What is a technical “contribution” when doing policy work?

Ben Bederson
Human-Computer Interaction Lab
CS / iSchool
University of Maryland

www.cs.umd.edu/~bederson
@bederson
How does a technologist do technical work?

AND

Make a contribution to policy?
Official Florida Presidential Ballot

Follow the arrow and Punch the appropriate dot.

Bush

Buchanan

Gore

Nader
Activism v. Policy
Imagine a World
Without Free Knowledge

For over a decade, we have spent millions of hours building the largest encyclopedia in human history. Right now, the U.S. Congress is considering legislation that could fatally damage the free and open Internet. For 24 hours, to raise awareness, we are blacking out Wikipedia. Learn more.

Contact your representatives.

Your ZIP code: [ ] Look up

Done? Tell the world!
“Our analysis of the bill with those provisions has revealed significant technical concerns with some of these items...”
Question

How do you balance your technical / HCI work with policy / impact efforts?
Occupy CHI!
Engaging U.S. Policy Makers

Privacy Policies and Privacy Policy

Lorrie Faith Cranor
May 2012
1996

- Joined AT&T Labs as fresh PhD
- Sent to “Internet Privacy Working Group” meeting
  - Corporate policy wonks and consumer privacy advocates
  - Wanted computer-readable language for privacy policies so websites and web browsers could negotiate about privacy
  - Industry hoped to demonstrate they could self-regulate on privacy
- Began work on Platform for Privacy Preferences (P3P)
  - Later I became working group chair
1997 – 2001

• Many trips to DC (and a few to the Europe)
• Served on FTC privacy advisory committee
• Chaired 2000 Computers, Freedom and Privacy Conference
• W3C worked on P3P specification (slow)
  – Focus on interoperability
  – User interface out of scope
• On the side, I worked on UI prototypes
  – Privacy configuration
  – Inform users about website’s privacy policy
2002

- W3C finished P3P spec
- Microsoft built minimal implementation of P3P into IE6
- Not satisfied with IE implementation, I built and evaluated AT&T Privacy Bird
Shane Zachary Cranor

Born May 4, 2001, 7:25 am, 7 pounds, 13 oz., 21 inches

Photo Album | Latest Photos | 2001 Favorite Photos | 2002 Favorite Photos

Shane’s Photo Album

- Shane’s First Year

Shane’s Latest Photos

Shane attended Mom’s Chatham Community Band Concert, but he was so bored he fell asleep. The next day Shane helped Dad change a lightbulb -- climbing a ladder couldn’t be that much.
Shane Cranor's Home Page Privacy Practices

Privacy Policy Check

Shane Cranor's Home Page's privacy policy matches your preferences.

Privacy Policy Summary

This site has the following statements in its policy:

- Site Statement 1

Site Statement 1

Types of Information Collected:

- HTTP protocol information
- Click-stream information

New your information will be used:

- Research and development
- To complete the activity for which the data was provided
- Web site and system administration

Who will use your information:

- This web site and its agents
1-800-Flowers.com, Inc. Privacy Practices

Privacy Policy Check

1-800-Flowers.com, Inc.’s privacy policy does not match your preferences:

- Unless you opt-out, site may share financial information or information about your purchases with other companies (other than those helping the site provide services to you).
- Unless you opt-out, site may share information that personally identifies you with other companies (other than those helping the site provide services to you).

Privacy Policy Summary

This site has the following statements in its policy:

- Site Statement 1 - All users and customers

Site Statement 1 - All users and customers
Types of Information Collected:
Dress, Casual & Athletic Shoes | Zappos.com
Online shoe store selling a variety of brand name men's and women's footwear.
http://www.zappos.com/ - No Cache - Privacy Policy - Similar Pages

Nike.com - Shop the Official Nike Store
Designs, develops, and markets footwear, apparel, equipment, and accessory products. Explore Nike's site to shop online, customize products, and find a local store.
http://www.nike.com/ - No Cache - Privacy Policy - Similar Pages

Onlineshoes.com - official site
Shop online for name brand shoes at Onlineshoes.com. Choose from over 170 brands. Enjoy free shipping and exchanges, plus 110% price guarantee on all shoes.
http://www.onlineshoes.com/ - No Cache - Privacy Policy - Similar Pages

Shoes from Shoebuy.com - Free Shipping & Return Shipping
Sells mens' and womens' shoes, sandals, boots, and sneakers.
http://www.shoebuy.com/ - Cached - Privacy Policy - Similar Pages

Footwear Shopping in the Yahoo! Directory
Browse through footwear shops and official company sites in the Yahoo! Directory. Find retailers selling shoes, boots, and accessories from Nike, adidas, Puma, Timberland, Converse, Reebok, Skechers, and others.
http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Shopping... - Cached - Privacy Policy - Similar Pages

Shoes.com - Womens, Mens, and Children's Shoes
2003

• Left AT&T and joined CMU faculty
• Liberated Privacy Bird and Privacy Finder from AT&T so my students could continue development
• Started CMU Usable Privacy and Security Laboratory
2004 to present

• Much research on privacy and usability
  – P3P user agents
  – Will people pay for privacy?
  – Usable privacy configuration
  – Privacy nutrition labels
  – Privacy nudges
  – Usability of online behavioral ad opt-out tools

• Many trips to DC

• Much press coverage
The Collection and Use of Location Information

Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection
Feb 24, 2010

The Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection and the Subcommittee on Commun
the Internet held a joint hearing titled, "The Collection and Use of Location Information for Commerc
February 24, 2010, in 2141 Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing examined privacy and other
commercial collection, use, and sharing of location-based information.

Witnesses

- Lorrie Cranor, Associate Professor, Computer Science and Engineering and Public Policy, Carn-
- Mike Altschul, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, CTIA - The Wireless Association
- John B. Morris, Jr., General Counsel, Center for Democracy and Technology
- Anne Collier, Co-Director, ConnectSafely.org
- Jerry King, Chief Operating Officer, uLocate Communications, Inc.
- Tony Bernard, Vice President and General Manager, Useful Networks
If you tried to opt out of online tracking, it probably didn't work.
CONSUMER DATA PRIVACY IN A NETWORKED WORLD:
A FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING PRIVACY AND PROMOTING INNOVATION IN THE GLOBAL DIGITAL ECONOMY

JANUARY 2013
So you want to get involved in policy issues?
Get up to speed

• Background reading
  – Government reports, reports from advocacy groups, relevant laws, research papers

• Follow current events
  – Identify relevant mailing lists, blogs, twitter feeds

• Attend policy conferences, public hearings, workshops
Do policy-relevant research

• Find policy questions for which empirical data, design prototypes, etc. would help advance the debate

• Position research you are already doing to show how it answers policy questions

• Start new research projects to answer policy questions
Make your research accessible

• Focus on policy-relevant take-aways

• Write executive summaries, blog posts, one-pagers

• Talk to the press
  – Enlist your institution’s PR folks to help
  – Practice sound bites
Network

- Government relations folks at your institution can help
- Meet other researchers
- Meet staff of government agencies, industry, activists
  - Send them the accessible version of your research, with pointers to the full papers
Get involved in groups

- Standards groups
- Policy groups
- Public task forces
- USACM
Explain issues to policy makers

- Submit public comments
- Let relevant policy makers know you are available as a resource
Plan to be in it for the long haul

• Public policy moves slowly
• But be prepared to respond quickly

OccupyCHI: Engaging US Policy Makers

Whitney Quesenbery
Usability in Civic Life
In 2000...

... we were given a lesson in how important usability is, especially in complex systems
In 2002, the Help America Vote Act created the Election Assistance Commission. I served on a federal advisory committee writing guidelines for voting systems. The EAC also funded research to create tested templates for election materials. In 2008, the Better Ballots report identified problems in usability, design, and plain language that might have affected election outcomes.
But in 2010, voters in New York City were confronted with this ballot: confusing, cluttered, and difficult to use, despite all the good guidance available.
Real, human, and political consequences

Following the 2010 election, the Brennan Center for Justice investigated overvotes (that is, votes when voters make too many choices and their vote does not count). Their estimate is that “approximately 20,000 votes in the governor’s contest were lost due to overvoting statewide.” (Design Deficiencies and Lost Votes)
Design for all voters

The analysis also showed the extent to which our election disproportionately disadvantages those who are already disadvantaged.

Note: The high overvote rate shown in red on this diagram has since been identified as a system error that went uninvestigated for several elections!
Design for all voters

HAVA has brought some real gains in making elections accessible, but it is still too often a shocking afterthought.
Is it possible for design and user experience to change a large, messy, distributed system?
Pro-bono work
Minnesota Absentee Ballot Instructions

Instructions for Absentee Voters

Step 1. You must have a witness to vote by absentee ballot. Your witness may be anyone who is registered to vote in Minnesota including your spouse or another relative, or they may be a notary public or person with the authority to administer oaths.

Step 2. Count the votes according to the instructions on the ballot(s).

Mark your ballot(s) in private. If you have a disability or are otherwise unable to mark the ballot(s), you may ask your witness to assist you. Make sure you do not vote for more candidates than allowed for any office, since this will prevent your vote for that office from being counted. If you make an error when marking your ballot, you may request a new ballot from the election official from whom you received your ballot. If you cannot request a new ballot, completely erase any errors and remark your ballot. Do not put any identifying marks on the ballot.

W hen p artisan primary races are on the ballot: If you are voting in a partisan primary, you may only vote for the candidates of one party on the partisan portion of the ballot. Voting for candidates not within the same party will prevent the entire partisan portion of your primary ballot from being counted.

Step 4. Fold and place all marked ballots in the ballot secrecy envelope and seal the envelope. Do not write on the ballot secrecy envelope.

Step 5. Place the ballot secrecy envelope into the ballot return envelope and seal the envelope.

Step 6. Print your name and address on the back of the ballot return envelope unless a label with your name and address has already been affixed. Sign your name. The name, address, and signature of your witness are required as well.

Step 7. Return your ballot by mail or express service to the address on the ballot return envelope, allowing enough time to be delivered by election day. You may also deliver it in person by 5:00 p.m. on the day before election day or have another person return your ballot by 5:00 p.m. on election day (this person cannot return ballots for more than three voters).

Instructions How to vote by absentee ballot for pre-registered voters

Get ready:

- Ballot
- Tan ballot envelope
- White signature envelope
- Pen with black ink
- Witness: Anyone registered to vote in Minnesota including your spouse or relative, or a notary public, or a person with the authority to administer oaths.

1. Vote!

- Show your witness your blank ballot, then mark your votes in private.
- Follow the instructions on the ballot.
- Do not write your name or ID number anywhere on the ballot.
- Do not vote for more candidates than allowed. If you do, your votes for that office will not count.

2. See other side if you make a mistake on your ballot.

3. Seal your ballot in the tan ballot envelope

- Do not write on this envelope.

4. Put the tan ballot envelope into the white signature envelope

5. Complete the white signature envelope

- If there is no label, print your name and Minnesota address.
- Read and sign the oath and write the date.
- This signature will be compared to the one on your absentee ballot application.
- Ask your witness to print your name and Minnesota address and sign their name. (If your witness is an official, they must print their title instead of an address.
- Notes: Must also affix their stamp.
- Seal the envelope.

6. Return your ballot by election day to the address on the signature envelope

You have three options:
- Send it as election day, using U.S. mail or a package delivery service,
- Deliver it in person by 5:00 p.m. on the day before the election, or
- Ask someone to deliver it by 3:00 p.m. on election day.

This person cannot deliver more than 3 ballots.

See other side for special instructions if you have a disability.

Dana Chisnell, Josie Scott, Caroline Jarett, Dana Botka, Sarah Swierenga, Ginny Redish, David Rosen, Josh Carroll, Suzanne Curie, John Dusek, Gretchen Enger, Christina Syniewski, Whitney Quesenbery, and the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State: Beth Fraser, Andy Lokken, Michele McNulty, Gary Poser
Designing election laws
Sample ballot showing impact of new bill.

