

Online Deliberation 2005 / DIAC-2005

Hosted by **The Symbolic Systems Program, the Center for Deliberative Democracy, the Center for the Study of Language and Information, and the Center for Internet and Society at Stanford University**

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Overview of the Conference

"E-democracy may be the 21st century's most seductive idea."

- *Keith Culver, "The Future of E-Democracy: Lessons from Canada", November 2003*

The **Second Conference on Online Deliberation: Design, Research, and Practice / DIAC 2005**, will be held at Stanford University from Friday through Sunday, May 20-22, 2005. This conference is a follow-up to "[Developing and Using Online Tools for Deliberative Democracy](#)", a two-day seminar which was held at Carnegie Mellon University in June, 2003. At the end of the CMU conference, participants agreed to have a follow-up meeting at Stanford. We would like to solidify the conference as a regular event, and to discuss establishing a new society for online deliberation that will bring together researchers, designers, and practitioners whose work bears on this area. This conference is also the latest in a series of conferences on [Directions and Implications of Advanced Computing \(DIAC\)](#), presented in association with the [Public Sphere Project](#) (a CPSR Initiative).

We welcome proposals for presentations and workshops from both within and outside academia. An edited volume of abstracts and selected full papers from the conference is planned for publication afterward through CSLI Publications, a division of the University of Chicago Press.

Topics of interest include:

- Online deliberation and groupware design
- