF WRITING*

Most research papers often start by posing a problem or thesis statement, then building upon that by giving reasons and details, gradually building up to a conclusion or recommendation. The inverted pyramid style turns this "upside down" to start with the conclusion.

The inverted pyramid story contains just two parts: a lead and a body, usually divided into at least six short paragraphs. There is no fixed ending or conclusion to the story. When you run out of story to tell, you just stop. The lead contains the most important information for the reader to know; if a reader only reads the headline and lead, they will get the main idea of the story. Most people don't read the entire article anyways.

### *WHAT ABOUT OBJECTIVITY?*

There's one important thing to note about objectivity: it doesn't exist. Indymedia isn't an objective source of information, we're just more honest about our biases than the corporate media. Indymedia utilizes open publishing which means that anyone (including you!) can post your stories to the newswire. There are no filters beyond a minimal editorial policy. Indymedia not only allow users to post to the site, but also to add their own comments to what has already been posted. In this way a many-voiced narrative emerges, more accurate than a corporate news article.

### *OTHER SUGGESTIONS*

In all of newswriting, it is best to keep your paragraphs short. As a general rule of thumb, keep your paragraphs confined to just a few sentences. This is vastly different than you've been taught in your composition classes where you write a theme sentence and build on it.

Your sentences should have an average of 20-28 words. The number varies based on who you talk to, but you get the idea. Don't spend forever counting words, though. That is an average. You should have shorter sentences/paragraphs and every once in a while you are going to have longer ones. If you have shorter sentences, there can be more than one in a paragraph.

Vary your sentence structures. A short sentence that comes after a long one will have more emphasis.

### *WHAT IS HTML AND HOW DO I USE IT? AND WHY?*

Indymedia articles are often short with lots of links. This is because most

people don't usually read more than a few paragraphs from a news article anyways. By linking certain key ideas to other articles or websites, we can transmit the basic idea of an article, and users can follow links to get more information if they have the time or desire to do so.

HTML is the main language used to write webpages. You can use HTML to make your articles look more interesting, adding links, or making text bold or italic. Below are some examples.

`<B>` text you want bold. `</B>` will look like... **text you want bold**

`<I>`text you want italic.`</I>` will look like... *text you want italic.*

to make a link, use the example below:

`<a href="http://www.anysite.com">` **text that will be the link** `</a>`

You will end up with text that will be the link being clickable and it will link to the site you specified.

## *DIY Media & Journalism*

### Thunder Bay IMC Guide

#### *Web Tutorial Links*

Transom.org (<http://www.transom.org/tools/>) has lots of helpful audio info, from choosing a good microphone to working with the latest audio applications. See also Ron Dexter's film/video/audio production tips (<http://www.rondexter.com/>).

#### *MP3 Audio*

Dozens of audio applications are on the web as freeware. Even the top-of-the-line audio workstation software Pro Tools (<http://www.digidesign.com/ptfree/>) is a free, albeit huge, download.

When recording sound onto your computer, it is important to adjust the output volume of your source so that it doesn't "clip," or overload, your computer's audio input. Simple sound recording freeware such as Coaster (mac) can help you set your levels; Coaster also allows you to chop the recording into separate files as you record. However, Coaster does not support Mac OS X. If you are using OS X, then you may want to try Audacity 1.2.0-pre3 for realtime audio editing and processing. It is free, open source, easy to use, and it looks nice!

For best results, MP3 audio files containing voice-only material should be encoded in Mono at a bitrate of up to 64k. Stereo and a higher bitrate of 128k can be used for files that include music. When encoding streaming MP3 files at modem-bitrates (such as 16k), choose a low sampling rate (such as 16 kHz). For best results (higher quality sound and a smaller filesize), turn on VBR (variable bit rate) encoding. You should also remember to type in the title and any other information for the "ID3" fields. On the Mac side, the free iTunes is excellent for encoding MP3s.

#### *RealMedia*

First of all, you will need an audio or video file that is compatible with RealProducer, Media Cleaner, or any other program that can encode RealMedia files. The better the quality of your source material (for example, uncompressed audio), the better the quality of your RealMedia file. RealMedia clips can be encoded as single-rate or multi-rate (SureStream). We serve RealMedia via the real time streaming protocol (RTSP), so make sure to choose SureStream; the file will be larger, but re-buffering will be reduced to a minimum, and image and sound quality vastly improved.

If you are using the free version of RealProducer, you can only choose two SureStream rates. We usually recommend 28.8k and 56k, as the majority of internet users have slow connections. Those using Media Cleaner Pro, RealProducer Plus, or other software can choose 28.8k, 56k,

out there. So that's what folks did. People pitched in, on really short notice, locally, nationally. Somebody said, "Well, this is what I can do. I can bring an editing deck, since you guys don't have one. And everybody can use it," or "We'll bring a bunch of camcorders, and we can help rent satellite time."

We were especially concerned with the way the internet has really grown and how access by a certain segment of the population has also grown, and so there's an issue of what's called a 'digital divide,' (wherein the vast majority of the world does not have internet, or even telephone access). So we set about to do this innovative thing, linking high and low technologies, or old and new technologies. So the internet and the website was the backbone of our distribution. For example, we posted audio, video, text, and photos, all these different mediums, to the site, and easy to download. Then community radio stations, cable access stations, even community-based organizations internationally could download and distribute them.

Here's a good example: Radio Havana pulled down the audio feed, because they had an internet connection in their office, and then they rebroadcast it on the FM dial, and people all over the island could hear it; nine million people could hear it and didn't have to use the internet. Another example is that we kicked out a daily print publication called The Blind Spot, and we only had the money to run off 2,000 hard copies each day. It's expensive to make hard copies, and we gave those away for free, and posted the files on the site. Activists in Brussels then pulled down those files and printed 8,000 copies and handed them out in the streets of Brussels. So, again, that's 8,000 folks that didn't have to check out the internet, right?

*MB: So how did the IMC as an organization become formulated? Did the (WTO organizing) process spark it, create a reason to develop this medium?*

JP: In the independent and activist media worlds, there was a lot of discussion about networking, the need for us to have a powerful, vibrant network, as a true alternative to the corporation's network - a peoples' network. Subcomandante Marcos, in 1997 made a video communiqué which was screened at the Freeing the Media Conference in New York.

*"We have a choice: we can have a cynical attitude in the face of media, to say that nothing can be done about the dollar power that creates itself in images, words, digital communication, and computer systems that invades not just with an invasion of power, but with a way of seeing the world, of how they think the world should look. We could say, well, 'that's the way it is' and do nothing. Or we could simply assume incredulity: we can say that any communication by the*

Active Sydney was to become a prototype for Indymedia — part events calendar, part meeting place, part street paper. For June of that year, the Active team revised the system for the J18 global day of action. Using this system, anyone could now upload a report, a video clip, a photo or an audio file, and see it instantly added to the emerging narrative of events. It was as easy as sending email. And it ran on open source code. With Catalyst members collaborating online with organisers in Seattle to establish the first site, this system became the basis for Indymedia. While the Active software is no longer the only platform used for Indymedia sites, it made a huge contribution to the movement's explosive growth.

**Bit 13** Another version of the story would place Indymedia within the long traditions of alternative media. John Downing's work is important here, and his definition of 'politically dissident media that offer radical alternatives to mainstream debate' is useful. To tell the Indymedia story from this perspective would be to highlight its independence and self-management, and the autonomy of each local editorial collective in running each Indymedia centre. It would be to emphasise Indymedia as a forum for viewpoints which are not usually expressed within the established media's consensus about what is and isn't news. And, perhaps most importantly, to tell the Indymedia story as one in the alternative media tradition would be to focus on the extent to which this movement fosters horizontal connections and open participation, in contrast to the vertical flows of the established broadcast and print media.

**Bit 14** A third version would approach Indymedia as part of what cultural studies academic George McKay terms 'DiY Culture.' McKay defines this as 'a youth-centred and -directed cluster of interests and practices around green radicalism, direct action politics, new musical sounds and experiences'. For this version of the story, a useful analogy would be with punk — not with the music so much as with its DIY access principle ('here's three chords, now form a band'). DIY was the key to Richard Hell's much-misunderstood lyric 'I belong to the blank generation' — the idea of the blank was that you were supposed to fill it in for yourself, rather than sign up to someone else's agenda.

**Bit 15** To consider Indymedia as part of this DIY spirit would be to see it as the expression of a blank generation in this fine original sense — not a vacant generation, but one prepared to offer their own self-definitions and to create their own media networks to do it. More than this, it would also be to place Indymedia within the frameworks of independent production and distribution which were the real impact of punk — independent record labels changed music more than any of their records, while photocopied zines opened up new possibilities for self-expression. Just as the real importance of punk wasn't in the individual songs, the importance of Indymedia isn't in this or that news story posted to this or that site. Instead, it's in its DIY ethos and its commitment to establishing new networks.

**Bit 16** What these three versions of the Indymedia story share is that each highlights an emphasis on access and participation; each stresses new avenues and methods for new people to create news; each shifts the boundary of who gets to speak. And where these different stories intersect is in the concept of open publishing. This is the Net making possible a shift in the production of news, as well as in its reception. Matthew Arnison of Catalyst, who played a key role in developing the Active software, offers a working definition of open publishing which is worth quoting in full:

'Open publishing means that the process of creating news is transparent to the readers. They can contribute a story and see it instantly appear in the pool of stories publicly available. Those stories are filtered as little as possible to help the readers find the stories they want. Readers can see editorial decisions being made by others. They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions. If they can think of a better way for the software to help shape editorial decisions, they can copy the software because it is free and change it and start their own site. If they want to redistribute the news, they can, preferably on an open publishing site.'

**Bit 17** Open publishing has undoubtedly been a big part of the appeal of Indymedia for its many contributors. In fact, one of Indymedia's slogans is 'everyone is a journalist.' If this is a provocation, who and what is it meant to provoke? Obviously, 'everyone' is not a journalist — at least not if journalists are seen as employees of news institutions and news businesses, employees with some kind of training in research methods and narrative construction. But to say that 'everyone is a journalist' is not to claim that everyone has such institutional affiliation, or that everyone has such training or expertise. Instead, the tactic here seems to be to inflate something out of all proportion in order to draw attention to the core smaller truth that may otherwise go unnoticed. Specifically in this case, what authorises some to be story-tellers and not others? From this perspective, the slogan reads like a claim for difference, a claim that other kinds of expertise and other kinds of know-how also have valid claims on our attention, and that these too can make valid contributions to the more plural media environment made possible — but not guaranteed — by the Net. It's a claim that the licence to tell stories should be shared around.

**Bit 18** But developments to this core element — open publishing — point both to an ongoing challenge for the Indymedia movement, and to a possible future which might enable a further significant shift in the nature of Net news. In March 2002, a proposal was circulated to remove the open publishing newswire from the front page of the main site at , replacing this with features sourced from local sites around the world. While this was said to have the objective of promoting those local sites to a broader audience, it should also be seen as acknowledgement that Indymedia was struggling against limits to growth. One issue was the large number of items being posted to sites, which meant that even especially well-researched or

streets that the networks weren't covering. And others — Paper Tiger TV, Deep Dish TV, all the activist media over the years lay the groundwork and paved the way for the IMC model, which was really tying all of these people together, nationally and internationally, in a network that would be powerful and vibrant — media for the movement.

> > *Logging on >> J18.org*

*In the UK, the bug for independent media caught at the Carnival Against Capitalism on J18. Australian techies provided a website which allowed easy uploading — the beginnings of the code for open publishing. Experienced media activists from Undercurrents, Squall, and Schnews and others joined in with cameras, notepads, and tape recorders. A strong internet connection was added, and J18.org appeared. "While the carnival was roving in the City of London, I spent most of the day on the other side of the river Thames, in a dark room packed with cables, used teacups and computers. Everybody was busy typing, uploading reports from all over the world to a shared website. Couriers came in with new audio and videotapes to be edited and uploaded. The footage was projected onto the wall. Reports were received on the phone. The room was buzzing with activity, everybody seemed to know what they were doing. When we left at three in the morning, the leftovers from the day were still visible in the quiet streets — graffiti, beer cans, forgotten leaflets. We were worried [about being] caught with our rucksack full of mobile phones, but determined to continue."*

*The day became a landmark for the emerging global protest movement due to the audacity of the action, but also due to the use of technology that allowed simultaneous, real time reports of events all over the world on a common website. Five months later, the first IMC website successfully reported the anti-WTO protests in Seattle, this time direct from the street, giving Indymedia a dynamic that would keep it moving and developing across the globe.*

> >- *UK IMC/Logging off >>*

JP: In Seattle, we had this notion that we couldn't just wait for the networks to cover this. This was going to be a very important event, and it was right in our own backyard. It was coming to our town, so we had a responsibility to provide some sort of platform, some sort of framework, for people all over the country to plug in and do good media work. We set about to do that with only about eight weeks before the WTO. We had no organization. We had no space. We had no funding. We had no staff. What we did have was these relationships with media activists who all were very excited about the idea of us coming together, of really amplifying our impact and bringing the resources and passion and skills that each of us could to really be a vibrant network and to provide a true alternative voice

## *Indymedia: precursors and birth*

**T**his is an edited transcript of an October 2000 interview with one of Indymedia's originators in Seattle, Jeff Perlstein, by journalist Miguel Bocanegra. Interspersed between the text of the interview are first-hand accounts of other Indymedia activists which relate to the events Jeff describes<sup>2</sup>.

*Miguel Bocanegra: I'm here with Jeff Perlstein of the Independent Media Centre in Seattle. So Jeff, can you talk a little bit about how you got involved in the issue of the WTO and give a history of the IMC?*

Jeff Perlstein: Sure. In January or February [1999], I saw some flyer about a city-wide gathering about the WTO I went to monthly meetings and started to hear more about the mobilizations that were happening and learn more about the policies of the WTO. I'd also begun to see how many folks were coming to Seattle, and see these meetings grow and grow. As someone who has done independent media projects, I began to recognize that we couldn't just let CNN and CBS be the ones to tell these stories, that we needed to develop our own alternatives and networks. That's where the idea for the media centre came from - the necessity for communities to control their own message. So we set about to create a community-based peoples' newsroom. That's where the idea came from.

*MB: How did the IMC develop, and how did it come out of the WTO process?*

JP: Just to back up a bit, I always like to give respect to the media projects that have come before, that have been part and parcel of movements for social justice, because it's a long history and the IMC didn't just come out of nowhere. [Alternative media] is everywhere from Radio Venceremos (clandestine radio station which played a crucial tactical and cultural role in the 1980s liberation struggle in El Salvador) to Liberation News Service in the sixties here in the US, to the Zapatista's use of the internet in 1994 and since then, a project called Counter Media that I was involved with in 1996, (which brought together independent media activists from around the country to document actions during the] Active Resistance anarchist gathering during the Democratic Party's convention in Chicago, and it was kind of the kernel of the idea for the IMC. It was very small-scale - media activists were out shooting video and documenting what was going on in the

significant stories would be replaced quickly on the front page; another issue was the persistent trolls and spam which plagued some Indymedia sites. In April 2002, after a voting process in which 15 Indymedia collectives from Brazil to Barcelona voted unanimously in favour of the reform, the open publishing newswire was taken off the front page. Many local Indymedia sites followed suit. Even the Sydney site, which, perhaps because of the history and involvement of the Catalyst group, promotes open publishing rather more than some other Indymedia sites, adopted a features-based front page in August 2002, stating that 'promoting certain issues above others' would make the site 'more effective.'