Redesign by Oxide Design Co. Usability testing support from Chris Fahey, Jessica Friedman, Whitney Hess, Jonathan Knoll, Michele Marut, Paul Erb, Greg Palmer, Ashley Pearlman, Mary Quant, Aaron Schwartz, Daivee Patel, Rachel Goddard, Angelo Tzelpis, Bil Sawlow, Dana Chisnell, Whitney Quesenbery and the Brennan Center for Justice. Bill Sponsor: Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh
User research
Voters’ understanding of rank choice voting

Flash testing in San Francisco and Oakland intercepted voters for usability sessions. Project organised by Dana Chisnell
Policy by design
Workshops on accessible elections

Workshops organized by the ITIF Accessible Voting Technology Initiative, held at Georgia Tech. Funded by the EAC. 64 total participants included election officials, disability advocates, voting system manufacturers and other designers. http://elections.itiforg
Crowdsourcing innovation
“How might we design an accessible election experience for everyone.”
Synthesis

A design concept for accessible elections
Mark Anywhere

Task
In a business woman in her 50s who has been blind since birth, she employs a "reader" for print materials, but uses a computer independently and prefers that method of accessing information.

Character
Mick is a press secretary in his 40s who has high functioning and each well. But, he is not comfortable in crowded and sensitive to loud noises. He tends to process at tables, and finds it difficult to move to the cash activity.

Scenario
In a hallway with a lot of people that affects his memory and mobility. He can't stand to wait periods. His memory loss means he needs his notes about his choices. He is very concerned about voting privacy.

How might we design an accessible election experience?

1. Receive & mark your ballot
   - Ballots to mark with your own technology. Paper ballots available in many places. Ballots (and AT) also at the polling place.
2. Bring your marked ballot to the polling place
   - Sign-in at the registration table.
3. Scan, verify, and cast your ballot
   - Scanner reads the ballot or QR code, then displays (or voiced) choices for verification. Choices are printed, cast, and counted.

Concept from the AVTI workshops and OpenIDEO challenge
Get involved
Be a democracy superhero.

HT to Dana Chisnell, who says that we have design super powers that can change the world
Whitney Quesenbery
whitney@wqusability.com

**Usability in Civic Life**
http://usabilityinciviclife.org

**Civic Design**
http://civicdesigning.org

**LEO Usability Testing Kit**
http://www.usabilityinciviclife.org/voting/leo-testing-kit/

**Field guides to ensuring voter intent**
http://tinyurl.com/ensuringvoterintent

**Election Assistance Commission**
http://www.eac.gov
The landscape of policy making

• Policy-makers are mostly non-technical.
  – The canonical Congressional staffer is a smart 28 year old, who majored in political science, has had 2 college-level courses in science, hopes to go to law school, and has mild ADD.
  – Staffers with science Ph.D.’s are not plentiful (though not nonexistent).
  – Executive branch decision makers have more technical smarts but less influence

• The relative importance of high-quality scientific input decreases with the status of the policy maker.
  – Science is only ONE input into the high-level decision making process,
    • Not the most important input
    • Sometimes contested (especially in high-stakes matters)
Some advice for engaging with policy makers

• Be able to give your message concisely in quanta of different sizes (30 seconds, 5 minutes, 20 minutes).
  – The 30 second pitch is what you *might* get with a principal. If s/he is interested, you’ll get the chance to say more.
  – The 5 minute pitch is what you will probably get with a staffer.
  – The 20 minute pitch is just in case you get very lucky.

• Have a good illustrative story.
  – Stories work much better than data.
  – Stories grab people’s attention, data put people to sleep.
  – Find a compelling story for your 5 min pitch that makes your point.

• Put yourself in the other person’s shoes.
  – *You* are the one wanting something from the policy maker, not the reverse.
  – Understand what the policy maker’s concerns.
  – Describe how what you are doing can help the policy maker.