**Bit 19** These developments might signal the eventual demise of the open publishing component. Indymedia might instead become 'professionalised,' with greater reliance on de facto staff reporters and more stringent editing, moving closer to existing alternative media outlets. But the new centrality of its news features might also open Indymedia up to a new level of involvement, because those features are given prominence in the site's central column and can remain on the front page for some weeks. This offers the potential for what Arnison terms 'automated open-editing'. This would involve creating the facility for audience members to contribute to sub-editing stories on an Indymedia site: they might, for instance, check facts or add sources; edit spelling, grammar or formatting; nominate a topic area within which a given story could be archived; or translate the story from one language or style to another.

**Bit 20** Open publishing is one phenomenon in which we can see the Net enabling changes to the nature of news and newsmakers. If open editing were also to work, then it would need to be as simple to operate as the original open publishing newswire. But if this were possible, then open editing might involve not only more new people in the development of informational news, but involve them in new ways, catering for a broader range of abilities and aptitudes than open publishing alone. Like earlier communication technologies, the Net could facilitate new types of media institution - ones built on an open model, which enable a new, more plural, news environment.

*Indymedia:  
Building An International Activist Internet  
Network*

**DeeDee Halleck**

In a space of less than three years, a grass roots media network has sprung up that has connected literally tens of thousands of media makers, created web sites visited by millions, projected videos in hundreds of venues, published newspapers in print runs of tens of thousands and transmitted web and micro radio programmes that have found avid and loyal audiences.

The first 'Independent Media Center' was created to provide a convenient physical work area and a corresponding website from which media makers could cover the scheduled demonstrations against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in the fall of 1999. Although the Seattle police were caught by surprise with the size and vehemence of the demonstration, organizers of the counter-WTO events early on had a sense that this would be a large gathering. Just as the corporate world has used the term 'free trade' to cover many corporation-friendly policies, activists from many areas have used meetings of free trade proponents as a way to focus attention on the problems of these neo-liberal monetary and trade policies. People in India, Brazil, Ecuador and many other countries had protested these policies for years, but Seattle was the 'coming out' party for U.S. anti-corporate demonstrations.

Realizing that this was to be the first big resistance to the global policies in the United States, a group of Seattle independent journalists, videomakers and radio people started looking around for a space that would be convenient for on-going coverage of what they correctly assumed would be an historic gathering. A work space for media would be a centre where people could charge their batteries, catch up with their email and perhaps post interviews with some of the veterans from the international struggles against corporate globalisation who were expected to attend, such as Vandana Shiva, Indian eco-feminist, Jose Bové, French farmer and anti-McDonalds militant, and Walden Bello, professor at the University of the Philippines Malaysia, anti-sweatshop activist and director of Focus on the Global South ([www.focusweb.org](http://www.focusweb.org)).

Seattle media activists Sheri Herndon, a community radio veteran, Jeff Perlstein video activists, and Dan Merkle, a movement lawyer were in touch with several networks: microradio proponents, internet hackers, alternative print journalists and video activists. Media makers from across the country began to discuss coverage of the impending activities in Seattle on many list serves.

tanks like the Rand Corporation are threatened by us. If we were just a collective of websites linked to a few servers across the globe, with groups of people uploading stories to open publishing sites, that would be cool. But that wouldn't be Indymedia. The work we are doing is not easy. It is not just about filling about a form. It is not just about getting a server going. It's about changing paradigms...and hopefully about listening and learning more from each other so that we really can change the world and communicate without commodification and with more of a vision for how we want to see things.

/Logging off >>

an IMC makes media on or off the internet, the general organizing principles are the same - have meetings, have enough people to sustain a group, gather a mission statement and editorial policy, not be dominated by one organization

#### > > IMC ECUADOR

In our country the mass media are private monopolized corporations; as a logical consequence they only inform about notices of their interest, not informing about actions of the majority of Ecuadorians. These days, knowing objectives/aims of Indymedia, and after having some meetings of analysis with responsible persons of alternative communication, we found it necessary for Ecuador to join power to create an IMC Ecuador, to inform the world about our struggles, processes, activities, proposals and thoughts. Indymedia is the space of communication, which will help us to inform lots of people about our feelings, thoughts, proposals, actions, and mobilizations like indigenous, campesinos, urban, popular, and other social movements of Ecuador. We will get back the space of communication that the conventional mass media have monopolized, not expressing the reality of people and social movements.

#### > > IMC ZAMBIA

After covering the Conference of Parties (COP 7) of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, in Marrakech, Morocco, I feel deeply encouraged to set up an IMC in Lusaka, Zambia. I contributed a series of stories to the IMC-Climate project in Morocco and after reading my stories on the IMC site, I was very much challenged to set up our local IMC. I have familiarized myself and other colleagues and have read the IMC blueprint documents. We seek to set up a committed, country-based IMC group that will work consistently and provide up-to-date independent news coverage. We also seek further guidance from already existing and established IMCs. We are neighbours to South Africa and Congo and I hope with effective communication, we can made our dream a reality.

#### > > IMC GLOBAL

Re: new imc process: We don't want to just have people fill out the form and click off the boxes and say, yeah give us the domain name. To me, personally, that feels like standing in line, filling out a form and getting a drivers license. That is NOT what Indymedia is about. It's not about a site. That would be easy. That would mean we are just a digital network. But we are much more than that and that is why we are a threat. We are a social network combining the best of a decentralized digital network. So think

#### *Catalyst software*

At the time, the idea of a web presence for the up-coming event was only a small adjunct to more traditional media activities that were being planned. A timely visit by an Australian computer geek to Boulder changed that, however. Mathew Arnison had helped develop a template and code for an interactive web site used by Australian activists - 'low-tech grassroots net access for real people,' he called it. This ingenious open-source software, called Catalyst (or *CAT*, short for *Community Activist Technology*), allowed anyone to post text, photos, audio and video very easily to the web from any home or public computer.

Arnison happened to stop by the Boulder offices of Free Speech TV a few months before the planned Seattle convergence. He discussed this web tool with Manse Jacobi and Brian Drolet, who were then in the process of developing FSTV's coverage of Seattle. Arnison showed them how convenient it could be, with the CAT software, to post a variety of media to web sites and to generate public commentary on stories. Jacobi began negotiations with Seattle folk to reserve server space that could accommodate what he began to realize might be large files of multi-media reports.

Chris Burnett, a computer expert who had founded Burn! (perhaps the first activist web space hosted in the Department of Communication at the University of California, San Diego) came on board and helped to tweak the code in preparation for Seattle. Burnett, through his work at Regeneration TV, a streaming music and politics site, also helped contact musicians for a benefit concert to raise funds for the centre, now dubbed IMC, The Independent Media Center. Ani DeFranco and Michael Franti gave a sell-out concert two weeks before the WTO meetings and raised \$60,000 for the Seattle preparations.

#### *The space*

A store front in the centre of downtown Seattle was leased and computers, TV monitors, audio mixers, cables and used office furniture started accumulating in the space as soon as the doors opened. In keeping with the movement protocol of consensus decision-making and open meetings, the group began regular discussions on how to set up the space and maximize effective use of the equipment and the web resource. Representatives from the media group went to the organizational meetings of the many WTO activist groups planning to participate in the demonstrations in order to develop efficient and convenient ways the independent media makers and the organizers could communicate.

For the first time, there seemed to be an authentic respect for alternative media from movement organizers, who have often preferred to talk with mainstream corporate reporters than to 'waste their time' with small independent news outlets. The convenient downtown IMC space became a

gathering place for both media makers and organizers. In the same way, the web site, [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) became a virtual centre for activist discussions and multi-media posts of demonstration preparations.

### *The responsive web*

Almost as soon as the IMC web page was initiated, it began to receive posts not only from activists in Seattle, but from others around the world, many of whom were either sending people to Seattle or were involved in local actions in solidarity with the events in Seattle.<sup>1</sup>

This original web site created the prototype for the typical indymedia web page that would proliferate after Seattle. It involved three columns: one on the right, the 'Newswire', for new posts which is completely open to anyone who wanted to send information or media imagery, and a centre column for 'features' which was edited by a team who scanned the news wire and selected the most relevant items for the highlighted and selected central space. A third column, on the left provides a search engine and organizational information and now includes links to the growing lists of centres which continue to come on line.

Indymedia 'news' is not traditional journalism that is 'objective' and without a point of view. Most imc-ers feel that mass media only pretends to be objective and upholds the status quo. Indymedia is activist media. As Evan Henshaw-Plath, one of the tech angels who keeps various indymedia sites going put it: '*...we are trying ...to make decentralized, democratic, community controlled media outlets which can be used to advance social change.*'

In the years since Seattle and the initiation of this format, there have been many discussions about the open nature of the news wire. Many of the web sites are besieged with crank posts, occasional racist slurs and even a sort of 'left spamming'. There have been calls for heavy moderation and censorship of racist and offensive material. Most IMCs have resisted any censorship of the open newswire. Rather than remove offensive material, the response has been for people who disagree to respond to the posts themselves, which has made for some lively discussions.

### *The situation escalates in Seattle*

As more and more people jammed the downtown streets and protesters began using civil disobedience, the Seattle police reacted with teargas, pepper spray and truncheons. The battle of Seattle had begun. Stunned protesters flocked to the IMC to tell their story to eager radio DJs, camcorder journalists and the print crew. At one point a tear gas canister was even lobbed in the door of the centre itself, in what was the first of what would be a regular event at other IMC's : direct attack by repressive state forces.

> > *Global IMC log* >>

> > IMC PALESTINE

Our mission is to help Palestinian activists organize, motivate and inform. We want to help people develop the art of story-telling and debate. We want to be a catalyst for those stories to reach into other media and parts of the planet. We want to break down barriers and encourage the flow of information from people with both good and bad stories to tell, to the people we know are out there who want to hear them. We want to create a physical and virtual space that creates a sense of achievement and reflection but is vibrant and open enough to attract people who are interested in activism; while remaining practical and focused to encourage all people in our audience to contribute. Out of the ten people in our core group, only two are women. Unfortunately this is a trend throughout Palestine that we do not want to follow and we are encouraging more women to attend our meetings and take an active role in the new media centre. New volunteers have asked us who is running this project? Most businesses and organizations in Palestine suffer from overmanagement and from having too many people in charge. This makes it even more crucial that we strive to create an open and transparent organization whose members report fully to one another and share responsibilities.

> > IMC NIGERIA

On the issue of the Nigerian government reaction, should they learn that a Nigeria IMC have commenced in the country, we resolved that we are going to operate our IMC though we know that the Nigeria government will never be in support of our new technique in getting real news spread within and outside the country. An activist from Dehura cited the killing of the editor-in-chief and founder of Newswatch magazine who was murdered by the federal government because of his unrelenting effort to unfold the ills of the Nigerian government, which is not the usual operation of the corporate press in Nigeria. We all agreed that the field of operation will be rough, but we just have to contribute lots of sacrifice to start and sustain the Nigeria IMC, knowing the positive effect it will have on the Nigeria people as a nation. We agreed that all our discussion-making system shall be non-hierarchical, consensus-based and collective decision process. We also agreed that the Nigerian IMC is not owned by any person or organization.

> > IMC JAKARTA

In a place where internet access is expensive and difficult, an IMC can/must do work primarily off-line to have it be effective. Whether or not

*Don't hate the media.*

*Be the media*

From Seattle to South Africa, Chiapas to Croatia, a radical and democratic peoples' news network for the world has spread like wildfire, recklessly endangering the corporate media's monopoly on information. Known as the Independent Media Centre (IMC, or Indymedia), this network enables hundreds of alternative media organizations and thousands of activists to collaborate through the internet in a joint effort to democratize the media. Since the success of the first IMC in Seattle, Indymedia is the fastest growing alternative media network in the world, with 112 websites spanning six continents as of April 2003 - the most recent addition being IMC Iraq.

Through Indymedia, people who are directly affected by social and economic policies can directly share their news and views with the world, using innovative 'open publishing' software. This allows anyone with access to the internet to easily and instantaneously publish text, audio, and video files onto the network's newswires. Viewers can comment directly below the original post, creating an open forum for dialogue and debate.

Open publishing is redefining journalism by welcoming people to publish more than just the facts, to tell their tale as they witnessed it. "People all over the world are dipping their story telling toes in the water," says Matthew Arnison, a member of the Indymedia Tech Collective. Without much in the way of rules or style guides, Indymedia is hub for the collection of eclectic and lush story telling, a breeding ground for the exploration of new and creative journalistic styles, and an archive for history as it happens.

Indymedia has evolved into a hopeful vision that a new media landscape is on the horizon, one that gives voice to millions of people. *"Those who are looking for a better world, those who are revolting...can no longer rely on corporate [and] mainstream media"*, says media critic Robert McChesney; *"They need their own media. That is precisely the mission of the IMC"*.

What follows is a compilation of texts, which explain some of the origins and spirit of Indymedia.

First is a log made up of excerpts from the New-IMC network email list that works with new site applications from around the globe. Here they explain their reasons for requesting a new site:

As the battle continued, more and more people, not just in Seattle but around the world, heard about it and wanted to find out just what was happening. The mainstream news outlets had few spokespeople from among the demonstrators, and concentrated on ominous military style reports from the police chief and mayor. News that an alternative source was available on the web spread like wildfire across the net. [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) began to get thousands of hits from all over the world. No one had predicted that there would be so much activity on the web. The server at Free Speech TV received were hundreds of thousands of people using the site.

What was unusual about Indymedia was the sense that this was a world-wide community linked by technology, that was discussing an immediate, emergency situation, whose outcome no one could predict. Many people use the internet for list serve discussions about social issues. Others have used live chat rooms for what is usually rather inane but instantaneous real-time discussions that often move too fast for considered response and thus are accurately described by the word 'chat'. At [indymedia.org](http://indymedia.org) the global community of people concerned with social justice, with the environment, with workers rights logged on and connected with each other in what was truly a global village never imagined by McLuhan.<sup>2</sup>

The sense of connection and an understanding of the power not only of the technology that could create this linkage, but the power and size of the community around the world who were in agreement with the protesters created an exhilaration among people who often feel outnumbered and defeated. The media makers who came to the IMC in Seattle also felt the exhilaration of connection. For the first time, video activists were collaborating with community radio producers, with photographers, with print journalists, with computer mavens. Indymedia has encouraged such collaborations, not only in the establishment of other indymedia centres and web sites, but in promotion of video screenings programming on community radio, and in sharing resources, studios and equipment.

*Indymedia spreads across the globe*

Since Seattle, the indymedia movement has spread to over 130 locations. There are IMC's in 51 countries. The United States alone has 47 different web sites that extend from the state of Maine to one for San Diego and the border region. These sites can represent dozens of people who regularly take part in a permanent centre (as in New York City, Los Angeles and D.C.), or smaller organizations with only a few people who meet in members' homes mostly to tend the web site. There have been several face to face meetings which attempted to bring indymedia folks from different locations together: in San Francisco as an adjunct to a Project Censored Conference in 2001 at a Ruckus Camp outside of San Francisco. Both of these meetings were able to bring some of the global representatives

together through small travel grants from anonymous donors.

Most of the participants in indymedia greatly value the horizontal and open structure that now exists and are quite resistant to any sort of central leadership or 'board of directors'. The face to face meeting in San Francisco did, resulted in a document outlining the 'Principles of Unity' for the IMC's, mostly at the urging of the web tech people, who felt that without that minimal agreement, too much of the decision making fell on their shoulders. This document was sent to all the existing imcs for ratification. The ensuing discussions are posted at [www.process.indymedia.org](http://www.process.indymedia.org), which also contains helpful hints for starting your own indymedia organization.

### *Problems and prospects*

There are many discussions on Indymedia listserves about trying to broaden the participation in the IMC movement to include more people of colour, more women and more working class members. At the current time, indymedia activists are volunteers, who often donate their own equipment and time. This makes it hard for people who have fewer resources to participate, and there have been accusations that the IMCs are in the hands of rich white boys. There are many discussions about how to empower others in the technical aspects of the work. Perhaps one of the more difficult hurdles is the process itself, in which coming to consensus on something can be excruciatingly time consuming and painful. Coming to consensus agreement on issues means that only one person can block an action. This can spell paralysis or at the very least hours of emotional ranting. For people who have jobs and family commitments this process can be a barrier to full participation. This process has also been accused of being a custom imposed by U.S. activists, and not necessarily the way that other movement media people want to function.

Other issues which are coming to the fore are connected with funding and staffing. As the movement continues, there are questions of sustainability. Can the level of participation that has characterized the IMC movement to this point be ensured if the organization relies on volunteers with private resources? Can the participants continue to volunteer their equipment and time? In each organization there are people whose work is crucial to the project and who need support. And what about health care? Will the spontaneity and autonomy of the movement be compromised if groups opt to secure foundation or government arts funding? How can IMC's in the 'North' contribute to those in the 'South' without falling into a sort of missionary attitude or worse? As the groups move out of emergency mode into sustaining mode, the problems of organization and sustainability loom large.

How this massive and chaotic operation can be sustained without sacrificing its immensely creative and inspirational energy to deadening

bureaucratic administration? With many international meetings such as the WTO in Cancun in September, 2003, the Porto Allegre World Social Forum (2002), the G8 meeting in Calgary (2002), new cities come on line and there is a flurry of travel by flying squads of techies and activists to help get the new centres 'on line'. But as the IMC movement becomes more popular imc 'groupies' sometimes appear, who aren't necessarily all that helpful and who often do not respect local customs and mores. And some obvious undercover trouble makers have appeared, sent from various security agencies—local police, FBI and perhaps even military agents in the post 9-11 militarized atmosphere.<sup>3</sup>

There are also pressures for IMCs to become regularized NGOs. For Indymedia, a horizontal network with strong anarchist sensibilities, the calls for government registration, hierarchical organization and centralization of power are an anathema. There is a concern about paying for work. Many worry that the ethos of volunteerism which has been the strength of the IMC movement will disappear as certain individuals are incorporated into grants proposals as paid staffers.

The test of the movement will be the strength of the centres in the South. Already the South African IMC has made important contributions in bringing to light the problems of water privatisation and the thousands of evictions perpetrated by the ANC government on behalf of the banks. In Argentina, where chaos ensued in December 2001, the IMC became a key source for information, as literally millions logged on every week. The reasons of the burgeoning use of this network are the open and readily accessible technology and publishing space, which mirrors the collaborative structures of the anti-globalisation movement, whose processes are transparent and whose operative principle is consensus.

- b. The imc-communications working group will ensure that the proposal gets distributed to all local IMCs and global working groups for discussion, and that a URL is posted indicating the location of the proposal to ensure transparency and openness.
- c. The proposal will get sent back to the Global SpokesCouncil for a decision where spokespersons are empowered to make decisions in the regular on-line meetings.

### 5: The Global SpokesCouncil

#### ARTICLE 11

In order to advance the mission and purpose of the CNIMC, members of the local IMCs and global working groups agree to the formation of a Global SpokesCouncil, and acknowledge the benefits of developing a forum for the advancement and sustainability of the network.

#### ARTICLE 12

1. The Global SpokesCouncil shall be composed of members from each local IMC and global working group.
2. Each local IMC and global working group shall have one spokesperson on the Global SpokesCouncil.
3. The Global SpokesCouncil will meet once every two months, or as necessary, at a time that is reasonable for all regional IMCs. Meetings shall take place on-line and be announced on the appropriate list at least one week in advance.

#### ARTICLE 13

1. The Global SpokesCouncil can initiate proposals to be submitted to the local IMCs and working groups.
2. The Global SpokesCouncil may discuss issues related directly to the global network. Decisions made by the SpokesCouncil shall follow the procedures outlined in Chapter 4.
3. The Global SpokesCouncil is responsible for the confirmation of membership within the network of all new IMCs and global working groups.

*media monopolies is a total lie. We can ignore it and go about our lives. But there is a third option that is neither conformity, nor scepticism, nor distrust: that is to construct a different way - to show the world what is really happening - to have a critical worldview and to become interested in the truth of what happens to the people who inhabit every corner of this world. This truth becomes a knot of resistance against the lies independent media tries to save history: the present history - saving it and sharing it so it will not disappear, moreover to distribute it to other places, so that this history is not limited to one country, to one region, to one city or social group. The truth that we build will reach full potential if we join with other truths and realize that what is occurring in other parts of the world is also part of human history."*

- SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS, EXCERPT FROM VIDEO COMMUNIQUE

So what we really saw with the WTO was an opportunity to be a spark, to be a catalysts. And then folks could bring [Indymedia] with them when they went home. The idea was to make it a replicable model they could take with them.

Since Seattle, when people come together for these big manifestations, the resources also come together, we document it, build an alternative, and then some of those resources stay behind, so we're building all these points in this network. Also we're building the personal relationships, not just a virtual world. Although we are all linked now by this website, Indymedia.org, there's a real emphasis on the physical spaces, because one of the whole points is to reclaim space for ourselves, for people to interact and to come together and dialogue and exchange, and that that can happen in the virtual realm, but most powerfully happens when we're face-to-face, so these physical locations are linked by this virtual connection.

*MB: Can you talk a little bit about the process itself. You said that you started organizing about eight weeks prior to the actual protests. Can you go through the timeline of events that occurred with IMC, the first eight weeks to 30 November through 4 December?*

JP: We started convening these weekly meetings and became overwhelmed very quickly as to how ambitious this was and what we were trying to do. Like I said, we had no money. Most of us weren't fund-raisers or anything like that. We were grassroots activists. Very quickly people started getting very involved, and people started, in an amazing way, saying, "This is what I can do. This is what I can contribute here." The first meeting maybe had 15 people. The next week we had maybe 30. The next week we had 40, 50. So about up to mid-October, we've got about 40, 50 people who are plugging in somehow. That's locally. Also, myself and a few others were keeping in touch with folks nationally and internationally, putting out the call and

getting an overwhelming response. People all over the country, saying, "Yes, we're coming, we're coming. This is what we can bring," or "We're going to raise money for this." A really key moment was that I made a trip to the Public Grassroots Media Conference in mid-October in Austin, Texas, because it was the only face-to-face opportunity that we had to meet up with independent media makers from around the country between the time of the idea and the WTO. Essentially, this project became the talk of the whole weekend. We ended up workshopping how we could make this go with people who had done these things for years. Paper Tiger has been around for 25 years doing activist media in New York, and they've got the experience. People from Free Speech TV from Boulder showed up. They were there with two people, and they basically said, "Well, we'll design the internet, and we'll provide all the resources for the web stuff." Folks from Acción Zapatista, based in Austin, were providing a lot of the ideological framework, a lot of input on the process and the importance of process and how the Zapatistas have put that at the forefront, and also a reclaiming of space and keeping this decentralized network, and this whole idea of "one no and many yeses", that we all can come together in these moments from one unified "no" to globalization, to global capital, to confront power from above, but that the model and the process has to have ways for people to express their different yeses, their different identities, their different ways of expressing themselves. So the whole project really accelerated then, to the point that when we got back to Seattle, people were really psyched and we located a space downtown owned by a local non-profit Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI). They really liked the idea of the project and they have this storefront that had just been sitting there unused for a few years. They said, "Look, you can use the place for two months. If you clean all the junk out, and you redo the walls and you paint the place, then that will be in exchange for rent." It is a big place, 2,700 square feet, with high ceilings and an ideal location, right in the heart of downtown. We couldn't really ask for much better. Pieces are starting to come together. Everyone is bringing a different part to it. Still no money, though. This is late October. We're about a month away and we have about \$1,500 donated by one group early on. At this point we're starting to see local people subdividing into different groups, different affinity groups almost. There's a video team. There's an audio team. There was a print team that didn't really come together until the week before. People dealing with volunteer coordination. Another team dealing with security. Another with housing for out-of-towners, and stuff like that. Meetings are happening almost every night of the week to make this thing go on. We're starting to have phone conference calls, people nationally, to really figure out how all these pieces are going to plug in and hopefully make some sense when the week of WTO hits. Right around the first week of November, we're still pulling all these strands together and trying to get people involved. Because we were a new project

#### 4: Decision Making

##### ARTICLE 8

The CNIMC adopts the model of consensus for all decisions affecting the network. It is up to each local IMC, global working group, and the Global SpokesCouncil to determine how consensus will be implemented.

##### ARTICLE 9

1. The CNIMC recognizes that in order to function as an international project that empowers and receives power from self organized, autonomous groups, it will need to develop a flexible, fluid and effective decision-making structure that will harness the energy of individuals and groups at the local levels.
2. The CNIMC recognizes the following groups empowered to make decisions that directly affect the network: Local IMCs, global working groups, and the Global SpokesCouncil.
3. The CNIMC recognizes that there is an important need for a Global SpokesCouncil where spokespersons from each group are represented to make decisions that affect the network. It is also recognized that careful discussion and deliberation are necessary in order to decide what constitutes a global decision.

##### ARTICLE 10

1. Local IMCs and global working groups shall be responsible for the majority of decisions that get made on a day to day basis.
2. The Global SpokesCouncil shall be responsible for decisions that fall under the categories of global finance and the approval of new IMCs.
3. The CNIMC shall adopt, or initiate, the creation of global working groups, via the Global SpokesCouncil, in order to make decisions and implement specific tasks and projects for the network.
4. The Global SpokesCouncil shall make network related decisions accordingly:
  - a. A local IMC, global working group, or the Global SpokesCouncil will initiate and formalize a proposal according to its own process.

### 3: The Network

#### ARTICLE 6

The CNIMC recognizes that its strength is derived from the self-organized, autonomous organization of people and resources that define the network. It is precisely this confederation, or union, of linked autonomous networks, that allows for the facilitation, production, and distribution of information and resources on a global scale. The CNIMC recognizes the value in cooperation and sharing of resources in order to enhance those who are most in need within the network.

#### ARTICLE 7

1. The CNIMC is composed of the following entities: all local IMCs, global working groups and the Global SpokesCouncil.
2. **The CNIMC recognizes the following definitions as valuable to its organizational structure:**
  - a. An IMC is an autonomous community based organization within the network that meets the membership criteria (as recorded in Chapter 2 of this book).
  - b. Global working groups are groups engaged in work directly related to the development and sustainability of the network, and meet the membership criteria (as recorded in Chapter 2 of this book).
  - c. The Global SpokesCouncil is a decision-making body composed of spokespersons chosen by each IMC and global working group.
  - d. The CNIMC is an adaptive, all-channel network whereby coordination and communications take place between as many groups as possible in order to enhance the flexibility, redundancy, and mutual aid within the network. In other words, communication and resource flow is not centralized or restricted from one particular group to another.
  - e. The CNIMC is composed of social and digital nodes within the network, both of which are critical to the operations of the CNIMC.
  - f. A social node can be defined as the human social fabric that is the backbone to the network, composed of autonomous individuals and groups from communities all over the world.
  - g. A digital node is the physical representation of the infrastructure of the network, and is a tool used to enhance our communications and our ability to distribute free information.

and trying to make it go in eight weeks and probably far too ambitious for what we had in place, that the relationship with local organizers, local organizations, wasn't as strong as it could have been, and in my mind should have been. So early November, we finally got the space, and not only were we maxxed out just trying to make the media side of things happen, but now all the same people are having to pitch in to sheetrock the walls and paint the floors and put in plumbing and wiring. So many people really put their lives on hold. Deep Dish TV from New York was on board - they started during the Gulf War, because they recognized the complete media consolidation during the war and how only a narrow thread of information was coming out. Their idea was to break through that blockade by producing video of the critical issues, and then loading it to a cable access station satellite so it would play on community access stations all around the country. For Seattle, they raised money for us to buy [TV] satellite time. By mid November we have solid core people. We actually got another space donated to use for the video editing, because they had to crunch video all the time, 24 hours a day, in order to produce the nightly satellite broadcast, so footage from the streets had to be logged each day from all the videographers that were going to be out there. As all this is happening, we're still in crisis mode. For example, we don't have a point person for the print team, and it's two weeks ahead of time. The audio team is just one guy from out of town who basically really wanted to be security and communications and just kind of stepped in to help out. And we're finding out that while lots of people were going to bring camcorders and video gear - the video team was stacked with resources - we couldn't even pull together two mini-disk recorders or even hand-held tape recorders for the audio team. We didn't know if the phone lines would be installed in time, so there was this huge panic, since so much that we were doing relied on the web. It was our backbone of distribution. We didn't have phone lines in, [or an] especially high speed internet connection. We didn't have a photocopier lined up. Just real basic stuff. We were having an argument - I should say discussions - about whether we should bother to paint the floor or not, because that meant that we were going to have to pick everything up and move it out, and we were going to lose two days. We were to the point where two days was like two weeks in any other point in your life. Throughout this, there was a real concern about participation and representation. Like I said earlier, lots of local organizers were deeply involved in their own campaign projects. It was short notice. But we were finding that who was coming in the door to participate were mostly white folks - progressive activists, well-intentioned white folks. The intention of the project was to be an opportunity for under-represented groups, groups who not only aren't seen in the media or misrepresented in the media, but may not have access to media production resources. Yet most of the people that were getting involved did have access to this stuff, did have some prior relationship with

media making, or had the resources to gain access if they wanted. That was just the way it was playing out, because of who had the 'free time' to get involved and to devote so much time to this project in such a short time frame. It was a major issue - how questions of privilege play out. Even if we seek to be an alternative, and in some ways we were, there always needs to be an internal critique as well, and that privilege is based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, even. So the question of how to be a really heterogeneous group is a fundamental question that the media centres continue to grapple with, as do many progressive projects. Another big question we were grappling with was how we were going to get people to check out the material? It is all well and good to come together and make a bunch of media, but if nobody sees it... It's like the tree falling in the woods - does it make a sound if no-one can hear it? One issue with the site is it relies on people coming to the website to find this material and post their own. So people needed to know that it existed, how to find it. Not only didn't we have a budget for advertising, but we didn't have a pre-existing web presence. It wasn't like people had been accessing this web address, Indymedia.org, before. It never existed. This was a real dilemma, because the site didn't even come online until the day before the WTO week. Yet it still got one and a half million hits that week, which was more than CNN's website, and we know that they have a bunch of advertising money. In some ways, I think what that speaks to is, first of all, the deep, deep desire and need for this sort of information, for this sort of network. People who did find out about it, friends, through the different links of all the partner collaborating organizations, it was resonating so deeply with them that they were letting everybody they knew check it out, and it just rippled outwards, expanding. So that's one part of its success. Part of it was also that we weren't trying to be in charge. We were very clear that we were trying to facilitate all these pre-existing organizations' and individuals' work, and so it was participatory in that regard and I think people really felt a powerful investment in the project, where they wanted to let everyone that they knew, know about the project. So they put links in their different websites; they were all referring to it. What was just complete circumstance is that things got pretty crazy and pretty exciting in Seattle that week, and the world was watching. People were speaking their voices powerfully, and that made for really compelling news, compelling coverage. I think that people around the world had some sense that this was an historic moment, that there was a shift happening here. We had ABC Nightly News showing up at the door of the IMC wanting to do a piece on the media centre, the new model. And CNN and Christian Science Monitor all of a sudden, intrigued by all this.

- a. Agree in spirit to the CNIMC Mission Statement and Principles of Unity,
- b. Have a minimum of five (5) members,
- c. Have a mission statement,
- d. Develop an editorial policy that is in alignment with the CNIMC Editorial Policy,
- e. Agree to the use of Open Publishing as described in the CNIMC Editorial Policies,
- f. Have a decision-making policy that is in alignment with consensus decision-making principles,
- g. Have a spokesperson(s) capable of representing the group to the Global SpokesCouncil meetings,
- h. Participate in key global lists that pertain to the health and vitality of the network,
- i. Have no official affiliation with any political party, state, or candidate for office,
- j. Have no endorsements of commercial products or services,
- k. Display a local version of the IMC ((i)) logo on their website and literature.

#### ARTICLE 4

1. Membership in the CNIMC is open to any group that accepts the Criteria for membership.
2. Membership of new IMCs in the CNIMC will be confirmed by a meeting of the Global SpokesCouncil.

#### ARTICLE 5

The CNIMC recognizes that the movement for independent media is fundamentally a struggle for the dignity, respect, and self-determination of people whose voices are often overlooked by the powerful. The CNIMC claims no special privileges in the representation of individuals, groups or social movements, but rather sees itself as an ally to people who are struggling for their own voices to be heard. It is in this spirit that the CNIMC recognizes that it is in solidarity with the thousands of allies, known and unknown, who may not have an interest in, or desire to become, a member of the CNIMC.

4. All IMCs, based upon the trust of their contributors and readers, shall utilize open digital publishing, allowing individuals, groups and organizations to express their views, anonymously if desired, without fear of censorship.
5. All IMCs shall be not-for-profit entities.
6. All IMCs recognize the importance of process to social change, from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics, and, therefore, shall organize themselves collectively and be committed to the principle of consensus decision making and the development of a direct, participatory democratic process that is transparent to its membership.
7. All IMCs recognize that a prerequisite for participation in the decision making process of each local group is the contribution of an individual's labor to the group.
8. All IMCs shall be committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships; to develop a pattern and practice consistent with the mission and purpose of the CNIMC, and to care for each other's needs.
9. All IMCs shall be committed to the use of free source code, whenever possible, in order to develop the digital infrastructure, and to increase the independence of the network by not relying on proprietary software.
10. All IMCs shall be committed to the principle of human equality, and shall not discriminate based upon race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. Concomitantly, all IMCs shall work together collectively to decide policy in regards to racist, sexist, or discriminatory content exhibited on an IMC website or within a locality.
11. All IMCs, while recognizing the vast cultural traditions within the network, shall be committed to building diversity upon race and class lines within their locality.

## 2: Membership Criteria

### ARTICLE 3

Membership in the CNIMC will require each IMC and global working group to:

*MB: Can you talk a little bit about the actual week of the WTO, and how the events, like you said, made for a dramatic scene? What was the mainstream media not doing that you guys were able to do so people were going to your site instead of the CNN site?*

JP: We opened our doors on Sunday, N28, and signed in over 450 people that week. So that allowed us to put about 100 videographers out in the street with camcorders. That meant that our coverage was in a lot of ways much more comprehensive than any of the networks who had maybe two camera people on staff. A real quick story is that we heard from some network folks later in the week that they actually started looking for intersections where they saw people with the IMC passes. They were bright green, obnoxious bright green. If they saw enough of those people around, they knew something was happening at the intersection. That's what was so compelling - we were out in the streets talking to people, which mainstream media wasn't doing. They were talking about people; we were talking with people, and handing people the microphone and letting them talk for themselves and be directly engaged. Monday rolled around and there were all sorts of marches and mobilizing. There was a real palpable sense that Tuesday was going to bring something that we'd never seen before. Nobody knew what that was going to look like, necessarily. Then Tuesday morning, we got reports from way early in the morning. A number of IMC folks were out with the direct action affinity groups. Some had paired up with labour groups. Some had paired up with the [grassroots Filipino-led] People's Assembly march. We got a sense early on that the people in the streets were actually shifting the balance of power, at least in those hours. Even before 10.00 am we could see that the positions of the direct action people were very solid, strategic positions, and that in order for the police to move, there would have to be a whole lot of commotion. By noon, with the police response we were capturing on film, it was clear that this could not be ignored by mainstream media. So folks went into overdrive to start conveying to and working with them - to make sure that the protesters' methods were really understood, to get the word out as widely as possible. We were getting in the IMC all sorts of reports. We actually had our own walkie-talkie dispatch system so that the different video teams could report back on what was going on, so people running in and out filing reports could know where to go. As information came in, we began expecting a serious clampdown. So lots of the media team stayed out in the field, to witness whatever might take place. This enabled us to counter a lot of the misinformation that the police department and city officials were putting out. A really significant example is the denial that they were using plastic bullets. All the networks were carrying this denial from the Police Chief, as if it's law, as if it's the word of God. But yet, we were posting numerous photos of people holding plastic bullets of all sizes, with huge welts all over

their bodies. Just quickly I'll talk about how the curfew played out that night. It was pretty interesting at the Media Centre. We got an announcement of a dusk-to-dawn curfew, that people were going to be cleared out of the downtown area. As I said, we were positioned right in the centre of downtown. It was very unclear whether the Media Centre was going to be cordoned off or raided. A lot of people had to decide quickly if they were going to stay there for the night or if they should take off.

> > *Logging on >> Information wars*

*It was early evening, and beyond the banks of computers, the tangles of radio wires and mikes, the giant map of Seattle's gridded streets pinned to the wall, and dozens of journalists rapidly uploading news reports from the anti-WTO protests onto the website of the Independent Media Centre, thick wisps of tear gas started curling under the front door. We all began coughing, and two men pulled a table across the entrance as the sound of concussion grenades clattered outside, coming nearer and nearer.*

*Outside the window we could see 'Peacekeepers' the armoured personnel carriers of the National Guard with huge mounted guns driving past in formation. Suddenly the door burst open, and out of the mist stepped a Darth Vader-like figure, booted, masked, with heavy black cape. Those near the entrance tried to negotiate with the policeman. We were told we were all detained.*

*Reports were still coming in from video makers, radio journalists, reporters with mobiles dotted around the city. We knew the precise scale of the clampdown against the anti-WTO protesters, who was injured, who was arrested. The tension was rising, and the IMC was stuck right in the middle of the 'no-protest zone' where all constitutional rights had been suspended.*

*A Dutch woman and I realized that as non-US citizens we would face possible deportation if arrested, and decided we would risk leaving. We climbed out the back window, past a burning dumpster, and looked left down the tiny alleyway. A line of riot police blocked our way. We turned right, only to find another line of police, this time with their backs to us. We found a third alleyway that was clear, and made our escape down it. It was abundantly clear to us as we skulked the 60 blocks back home, often having to turn back on ourselves to avoid more lines of police, that in a globalizing economy, not all information is equal. By the end of the first day of the historic street protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle almost every single newspaper box in the city had been graffitied with a single word: Lies.*

- Report from British Indymedia activist in Seattle /Logging off >>

*1: Mission Statement and Principles of Unity*

ARTICLE 1

*Mission Statement*

The specific purpose of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers (CNIMC) is to facilitate the use of media production and distribution as a tool for promoting social, environmental and economic justice, and to develop a global decentralized communications network to provide a voice for the voiceless. It is also the purpose of this network to give expression to a wide diversity of social movements in order to assist the distribution of intellectual, scientific, literary, social, artistic, creative, human rights, and cultural expressions not covered by the commercial press.

We seek to expand the human social fabric in a meaningful and tangible way that is empowering for local communities. It is our goal to further the self-determination of people under-represented in media production and content, and to illuminate and analyze local and global issues that impact ecosystems, communities and individuals. We seek to generate alternatives to the biases inherent in the profit driven commercial media, and to identify and create positive models for a sustainable and equitable society. It is our goal to aid in a revolutionary social transformation of society that prioritizes people before profit. We seek to expand and develop our own working relationships in a manner that is non-hierarchical, autonomous, and based upon mutual aid and solidarity.

ARTICLE 2

*Principles of Unity*

1. The Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers (CNIMC) is based upon principles of equality, decentralization and local autonomy. The CNIMC is not derived from a centralized bureaucratic process, but from the self-organization of autonomous collectives that recognize the importance in developing a union of networks.
2. All IMCs consider free speech and open access to information a prerequisite to the building of a more free and just society, where information is not treated as a commodity.
3. All IMCs respect the right of activists who choose not to be photographed or filmed.

## *Proposed Charter for the IMC Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers*

"when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion."  
-ethiopian proverb

### *Preamble*

**W**e the peoples of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers have determined to end the scourge of privatized news media systems that market our minds for the profit of advertisers, while simultaneously claiming objectivity, and to expose the lies, exaggerations and biases of commercial media conglomerates whose rigid hierarchies are the antithesis of democratic participation in media production and cannot be trusted to represent the public good, and to provide a global, open publishing system to individuals and communities who would otherwise not have access to media resources, and to embrace transparency so that the audience can participate in the production process by writing, publishing, and critiquing editorial decisions.

We have therefore resolved to

**Challenge** the notion that news and information is simply a commodity to be pre-packaged and sold, and

**Develop** participatory democratic structures for the proliferation of free information based upon principles of mutual aid and solidarity, and

**Work** to develop a global decentralized network that is respectful of local communities and traditions, that empowers individuals and groups to develop their own voice.

Accordingly, the charter working group, who have assembled in the city of San Francisco, through a participatory decision making process, recommend to the network at large, that we adopt the Charter of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers in order to establish a global decentralized network of autonomous collectives to be known as the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers.

JP: After the police left, (without detaining anyone) we were all pretty exhausted and emotionally distressed from the events of the day. We decided to run with just a skeleton crew that night in the centre so everybody else could get some rest and come back into the streets to document stuff the next day. So we basically emptied out the place. There were eight of us who stayed overnight, napping, and keeping stuff running. That brings us through Tuesday night pretty much, at least the view from inside the Media Centre. There were lots of memorable events during the rest of the week. One was a public hearing with the City Council on 2 December. People were demanding accountability from the city, in part because of the incidents that happened on Capitol Hill (the most densely populated neighbourhood on the west coast outside of San Francisco) the two nights previous, when police pushed crowds there from downtown with great force, used lots of tear gas and pepper spray, and attacked a lot of people who hadn't been involved in the protests and didn't consider themselves activists - that really politicized folks. We had people there covering the hearing - it was standing room only, and several hundred people rallied in the rainy streets outside. They actually had to cut off the speakers - each had three minutes, but still it went on for more than six hours and they didn't get to everybody. So they had to schedule another one a few days later. It was just tremendous to see people speaking up. The IMC was getting calls from the hearing, because all the videographers were running out of film and batteries. The other big moment was the presence of people at the jail, supporting those who had been arrested. Hundreds were camping out and demanding their release, and also making the connection between the arrests and brutality that happened to activists and the arrests and brutality that happens everyday in lots of communities, here and internationally. So a part of what we've seen since Seattle, I think, is the growth of these international mobilizations and confrontations in Washington, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Prague. In all these places, people have seen it appropriate to carry the IMC model on, build on it, add to it.

> > *Logging on >> Public access point - Prague S26*

*"Indymedia adds a further aspect to the carnival - a challenge to the boundaries between reporter and activist, documentation and spectacle, expert and amateur, techie and content-producer, cyberspace and real space. Public access points are one way to enforce this challenge. On marches in Belgium and Italy, Indymedia activists used vehicles with sound-systems as reporting hubs and for info distribution. On S26, the direct action day in Prague, the international Indymedia crew tried out the public access point again: "We hooked up to the generator of one of the sound systems in Nam?esti Miru, the main square. We didn't have any materials until that morning, but it*

*came all together as the crowds gathered. A door was used as a table for two computers, hastily painted banners pointed to the public access point in Czech, Spanish, and English, and the whole thing was decorated with glitter hanging off the trees. People came and asked lots of questions, others typed or translated reports. It was not so much info-gathering, more a hub to exchange information - and the community that fed and read it extended far beyond Prague."*

- IMC UK /Logging off >>

## *Indymedia: who are we?*

> > STATEMENT BY IMC ARGENTINA<sup>3</sup>

Permit us to begin by digressing, as we Argentines so enjoy doing. We wish to inform you that from now on, when you speak with Indymedia Argentina, you should know that you are not speaking with Indymedia Argentina.

This sounds strange, but it is so, and it was discovered by DJ Soncho the other day. We believe that we were the 10, 20, 30, 50 or three that met from time to time. We believe that today it was us who wet our hair so we could stand the heat and write these lines. But someone told us we are not these things, and we return to the Zapatista slogan: we are not ourselves - "Nosotros no somos nosotros."

We admit that we are a rock that flew a little over a year ago and got stuck imbedded in the window of a bank. We went for almost a year before discovering it by the old axiom that consciousness runs behind reality and rarely reaches it, but finally DJ spelled it out. And now we know who we are, or, better said, we know to a scientific certainty that we are not ourselves.

And what are we if we are not?

Are we a picket line, barricade, burning tyre, masked face, nightstick, bullets that come flying, dining room where all the hands are all one and the mouths are in the thousands? Are we a factory takeover, posted lookout, machine that makes magic, that reproduces love, that returns to us what is ours? Are we a neighbourhood assembly, a woman that changes the life of her family, eyes that yearn, rebelliousness that speaks out? A while ago, shut up in an office (it wasn't as hot as it is right now) we asked permission of everything to be part of everything, and everything gave us permission to be part of itself.

And we disappeared. And we changed into all of the above things, without even realizing it. And our voice got hoarse and spoke in other voices, and later we heard nothing. Then we discovered that others spoke.

That we were not ourselves and we were a protest, a factory, an assembly.

And so it was, simply, that we stopped being ourselves. So imagine that every time we wanted to have a meeting, and wanted to discuss something, how our voices got mixed with the noises of machines producing, the slogans of piqueteros, or the shouts of the woman who prepares the food for everyone. And, once in a while, the police interrupt, or someone flees simply because we're facing an eviction. And so it is that now with wet hair, to endure the heat of Buenos Aires, it is hard for us to say what we have to say.

**Familiarity with Consensus:**

The consensus process is not always about agreeing to everything. People should be conscious of when they can let go of their concerns and allow the process to move forward, or when they feel it necessary to stand aside or block for principled reasons (e.g. a proposal is in direct conflict with the mission statement set forth by the group). The process should not be used as a means of getting everything that we want as individuals, but to produce a decision that is acceptable to everyone and will allow the group to move forward.

**Formal/Informal Consensus:**

There are times when everyone is in agreement and the formal consensus process is not necessary. Other times, the group is not united and it is necessary to go through the formal consensus process. The choice of when to use the formal process is a judgment call of the facilitator(s). If no one has any questions or concerns, then it is probably not necessary to use the formal process.

**When Consensus Fails**

Occasionally, a group that uses consensus will find itself unable to move forward due to an issue that causes a group to be divided and is unable to reach a consensus. Many groups will often adopt a defacto policy of consensus-minus-one (or two) and the ability to move towards a super majority (2/3) vote in the case of difficult proposals.

**Consensus Minus Two**

Consensus Minus Two is a concept that allows a group to move forward in the case of repeated blocks to proposals. In order for a proposal to be blocked, the block must be supported by a minimum of three (3) people. In other words, the group can move forward with a proposal if only two (2) people choose to block. In a group with at least ten (10) people, this allows 80% of the collective to agree on a given proposal. In groups of less than ten (10) people, Consensus Minus One maybe more appropriate depending upon the desired percentage of agreement.

**Two Thirds Majority**

Another option to dealing with controversial proposals is to fall back to a super majority vote in which two-thirds (2/3) of the group supports a given proposal. In order to move to a two-thirds vote and out of the consensus process, it requires a super majority vote (i.e. a two-thirds [2/3] vote). It may often be the case that while two-thirds may agree on a particular topic, they may not agree on moving out of the consensus process.

*6: Editorial Policies*

## ARTICLE 14

1. The CNIMC is committed to the concept of open publishing, a participatory process of creating news that is transparent to readers where the working parts of journalism are exposed. Open publishing assumes the reader is informed and creative, and may choose to participate as a writer, editor or distributor. Open publishing assumes that a reader can decipher the quality of a story.
2. The CNIMC trusts the audience to publish, critique and distribute information within the network. Open publishing is not new; it is the electronic reinvention of the ancient art of story telling.
3. Open publishing is free software, providing free access to information and a forum for creativity.
4. The editorial process associated with open publishing is transparent and participatory. Readers can critique editorial decisions.
5. The CNIMC recognizes the importance of developing and maintaining a global publishing system that is accessible to the individual, as well as the right of that individual to remain anonymous.

## ARTICLE 15

1. Open Publishing software is based upon the "Active" code found at <http://www.active.org.au/doc>
2. CNIMC sites using Active must have Open Publishing on the main Newswire so that material uploaded to the local IMC site is not pre-filtered or edited. Everything gets published to the site.
3. The Editing and filtering process must happen after content is published to an Active based IMC site, not before. Content may be **hidden** according to the published editorial policy of the local IMC.
4. In order to keep the process as transparent as possible, hidden content will be available for viewing on another page with an explanation as to why the content was removed from the newswire.

5. Under special circumstances presented to the Global SpokesCouncil, the Open Publishing newswire may be one click away from the front page of the website.

#### ARTICLE 16

1. CNIMC websites shall not carry content having racist, sexist, or discriminatory content.
  2. CNIMC websites shall not carry reports endorsing any political party or state, or considered to be commercial.
  3. Reports within the CNIMC cannot be published twice and text published as a comment to a report can not be published again as an independent report.
  4. Reports within the CNIMC can be reproduced and distributed so long as they mention the author and the source.
  5. Copyrighted material can be published within the CNIMC so long as the copyright owner allows publication.
  6. Editorial collectives at the local IMCs do not edit content but may perform small format changes in order to make information compatible with the website's technical standards.
- 

#### Set goals for the meeting:

Facilitators should always be conscious of the difference between discussion and proposals. Discussions can lead to proposals on the spot, but this is often poorly done. For more complicated agenda items, it is much better to have discussion in one meeting and a proposal presented to the group at the following meeting. If a clear proposal has not been put forth to the group, then it can be very difficult to articulate proposals on the spot. If people make the effort to clearly work out proposals in advance, then goals for the meeting are much more clear and can lead to more productive meetings.

#### Review the Agenda:

Reviewing the agenda serves two purposes. First, it gives everyone in the room a chance to know what the agenda is and second, it allows people to make changes to the agenda, and whether or not to prioritize some things over others or to include things that were left out. This also contributes to a more inclusive process that helps make it easier for people to participate.

#### Setting Times for each Topic/Time Keeper:

It is important to set times for discussion that are realistic. Each time we bargain for time it only increases the pressure. It is possible to not discuss everything on the agenda because some things are more important than others. The time keeper is useful for helping people stick to the time limits. The time keeper should announce when they are halfway through an item's time and when they have two minutes left.

#### Co-Facilitation:

It is useful to have more than one facilitator run a meeting. If the facilitator gets stuck during the meeting and is having trouble moving forward, it is often helpful to have someone takeover for a part of the agenda. It is also helpful when a co-facilitator can take care of the stack as people raise their hands to speak. Co-facilitation is also a way for those who are learning the facilitation process to become more comfortable running a meeting on their own.

#### Challenges to building consensus

##### Rushing the process:

It is important to allow for adequate time for a discussion that will help develop a consensus. It takes time to create consensus and discussion is critical to achieve it. A facilitator may feel pressured to rush the process in ways that can be counter-productive to the group.

**Stress Reduction:**

Breaks  
 Calm voice  
 Breathing  
 Silence  
 Humor  
 Games

**The Meeting Process**

Each meeting begins with several members volunteering to take on specific roles for the course of that meeting. Facilitators lead the group through the items on the agenda, the Time Keeper makes sure that discussions on a single agenda item don't drag on too long and the Note Taker, well, takes notes on the meeting and then emails them to the LA - IMC list so that everyone can see what transpired. The Vibes Watcher keeps an eye on the group itself, calling attention to any tensions, frustrations, boredoms, etc. that the group might be feeling.

During the meeting, the Facilitator(s) will call on people to speak, beginning with the person responsible for a particular agenda item. That person will speak, and then anyone else can raise their hand to add to, comment on, or ask questions. The Facilitator will call on these people to speak, in the order that they raised their hands. The queue of people waiting to speak is called "the stack". Each agenda item is assigned a time limit when it is first suggested. If the discussion is over before that time limit is reached, the Facilitator will move onto the next item. If the time limit is reached and there are still people who wish to speak, the group can choose to extend the time limit. This process continues through the last item on the agenda.

**Facilitation****Planning a good agenda:**

- 1st:** *Try to understand what the agenda items are attempting to accomplish in the meeting.*
- 2nd:** *Be conscious of moving the process forward and keeping conversation focused on the topic at hand.*
- 3rd:** *Be conscious of time and make the group agree to give more time to each topic as necessary.*

-----  
 charter OUT-OF-DATE  
 by abc 9:21pm Fri Aug 30 '02      comment#691

*just so noone who lands here gets confused - the above charter was only a \proposition\, and i think it never got much acceptance, which is why you won't see many links to it. in any case, global IMC decision-making procedures are still waiting to be developed.*

*AFAIK, we're still just a loose network of local IMCs which try to coordinate with one another according to principles like those at  
<http://newimc.indymedia.org>*

*browse through  
<http://lists.indymedia.org/>  
 if you want to try to find more up-to-date ideas or "decisions"...*

-----

*clarification  
 by Chris Burnett 3:41am Wed Jun 18 '03      comment#1026  
[chris@indymedia.org](mailto:chris@indymedia.org)*

*The charter proposal was initially discussed at the April 30th, 2001 gathering in San Francisco where approximately 70 IMC representatives participated.*

*This charter proposal was drafted as a starting point for discussion, and was never intended to be a final document. However, the Principles of Unity and the Criteria For Membership were adopted, with adjustments and changes, from the charter above.*

*The POU's and the Criteria for membership are used by the New IMC working group, and sent out to new imc's when they want to join the network.*

Chris

Example of an IMC with a well documented process:

## Los Angeles Independent Media Center

COLLECTIVE DOCS  
July 8, 2002 Los Angeles, Ca

**Contact info:**  
Los Angeles IMC  
2007 Wilshire Blvd. #909  
Los Angeles, Ca 90057  
Phone/Fax: 213 353 0033

Website: <http://la.indymedia.org>  
Contact: [info@la.indymedia.org](mailto:info@la.indymedia.org)

### LA IMC ListServ's:

General	<a href="mailto:imc-la@la.indymedia.org">imc-la@la.indymedia.org</a>
Collective	<a href="mailto:collective@la.indymedia.org">collective@la.indymedia.org</a>

### Working Group Lists:

Webitorial	<a href="mailto:webitorial@la.indymedia.org">webitorial@la.indymedia.org</a>
Tech	<a href="mailto:tech@la.indymedia.org">tech@la.indymedia.org</a>
Finance	<a href="mailto:finance@la.indymedia.org">finance@la.indymedia.org</a>
Audio	<a href="mailto:audio@la.indymedia.org">audio@la.indymedia.org</a>
Video	<a href="mailto:video@la.indymedia.org">video@la.indymedia.org</a>
Print	<a href="mailto:print@la.indymedia.org">print@la.indymedia.org</a>
Photo	<a href="mailto:photo@la.indymedia.org">photo@la.indymedia.org</a>
Volunteer	<a href="mailto:volunteer@la.indymedia.org">volunteer@la.indymedia.org</a>
Network	<a href="mailto:network@la.indymedia.org">network@la.indymedia.org</a>

### Donation Information

LA IMC runs on less than \$1000 per month and any extra money, or equipment, goes a long way. Tax-deductible donations can be made to LA IMC via our fiscal sponsor, Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs (SEE). Donations can come in the form of money or equipment

## Consensus and Facilitation Tips

### Meeting Roles

#### Facilitator(s):

Move group through each stage of consensus process; call on people (usually no more than 3 in a stack); allow only one proposal at a time; repeat proposal frequently to keep people clear about its current wording; suggest meeting tools and help people participate equally

#### Time Keeper:

Keep time; give warnings as each time limit approaches; force group to bargain for more time if it wants to go over time on any agenda item.

#### Note Taker:

Take notes and distribute accordingly; announce decisions made at previous meetings

#### Vibes Watcher:

Point out the emotional undercurrents in the group; intervene if people are getting tired or cranky; suggest meeting tools, breaks, games, etc.

### Tools for Successful Meetings

#### Meeting Process:

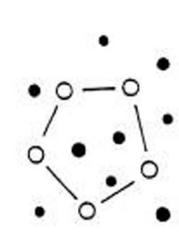
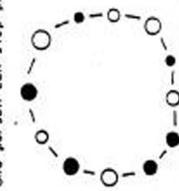
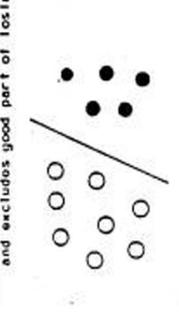
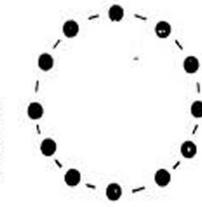
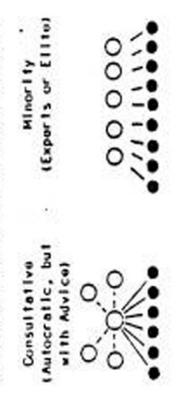
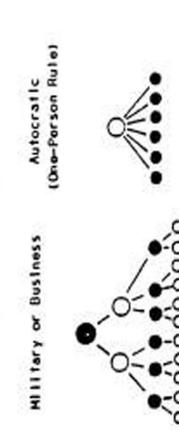
- Written agenda
- Evaluation (at middle and end)
- Visual aids
- Strategy development

#### Conflict Resolution:

- Active listening
- Articulating feelings
- Criticism/self-criticism
- Fishbowls

#### Decision-Making

- Go-arounds
- Straw polls
- Brainstorms
- Small group discussions
- Dyads or triads
- Fishbowls

Decision-making Processes and Organization	
<p><u>No Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Rugged individualism</li> <li>o "We All Trust Each Other"</li> <li>+ Sounds nice</li> <li>+ Free of roles and penalties</li> <li>- Hidden decision-making</li> <li>- Domination (usually by aggressive males)</li> <li>- Only a few talk, even fewer listened to</li> <li>- Most people dissatisfied &amp; leave</li> </ul> 	<p><u>Consensus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o No voting</li> <li>o Reach a decision that all can agree to</li> <li>o Persuasion, no coercion or deals</li> <li>o Bring conflict into open and deal with it, not hidden or repressed</li> <li>o Synthesize all ideas into one</li> <li>+ Minority opinions listened to</li> <li>+ Well thought-out decisions</li> <li>+ Promotes solidarity, all are winners</li> <li>+ Prevents anyone from ruling or being ruled</li> <li>+ Promotes commitment to carry out decisions</li> <li>- Takes more time, long meetings, sometimes frustrating</li> <li>- Requires more patience</li> <li>- Requires ability to seek out conflicts</li> <li>- Requires good listening skills</li> <li>- One person can stop process</li> </ul> 
<p><u>Majority Rule</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Voting</li> <li>+ Most people familiar with</li> <li>+ Works with any size group</li> <li>+ Generally quick</li> <li>- Splits group into winners &amp; losers -- losers leave</li> <li>- Polarizes group causing anger &amp; lack of commitment from losers</li> <li>- Decision has bad part of winning decision and excludes good part of losing decision</li> </ul> 	<p><u>Unanimity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Everyone agrees completely</li> <li>+ Best when possible</li> <li>- Almost impossible to achieve with more than two people</li> </ul> 
<p><u>Parliamentary</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Robert's Rules of Order</li> <li>- Tricky maneuvers</li> <li>- Only a few really know what is happening</li> </ul>	<p><u>Consultative (Autocratic, but with Advice)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bossism</li> <li>- Encourages competition &amp; ass-kissing</li> <li>- Low chance of acceptance of decisions or commitment to carry them out</li> <li>- Not necessarily representative</li> <li>- Many views not heard, not best decision</li> </ul> 
<p><u>Hierarchy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Chain of Command</li> <li>+ Fast -- good for crises, war, etc.</li> <li>+ Explicit structure</li> <li>+ Clear responsibility -- things get done</li> </ul> <p><u>Military or Business</u></p> <p><u>Autocratic (One-Person Rule)</u></p>	<p><u>Minority (Experts or Elite)</u></p> 

(i.e. In-kind donations such as computer or audio equipment). Please send checks payable to "LA IMC/SEE" to:

LA IMC c/o SEE, 20178 Rockport Way, Malibu CA 90265-5340

*Mission Statement*

LA IMC is a collective organization committed to using media production and distribution as a tool for promoting social and economic justice. We intend to promote the proliferation of media in whatever form is necessary in order to challenge the corporate domination of our lives. It is our goal to further the self-determination of people under-represented in media production and content, and to illuminate and analyze local and global issues that impact ecosystems, communities and individuals. We seek to generate alternatives to the biases inherent in the corporate media controlled by profit, and to identify and create positive models for a sustainable and equitable society.

*History of the Los Angeles IMC*

Since November 30, 1999, the day that protests erupted in Seattle against the World Trade Organization and corporate globalization policies, there has been a worldwide growth in the creation of independent media, especially embodied in the spirit of the Independent Media Centers (IMC's) found around the globe. The IMC is a decentralized network of autonomous collectives whose shared vision encompasses a radical critique of corporate/commercial media as well as an organizational structure that is based upon principles of anti-authoritarian organizing, self-management, autonomy, and mutual aid. The IMC follows in the spirit of the last 30 years of independent media making, but is especially linked to the culture of resistance found in the Zapatista struggle and many other movements who found a voice in the modern information age.

The IMC was organized in Los Angeles to create an independent media for and during the Democratic National Convention (DNC) protests. As people took to the streets protesting the policies supported by the Democrats (and Republicans), the LA IMC covered the events by webcasting timely audio and video in the form of political analysis, street protest coverage, interview segments, and in association with Free Speech TV, delivered five nights of satellite coverage.

Since the convention, many of the LA IMC volunteers continued their efforts to build an ongoing Los Angeles Independent Media Center, resulting in the opening of our MacArthur Park offices in September of 2001. The LA IMC has also been instrumental in providing assistance to new media organizations such as the Chiapas, Hawaii, and San Diego

IMC's. LA IMC also contributed to the creation of KillRadio.org, a community based on-line radio station by providing technical and monetary assistance. Kill Radio was born out the LA IMC's audio working group during the DNC.

### *The IMC Network*

The LA IMC is a member of the Independent Media Center Network: a decentralized network of over ninety autonomous IMC's worldwide. There is an IMC on every continent except Antarctica. These IMC's are self-organized by local activists in each locality who took it upon themselves to join the network and have generally agreed to the Principles of Unity and the Criteria for Membership outlined below.

The strength of the IMC Network lies in structure; namely, a network of journalists, activists, and media makers that contribute to a local IMC by providing information on local issues in a global context. The IMC Network is also composed of working groups that help to maintain the infrastructure of the network. For example, the IMC Tech Collective is global working group that maintains the digital infrastructure of the network. The New IMC working group is a global working group that coordinates the process for introducing new IMC's to the network. Other global working groups cover issues ranging from finance and process to communications and grant writing.

It is imperative for local IMC's to participate in the global process in order to help maintain the infrastructure of the network. We are much stronger as a united network in resisting various forms repression than if we try exist as a single entity.

*For more information on the network, please see:*

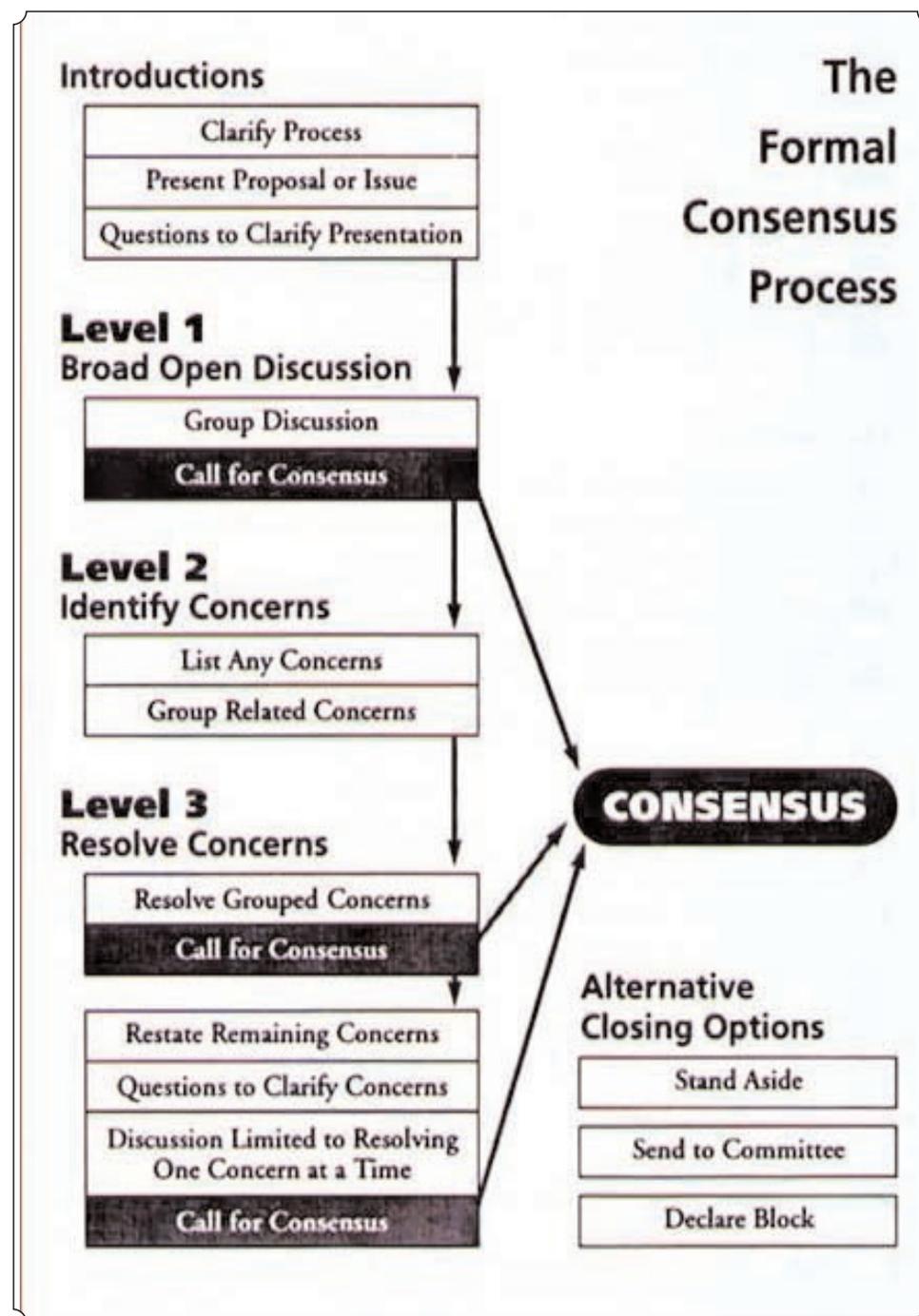
<http://global.indymedia.org> *(global site for internal IMC proposals)*

<http://process.indymedia.org> *(global IMC process)*

<http://lists.indymedia.org> *(global IMC mailing lists)*

<http://www.indymedia.org:8081/fbi/> *(IMC and the FBI)*

[http://global.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=198](http://global.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=198)  
*(first IMC Network Charter proposal – San Francisco, April 2001)*



- ▶ Consensus helps to avoid the adversarial confrontations and the anger and potential for hurt feelings generated in a win/lose style decision-making.
- ▶ It increases group strength by decentralizing authority, and allowing more people in the group to take on leadership roles. This really helps to increase personal empowerment.

### *Conditions needed for Consensus*

- ▶ You need a group that shares values and goals. This emphasizes the importance of your group to come up with a mission statement together.
- ▶ Members must have commitment to the group and it's processes
- ▶ Equal access to power, you can not have any hidden hierarchical structures
- ▶ People must be aware of issues which can lead to inequalities of power. These are things like diversity and gender balance.
- ▶ There must be willingness to acknowledge differences of opinion, and willingness to take the time to work through them.
- ▶ The toughest one is having willingness to let go of ego-identification with one's own proposals and ideas. "Once an idea leaves your mouth it no longer belongs to you."

For a group to use consensus it demands responsibility from the members, which means a commitment to the group and a commitment to yourself. You must be able to listen to others as well as speak on issues about which you have strong feelings.

Consensus decisions take a lot more time than voting. The time you spend is an invaluable investment into the community of your organization. Groups will be much better off if objections and concerns are expressed respected and creatively resolved. The alternatives end up with hasty decisions in which objections are suppressed. This can damage your group and cause unnecessary pain, which in the end can take much more time to repair.

### *IMC Network Mission Statement (draft version)*

The specific purpose of the Independent Media Center Network is to facilitate the use of media production and distribution as a tool for promoting social, environmental and economic justice, and to develop a global decentralized communications network to provide a voice for the voiceless. It is also the purpose of this network to give expression to a wide diversity of social movements in order to assist the distribution of intellectual, scientific, literary, social, artistic, creative, human rights, and cultural expressions not covered by the commercial press.

We seek to expand the human social fabric in a meaningful and tangible way that is empowering for local communities. It is our goal to further the self-determination of people under-represented in media production and content, and to illuminate and analyze local and global issues that impact ecosystems, communities and individuals. We seek to generate alternatives to the biases inherent in the profit driven commercial media, and to identify and create positive models for a sustainable and equitable society. It is our goal to aid in a revolutionary social transformation of society that prioritizes people before profit. We seek to expand and develop our own working relationships in a manner that is non-hierarchical, autonomous, and based upon mutual aid and solidarity.

### *IMC Network Principles Of Unity (adopted by LA IMC):*

**(The IMC Network Principles Of Unity are reproduced on page 33 of this book)**

### *IMC Network Criteria for Membership:*

**(The IMC Network Criteria for Membership are reproduced on page 35 of this book)**

### *How do I join the LA IMC?*

Becoming involved with LA IMC requires commitment on the part of every member. In order for this collective to function, we need your help. There are no management or bosses at LA IMC, primarily because we are tired of having to deal with them in our everyday lives. Those who operate the Collective, the members themselves, must take responsibility for running it. We have setup guidelines that we have all agreed to fulfill. The

spirit of these guidelines is meant to keep the collective running as a functional resource for our community, and while it is not intended to be heavy handed, it is essential that we create a framework for everyone to support each other. We take our mission seriously. It forms the basis for our work together as a collective.

### *LA IMC Guidelines:*

1. Participate in a Consensus Training.
2. Agree with the Mission Statement (if you do not agree with the mission statement of LA IMC, this is probably not the organization for you).
3. Attend two (2) meetings, and one (1) consensus training before participating in the decision-making process.
4. Acknowledge that while the collective supports the fundamental right of free speech, the collective will not tolerate racist, homophobic, or sexist attacks against collective members, or hate speech directed against individuals in the community.
5. Join a working group, and attend at least one general meeting per month.

### *Reasons for Removal*

The collective may decide to remove a member from the collective for the following reasons:

1. Two months worth of meetings have been missed (*without explanation*).
2. Non-adherence to the Principles of Unity.
3. Violations of the LA IMC guidelines.

### *What are my responsibilities once I become a member of the collective?*

#### **You must:**

1. Follow the guidelines, and agree to the Principles of Unity
2. Join and participate in a Working Group
3. Attend one general meeting per month (every other sat. at 5pm)
4. Subscribe to the collective discussion list, so you can be kept up-to-date on issues, and can interact with your fellow IMCistas.
5. Try to help out the station when you can. This includes things like cleaning up after yourself, using the log to leave a record of when there are problems that need fixing, etc.

### *Consensus Decision Making*

#### *What is a collective?*

The LA IMC has an organizational structure that is fairly unique in our

society. No one is in charge, no one has power over anyone else, and in most cases, no decisions are final until everyone is satisfied with the outcome. An organization that lacks such hierarchy is called a collective, and the decision-making process is called consensus. A collective is best described as a power-sharing organizational model.

Members of the collective take turns leading/facilitating the meetings, where the important LA IMC decisions are made. When someone has an idea or a plan, we discuss our thoughts and concerns about the plan, and then make changes and compromises with the plan until it takes a shape that everyone likes, or at least one that everyone can live with. Granted, the process can be time consuming and difficult. Democracy can be difficult, but consensus really is one of the most fair and equitable ways for groups of people to make decisions.

#### *What is consensus?*

Consensus is a decision making process in which a group strives to agree unanimously to all decisions made. The objective is to have the final decision acceptable to everyone involved. The process makes a number of assumptions in order to work effectively. For example, in order for a group to use consensus, members of an organization must share common principles and values. This is often done by the use of a mission statement in combination with clearly articulated principles of unity.

Without common ground, it is unlikely that the consensus process will be an effective decision making process precisely because it assumes that unanimity is possible. Put quite bluntly, it is unlikely that a "left" and "right" organization will find a basis for consensus decision making. However, consensus can be very effective for groups who share a commonality. Such groups can make high quality decisions that are empowering for all the members of the group.

#### *General Assumptions We Make to Allow for Consensus*

- ▶ A group shares clearly articulated principles and values.
- ▶ The way we work for social change is a vital link to the change itself.
- ▶ Each individual is important to the group.
- ▶ Differences of opinion are normal and healthy and can be worked through. They need not result in a divided group.
- ▶ Creative solutions are possible.
- ▶ Every member of the group has a right to be heard.

#### *Why should you use consensus?*

- ▶ When each individual shares in the decision of the group, then all have a greater commitment to implement the group's decisions.
- ▶ Better decisions are made because more ideas are generated and discussed which creates more freedom for creativity.

the U.S. Defense Department has pointed to Indymedia as a potential terror network in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*, edited by John Arquilla. (Rand Corporation, 2002.)

### Bibliography

Arquilla, John, editor, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*, Rand Corporation, 2002.

Beckerman, Gal, 'Edging Away from Anarchy: Inside the Indymedia Collective, Passion vs. Pragmatism', *Columbia Journalism Review*, Issue 5, September and October, 2003.

Ford, Tamara Villarreal and Genevieve Gil. 'Radical Internet Use.' *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*. Ed. John Downing et al. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001.

Intelligence Service Publication, Report # 2000/08, 'Anti-Globalization: A Spreading Phenomenon,' Perspectives, A Canadian Security, August 22, 2000.

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Kidd, Dorothy. 'Talking the Walk: the Media Enclosures and the Communications Commons.' Dissertation. Simon Fraser University. 1998.

Pavis, Theta. 'Modern Day Muckrakers: The rise of the Independent Media Center movement.' *OnLine Journalism Review*, 2002. USC Annenberg.

### Become The Media

#### Notes

1. from *We Are Everywhere*, London/New York 2003, ISBN 1-85984-447-2  
www.WeAreEverywhere.org  
2003:
  2. Thanks to Jeff Perlstein, Miguel Bocanegra, Ana Nogueira, UK IMC collective, and many anonymous others for contributions to this piece, and to the literally thousands of independent media makers around the world who continue documenting a people's history.
  - 3 English translation by Peter Maiden
- Resources: » Global Indymedia:  
<http://www.indymedia.org> (portal to all local sites)  
-- AnarchoBabe - 17 Sep 2003  
----- Revision r1.1 - 17 Sep 2003 - 22:19 GMT - AnarchoBabe

### Proposed Charter for the IMC Network

[http://global.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=198](http://global.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=198)

8:30am Thu Apr 26 '01 (Modified on 3:41am Wed Jun 18 '03) article#198  
chris@regenerationtv.net  
user-contributed rating of Good stuff  
Submitted by Chris Burnett  
chris@regenerationtv.net  
April 24, 2001  
Draft  
Version 0.1  
[www.regenerationtv.com/CNIMC\\_Draft\\_01.pd...](http://www.regenerationtv.com/CNIMC_Draft_01.pd...)

### LA IMC Example of an imc with a well documented process

[http://la.indymedia.org/LA-IMC\\_Docs\\_001.html](http://la.indymedia.org/LA-IMC_Docs_001.html)

### GLOBAL INDYMEDIA OVERVIEW

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/GlobalIndymediaOverview>  
(updated June 7, 2002)  
-- PseudoPunk - 14 Jun 2002  
----- Revision r1.2 - 30 Oct 2002 - 09:11 GMT - BartMarescaux?

### Contacts

<http://www.indymedia.org/contact.php3>  
How can you contact us?  
There is no Indymedia "main office." Many local IMCs have physical spaces and / or a way to contact them, which you should be able to find through each IMC's web site.  
Learn more about  
IMC-Audio at <http://radio.indymedia.org/>  
IMC satellite TV projects at  
<http://satellite.indymedia.org/>  
IMC global print projects at <http://print.indymedia.org/>  
1 <http://www.wto.org/>  
2 <http://seattle.indymedia.org/>  
3 <http://process.indymedia.org/faq.php3>  
----- Revision r1.8 - 25 Nov 2002 - 16:20 GMT - RovinNZ

Section xi

## Working Groups

### What is an working group?

A working group is analogous to a committee, except that the decision making structure of a work group is based upon the consensus model. A working group is ideally composed of 5 to 20 people who work together on projects that maintain the day to day operations of the LA IMC. Working groups form the basis of participation in the LA IMC and are semi-autonomous from the general collective. In other words, working groups make decisions for the general collective unless those decisions violate the mission statement or the Principles of Unity.

Working groups in the LA IMC are organized to make decision-making more efficient and participatory. These groups are designed to distribute lots of decisions that would normally be made by the entire group into smaller, more closely affiliated groups of people. In this way, the entire collective doesn't have to painstakingly cover every single detail of a decision that is often easier to make with a small group of people focused on a specific area of operations. Working group decisions are reported back to the collective at the general meetings or via the mailing lists.

Working group logistics are the responsibility of DPR's, or Designated Persons Responsible, who coordinate meetings, report backs and other details necessary to a working group.

We ask that every member of the LA IMC join a working group and get involved in making decisions on behalf of the larger LA IMC collective. The following are the current working groups of the LA IMC:

1. **Finance** — *Responsible for finances and record keeping, maintaining a good work relationship with SEE, our fiscal sponsor, raising money for rent, etc.*
2. **Tech**
3. **Audio**
4. **Video**
5. **Print**
6. **Photo**
7. **Volunteer**
8. **Webitorial**
9. **Network**

**NewsReal** : Responsible for coordinating IndyMedia Newsreal screenings for the LA Community, finding sources of pre-produced material on the web.

**Volunteer**: Responsible for promoting the collective via events like Sunset junction, doing outreach on the web via the mailing lists, making stickers, flyers, etc.

- Space :** Responsible for keeping the space organized, maintaining a good working relationship with the landlord, etc.
- Video:** Responsible for the organization and coordination of any IMC LA video projects.
- Webitorial :** Responsible for the organization of the website, keeping the website up to date and making sure that the center column, newswire and calendar, etc. are being facilitated.
- Radio:** Responsible for the organization of the radio project, and keeping the Kill Radio slot commitment fulfilled.

## Community Voices

### *DPR - Designated Person Responsible*

DPR's are individuals who have taken responsibility for a residual task of the collective or who have volunteered to coordinate meetings and other items associated with a given working group. Each working group should have one or two DPR's in order to maintain the mailing list, coordinate meetings, and act as a contact for new people. DPR's help to maintain the consistency of a working group by providing up to date reports to the general collective. The role of the DPR is crucial and requires a rather serious commitment on the part of the individual(s) to the larger collective.

We Cannot Live Without Our Lives  
Barbara Deming  
Grossman: 1974  
New York, NY  
Food Not Bombs Publishing



1.800.569.4054  
(c) C.T. Butler, 1987.

This internet version is free. You may copy it to other computers, and you may print it.

If you'd prefer a pretty printed book with a binding that lays flat for use during meetings, or if you'd like to arrange a workshop or consultation, contact C.T. The book costs \$15 US, including postage.

If you need a freelance typographer and page production artist, contact Amy.

C.T. Butler's email: [ctbutler@consensus.net](mailto:ctbutler@consensus.net)

Amy Rothstein's email: [amyr@pondproductions.com](mailto:amyr@pondproductions.com)

### *Make Media Guide*

<http://santacruz.indymedia.org/mod/info/display/mediaguide/index.php>

<http://michiganimc.org/images/newswritingpamphlet.pdf>

Audio/Video Encoding Recommendations

The Thunder Bay Independent Media Center audio and video collectives are developing recommendations for the capture, encoding, and publishing of media on the internet. This is a work in progress. If you would like to contact the Thunder Bay IMC audio or video collective with questions or comments, please send an email to

[imc-thunderbay@lists.indymedia.org](mailto:imc-thunderbay@lists.indymedia.org).

### *IMC Press Collection English*

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/ImcPressCollectionEnglish>

### *Articles on Indymedia*

#### *Indymedia and the new net news*

Meikle, Graham

<http://www.wacc.org.uk/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=238>

First published in Media Development 4/2003

Posted on

<http://www.wacc.org.uk/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=238>

Thursday, November 06 @ 12:13:57 GMT by md editor

### References

Arnison, Matthew. 'Open Publishing Is the Same as Free Software.' 2001. 21 Feb. 2003 <>.

Arnison, Matthew. 'Open Editing: A Crucial Part of Open Publishing.' 2002. 21 Feb. 2003 <>.

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Downing, John. 'Alternative Media and the Boston Tea Party.' Questioning The Media. Eds. John Downing, Ali Mohammadi and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995. 238-52.

McKay, George. 'DiY Culture: Notes towards an Intro.' DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain. Ed. George McKay. London: Verso, 1998. 1-53.

Meikle, Graham. Future Active: Media Activism and the Internet. New York & London: Routledge, and Annandale: Pluto Press, 2002.

Wark, McKenzie. Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994. Originally published: Meikle, Graham. 'Indymedia and The New Net News' M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture < <http://www.media-culture.org.au/0304/02-feature.html> >.

### *Indymedia: Building an international activist internet network*

by DeeDee Halleck.

<http://www.wacc.org.uk/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=240>

Posted on Thursday, November 06 @ 12:30:01 GMT by md editor

First published in Media Development4/2003.

I would like to thank Helen DiMichele and Janet Jenkins. Portions of the paper were printed in 'A Closer Look', the annual field guide of the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, Fall 2002.

### Notes

1. For an interesting discussion of the internet as the 'commons' see: Kidd, Dorothy. 'Talking the Walk: the Media Enclosures and the Communications Commons.' Dissertation. Simon Fraser University. 1998. Kidd has also written specifically about

indymedia and the idea of an information commons: Kidd, Dorothy, "Indymedia.org and Anti-corporate Globalization" In Representing Resistance: Media, Civil Disobedience and the Anti-Globalization Movement. Andy Opel, Ph.D. and Donnaly Pompper, editors, Greenwood Publishing Group.

2. A paper presented at the IAMCR 2002 Conference (International Association of Media and Communication Researchers) address the issue of counter public sphere such as indymedia. John Downey and Natalie Fenton, 'New Social Movements, Counter Public Spheres and Global Modernity', July 2002.

3. The Rand Corporation, which provides reports to

anyone who is interested in what's there.)

Written by jay@tao.ca in May 2000

### *DispatchDesk.Blueprint*

-- RabbleRouser - 14 Aug 2002

----- Revision r1.1 - 14 Aug 2002 - 21:35 GMT - RabbleRouser

### *On Conflict and Consensus*

<http://consensus.hypermart.net/OCAC/>

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Stephanie Judson

Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Peace Committee, Philadelphia

New Society Publishers: 1977

4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143

Beyond Majority Rule

Michael J. Sheeran

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4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143

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American Friends Service Committee

Grossman, NY: 1967

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Berit Lakey

New Society Publishers

4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143

More Power Than We Know

The People's Movement Toward Democracy

Dave Dellinger

Anchor Press/Doubleday: 1976

Garden City, NY

No Bosses Here!

a manual on working

collectively and cooperatively (2nd ed.)

Karen Brandow, Jim McDonnell, and

Vocations for Social Change

Alyson Publications 1981

P.O. Box 2783 Boston, MA 02208

Vocations for Social Change

PO Box 211, Essex Station, Boston, MA 02112

Nonviolence In America

A Documentary History

Staughton Lynd, ed.

Bobbs-Merrill, NY: 1966

Nonviolent Direct Action

A. Paul Hare and Herbert H. Blumberg

Corpus, Washington: 1968

Nonviolent Resistance

Mohandas Ghandi

Schocken: 1961

New York, NY

Peace & Power

Charlene Eldridge Wheeler, Peggy L. Chinn

Buffalo, NY, 1984

People With People

A Compendium of Group Process Theories

John D. Swanson, ed.

Humanitas: 1977

PO Box 196, Jamestown, RI 02835

Resource Manual for a Living Revolution

A Handbook of Skills and Tools for Social Change

Activists

Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon,

Charles Esser, Christopher Moore

New Society Publishers: 1985

4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143

The Politics of Nonviolent Action

Gene Sharp

Porter Sargent: 1973

Boston, MA

War Resisters League Organizer's Manual

Edited by Ed Hedemann

War Resisters League: 1981

339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012

## LA IMC

## Sample Agenda

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Facilitators:**  
generally two or  
more facilitators

**Minutes:**  
someone willing  
to take notes and  
type them up for  
distribution

**Time:**  
someone who will  
rigorously  
announce time  
on each item

**Vibes:**  
one or two  
people who keep  
a check on the  
emotional  
climate

### **Introductions:**

good to do if there are new people

### **Announcements:**

for events, updates, items that do not require a discussion by the entire group, or items that are not intended as a proposal. Announcements are a good place to suggest agenda items for a future meeting, etc.

### **Working Group Report Backs:**

if an working group has recently met to make decisions, or needs the groups input into a particular decision, then this is the best place to give a report. Generally, the reports are short and there is an announcement of the working groups next meeting time and location

### **Agenda:**

Note: It is important to **distinguish between discussion items and items that are put forth as a proposal**. Proposals require a group consensus and can follow a formal or informal consensus process that is at the discretion of the facilitators. Discussion does not require consensus, but is usually intended as a precursor to a future proposal. It is also **critical that time limits and names are attached to each agenda item** so that the group has an idea how long the meeting will take. Long unorganized meetings are usually the downfall of many organizations that wish to be sustainable. Also, **it is very helpful to have proposals printed out on paper** for everyone to read. This makes the information more accessible and easier to understand.

**Old Agenda Items**

(items that have been tabled, or previous discussion items that have been turned into proposals)

1. Last weeks discussion turned into formal proposal to buy X amount of equipment for collective  
(Jane Doe, 10 min.)

2. Discussion from last week regarding collective name  
(John Doe, 15 min.)

**New Agenda Items**

(generally, new items are discussion items, but not always. If people are familiar with the issue, or it is a simple proposal, new agenda items will have both discussion and proposals listed)

3. Report back from benefit show  
(Noam Chomsky, 10 min.)

4. We need a new scanner in the office  
(Emma Goldman, 10 min.)

**Proposal:**

that we spend our last \$150 on a new scanner for the collective.

5. Discussion on the keeping office open schedule  
(Peter Kropotkin, 5 min.)

6. Proposal to set a new Indymedia Newreal space that is accessible. It must be dealt with today because we don't have another space lined up  
(Judy Bari, 10 min.)

7. Choose next week's facilitators  
(responsible for preparing the Agenda)

IMC organizers would create to share with organizers of upcoming indy media centers. This manual will be most effective if it is both brutally honest and brutally detailed. The Seattle IMC manual will also provide the basis for each subsequent media center to keep detailed working records, which we will add to the Independent Media Center Project's files so the next groups can use them too.

Relationships with Other Groups

What was the relationship between the IMC and DAN? We've heard that the media desk of DAN was inside the IMC. How did this work?

What was the relationship between the IMC and other groups in or coming to Seattle?

Did the IMC have special relationships with any existing media outlet (such as the Seattle Weekly)?  
Outreach

What existing media outlets used the IMC services?  
Money

What was the actual budget (vs. proposed)? What equipment / facilities did you actually have? Who provided it?

How did the IMC raise the money? From where?

Are there any experiences of funding with subscriptions? Is this sufficient to keep working?

Most independent media seems to be working without any advertising. Are there any experiences of working with "Ethical Advertising?" Any other ways of funding?

Operations

What was the registration process for journalists and volunteers? Did this work well, or would you do it differently?

How did you lay out the space? Any advice on that?

What aspects were the most chaotic or needed most improvement?

Jobs

Some web sites seem to be working with 100% volunteers, others with some professional people. How many people do we need? Are they mainly technical people, or content people?

What were the roles of people working to set up the IMC? How many people were involved, and at what levels of effort?

What were people's roles during the WTO?

Volunteer Coordination and Intake

Has anybody been working with contributions from nonprofessional media people?

Training

Has anybody experiences in teaching people how to make articles, video, audio for the Internet?

We want to set up some kind of school, a center in which people are able to come by and learn how to make an article, a video, a radio program. Has anybody done this before? Is this the right way?

Quality Control, Editing

What is the level of professionalism you need to have an audience, is there a critical level of professionalism?

What is your policy for deciding what can stay on the web site?

How much editing were you actually able to do?

Equipment

What equipment was most valuable? What things could you have done without?

Has anybody any experience in working with the open source and GNU community for the programming part?

Servers

What kind servers should we use (Linux)? Do we need our own server or is it better to rent space on a commercial server?

Communications

How did they use the 2-way radio? How about cell phones?

Video

How was the video uplinked to the satellite?

Do you know how many places / where the video was cablecast?

How much tape stock (audio/video) did they go through?

We think everybody with a High8 camera should be able to make contributions to our television programs. Has anybody any experience in working with low budget cameras?

. Has anybody any experience with working with video?

What is low cost editing system adapted for working on the internet?

Audio

Were the radio programs broadcast (aside from the web broadcast)? Where?

Why are most people working with video on internet?

Are there any experiences with radio internet?

What about copyrights?

Print

How/where was "Blind Spot" or other printed material produced and distributed?

Uploading, Encoding

Why is everybody working with real? Is Quicktime not that good?

General Technical

Were there any major technical problems? Any advice on this?

General Other

Were there things you wish the IMC had had?

Is there anything you thought of afterward that would have helped?

-- RabbleRouser - 14 Aug 2002

----- Revision r1.2 - 23 Aug 2003 - 17:07 GMT -

LuiS

**Washington DC Blueprint**

Notes 1. (I don't know if I have the DC welcome packet on disk but I do have a copy and can fax it to

Communication: Independent Media Centre and the Politics of Direct Action.' M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University.

Wall, Melissa. (2003). 'Press Conferences or Puppets: NGOS' VS Street Groups' Communication in the Battle of Seattle.' Javnost/The public. 10(1), 1-16.

### *Indymedia's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/FrequentlyAskedQuestionEn>

Translations: es | eu | fr | it | nl | pl | sv Compiled by Indymedia volunteers on many IMC working group lists. Send questions or corrections to [help@indymedia.org](mailto:help@indymedia.org).

added Twiki to "Does Indymedia organize via the Internet" -- IonNec - 18 Aug 2003  
added "Is Al-Muajaha the Baghdad Indymedia Center" -- RabbleRouser - 16 Oct 2003  
updated IMC numbers, spelling, punctuation, etc. -- EarthmanWhyTheFscKantThisHandleSingleNames - 15 Jan 2004  
-- Revision r1.11 - 15 Jan 2004 - 21:51 GMT - EarthmanWhyTheFscKantThisHandleSingleNames

### *New IMC Information*

<http://newimc.indymedia.org/>

1 'YOU' does not refer to an individual person; it means the collective requesting to be a member of the IMC Network.

Información para Nuevos IMC:  
<http://newimc.indymedia.org/?lang=es>  
Information pour les nouveaux CMI:  
<http://newimc.indymedia.org/?lang=fr>  
Informações para um Novo CMI:  
<http://newimc.indymedia.org/?lang=pt>  
New IMC Informatie:  
<http://newimc.indymedia.org/?lang=nl>

### *Principles of Unity*

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/PrinciplesOfUnity>

#### **Notes:**

1 First draft by PseudoPunk - 14 Jun 2002. Revision r1.5 - 27 Nov 2003 by BrianSzymanski  
2 Translations are listed on

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/DocumentsTranslation>  
and they currently include versions in Nl, Fr, It, Jp, Es, Pt, Pl, Eus & Sv.

The web page currently carries the following :

*To All Local IMC's: ....*

*....After June 15, the working group will spend two weeks incorporating*

*the local feedback and will repost the document on June 30, 2000.*

*Final comments from local IMC's should be sent to the above address by July 15. Spokespersons from all IMC's will meet via IRC (and telephone when necessary) for final consensus within the week following (exact date to be announced). The results of that meeting will be posted by the Unity working group by July 25.*

### *Membership Criteria*

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/MembershipCriteria>

1 by PseudoPunk - 14 Jun 2002,  
Revision r1.4 - 23 Oct 2003 - 20:53 GMT - TaiwanIMC  
2 Translations are listed on

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/DocumentsTranslation>  
and  
<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/MembershipCriteriaNl>  
<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/MembershipCriteriaFr>  
<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/MembershipCriteriaEs>  
<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/MembershipCriteriaPt>  
<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/MembershipCriteriaMy>  
<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/MembershipCriteriaTw>

### *Indymedia . Global . BluePrints*

<http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/BluePrintsSeattleBlueprint>

This document is taken from an interactive page that is something of 'work-in-progress'. The page: <http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/SeattleN30Blueprint> int also contains the following passages that have been removed from the main text of the book for clarity  
**Structure of Document and Ideas for Proceeding**  
Right now, to get things started, this document is split into two parts. The first part is the big lessons – what were the things that screwed up most painfully, and what went blessedly well. Add issues to this part, or add coverage of issues that are already listed. The second part is divided into many subject categories. In each category I have put questions that have come in from various sources. Please add to these any answers you have or any other questions you think this doc should answer. Also, if we're missing a category, put it in. If you can put anything into a chronological development that would be probably be useful. Here is a vision of this doc from Jay at DAMN:  
A very detailed, step-by-step, "exactly how we did it from day one to the bitter end" blueprint that Seattle

LA IMC	Member Form	Date
Your Name:		
Email Address:		
Phone 1:		
Phone 2:		
Description of work you would like to do at LA IMC:		
LA IMC Email address (name@la.indymedia.org):		
Available for Staffing (?):		
Preferred LA IMC Working Group:		
Do you have any equipment/resources/skills you could donate to LA IMC?		
Comments:		

## Global Indymedia Overview

This is a general introduction to the inner workings of - or lack thereof - the global Indymedia network. This document is especially intended for people in local IMCs who are curious as to how they can become more a part of international indymedia organizing, though individuals can also use the information within to know how to get involved.

### WHAT IS GLOBAL INDYMEDIA?

That's a good question. In one sense, global Indymedia is a thriving organization composed of hundreds of activists from around the world who communicate regularly via e-mail to coordinate the forward development of an international network of independent media projects and community-based media centers. In other ways, the whole idea of "global Indymedia" is a myth. People who are helping organize "global indymedia" do so primarily via the internet, in virtual space, communicating via e-mail lists and meeting sporadically on the "[irc.indymedia.org](http://irc.indymedia.org)" IRC chat server (type <http://irc.indymedia.org> in your browser or find an IRC program at <http://www.mirc.com>), often in the indymedia channel. Sometimes they get together in the real world to help coordinate event-based IMCs, primarily around anti-globalization events such as those in Seattle for the WTO protests in '99, Washington and Prague for the World Bank/IMF protests in 2000. Indymediacs also gather sometimes at independent media conventions and sometimes gasp! they even visit each other just for fun. In a very real sense, global Indymedia is a loose organizing network of individual activists who support each other and each other's independent media activities. In that way, global Indymedia is a virtual entity, a network, a big ball of energy that no one can quantify.

Over the last two years, individuals who are interested in harnessing the power of Indymedia to produce inspiring, informative media, have come together to work on a number of international Indymedia projects, such as the features in the center column of the <http://www.indymedia.org> web site as well as international print, audio and video productions. You will find information about how to get involved in these projects below.

### WHY SHOULD YOUR LOCAL IMC GET INVOLVED?

Indymedia is nothing if the real-life, local IMCs are not strong. However, the idea that each local IMC is part of a thriving international network helps inspire local IMCs to do good work. In turn, when people in local IMCs become involved with global Indymedia projects they build strong bonds between the local, real-life, community-based Indymedia organizing and the global independent media "movement".

## Notes

### *The Independent Media Center: A new model*

<http://www.wacc.org.uk/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=239>

Posted on Thursday, November 06 @ 12:23:57 GMT  
by md editor

By Dorothy Kidd.

First published in Media Development 4/2003

### Notes

1. See Arnison, 2001 and Meikle, 2002 for a discussion of the importance of shared software Open Publishing. See Dyer-Witheyford, 1999 and Kidd, 2003 for a discussion of the significance of the cooperative ethos of the open source movement.
2. There have been meetings among women in the Network, between regions of the South, and continuing discussions of extending the Network into communities of colour. (Personal interview with Sunny Angulo, San Francisco, 2003, Madison IMC, 2002).
3. In an earlier piece, I likened the IMC to a 'communications commons,' which is resisting the privatization of public airwaves and resources, creating a new commons regime in which unpaid workers share cyber and real territories, labour time and communications technologies and techniques (Kidd, 2003).
4. See Uzelman, Dyer-Witheyford and Kidd for a longer discussion of 'autonomous communications.'

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## HOW DOES YOUR LOCAL IMC SHARE CONTENT WITH GLOBAL INDYMEDIA PROJECTS?

### Text features:

If you have a feature that you think has international relevance, send notice about it (and the proposed text, which would be helpful), to the **www-features@indymedia.org** list. Features for the [www.indy.org](http://www.indy.org) page should have some kind of international relevance and should include links to articles on a local IMC newswire or on the [www.indy.org](http://www.indy.org) newswire.

**Photos:** Post interesting photos from your local IMC that you think have international relevance to the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) newswire. In the future, when the PDF project is active, you may also suggest your best photos to the **imc-print@indymedia.org** list for inclusion.

**Audio:** Please communicate with the **imc-audio@indymedia.org** list about your audio ideas and adventures. You may also find information about Indymedia audio at <http://radio.indymedia.org>.

**Video:** Please communicate with the **imc-video@indymedia.org** list about your video visions and accomplishments. You may also find information about the Indymedia newsREAL, a monthly compilation of Indymedia video being broadcast on Free Speech TV (**<http://www.freespeech.org>**) at **<http://satellite.indymedia.org>**.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

There is some information about how to organize an IMC at **<http://process.indymedia.org>**. While that site is quite out of date, there are a couple "blueprints" from event-based IMCs that give good advice about how to put together local event-based coverage. You can also get to a global Indymedia "to do list" at **<http://todo.indymedia.org>**, and find some imc-tech information at **<http://tech.indymedia.org>**. If you have any general questions about Indymedia or anything related, direct them to **[general@indymedia.org](mailto:general@indymedia.org)**. Remember that the volunteers who answer those requests are quite overtaxed and may take a few days to get back to you.

Of course you may send any questions related to forming a new-imc to "**[new-imc@indymedia.org](mailto:new-imc@indymedia.org)**".

## HOW CAN YOUR LOCAL IMC GET INVOLVED?

Recently global Indymedia has begun to have bimonthly meetings on the "**[irc.indymedia.org](http://irc.indymedia.org)**" IRC server. Each local IMC is strongly encouraged to have a liaison attend the global meetings. These meetings will be a place for liaisons from local IMCs to discuss their local IMC's reaction to issues that effect the global Indymedia network. For information about how to be involved in the meetings, contact

**[imc-communication@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-communication@indymedia.org)**.

On an ongoing basis, other than making an effort to visit people at local IMCs when you travel, and/or trying to get to any regional independent media gatherings or events an IMC is covering, the best way to get involved with global Indymedia organizing is to participate in the global Indy e-mail lists. Some local IMCs are making an effort to have at least one member on each list. Below is a description of the global Indymedia lists. All of the lists would LOVE to have representation and involvement from all local IMCs.

### INDYMEDIA E-MAIL LISTS:

You may sign up for all lists and view all list archives through **<http://lists.indymedia.org>**. Having **someone from your IMC active on the lists marked with an ** is **strongly, strongly suggested** to keep in tune with what's happening throughout the network.

 **[imc-communication@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-communication@indymedia.org)** The purpose of this list is to develop better communication between the local IMCs and to initiate a global Indymedia communication structure. Every IMC is asked to have someone on this list. The person from your IMC on this list will bring issues being discussed throughout the network back into your local meetings so you can discuss them there (and of course pass a summary of your discussion back to the list).

 **[imc-process@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-process@indymedia.org)** People have used imc-process as a place to discuss the organizational structure of Indymedia. It has also been a list for people to raise any and every issue they feel is important to the network. Lately it has also been the list that formally accepts new imcs into the network. Your IMC should have at least one person following conversations here. People are also posting process documents and having process discussions on the web at **<http://global.indymedia.org.au>** and **<http://internal.indymedia.org>**.

 **[imc-finance@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-finance@indymedia.org)** An imc-finance list exists for people working on the financial aspects of the global Indymedia project, including accepting, encouraging and organizing donations, and figuring out how to spend what we raise. So far almost all of the donations to

Indymedia have gone to local IMCs, but some people and foundations have expressed interest in supporting the global Indymedia entity, which in turn would support the local IMCs, especially formation of local IMCs in the Global South. We are asking each IMC to have a member participating on this list.



**Imc-proposals@indymedia.org** This list is primarily for proposals and communication that the imc-commwork working group (described below) decide should go out to every IMC contact. Each local IMC should have someone on this list, and when a proposal/issue appears s/he should raise the issue in his/her local IMC. We are moving toward developing a place for focused discussion of these proposal, and to creating a decision-making process for how to put these discussions into action.

**Imc-tech@indymedia.org** This is the list for people who are working on general indymedia technical issues and programming concerns. There is also a list for people working on the web code that underlies the indymedia sites at webcoders@cat.org.au.

**Imc-print@indymedia.org** A global print team has developed through this list to work on network-wide print projects such as the PDF project (a weekly printable page of IMC news coverage). The project has printed sporadically, and could always use a burst of energy from new participants. IMC-print team members often work on articles together through the print.indymedia.org web site.

**Imc-video@indymedia.org** This is a list for international communication about and coordination of IMC video projects.

**Imc-audio@indymedia.org** This is the place for discussions about IMC audio projects.

**Imc-editorial@indymedia.org** People on imc-editorial have been working on issues such as the editorial policy for the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) news wire, and on broader issues related to how to present the content on the [www.indy.org](http://www.indy.org) site.

**www-features@indymedia.org** This is a list for people who are coordinating the features that appear on the center column of the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) page. Anyone can suggest a feature to this working group by e-mailing the suggestion to the list. If you have a feature idea to suggest, or an upcoming event to have listed in the top right corner of [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org), post to this list.

**Imc-newswire@indymedia.org** This working group focuses on keeping the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) newswire healthy by hiding posts that don't fit into Indymedia editorial policy.

**Imc-presentation@indymedia.org** This group coordinates the way the [www.Indymedia.org](http://www.Indymedia.org) site looks (fonts, type colors, etc.)

**Imc-commwork@indymedia.org** This working group tries to improve network-wide IMC communication, most recently by organizing bi-monthly global IRC meetings.

**Syndication@indymedia.org** Come here for discussions about all aspects of syndicating your center column feature stories to the "features-wire" on the [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) site, as well as other syndication issues.

**Translation@indymedia.org** This list is an organizing group for the Indymedia translation team. People on this list are developing the system by which translation team volunteers will translate things like Indymedia process documents and [www.indy.org](http://www.indy.org) center column features.

**Imc-global@indymedia.org** The purpose of this list isn't exactly clear, but people have been using it as a place to discuss general issues that effect the whole network, such as what to do with donations and what kind of general ideas people have for the future of Indymedia.

**Listwork@indymedia.org** People on this list are working to coordinate the creation and management of the indymedia e-mail lists.

**General-discussion@indymedia.org** This list is for discussion of issues surrounding the variety of questions people send to the [general@indymedia.org](mailto:general@indymedia.org) e-mail box. The people on this list are using the [helpdesk.indymedia.org](http://helpdesk.indymedia.org) system to answer those varied requests.

**New-imc@indymedia.org** The new-imc working group helps welcome aspiring IMCs into the network by answering their questions about Indymedia and by working with them as they advance through the new-imc process (described on <http://newimc.indymedia.org>).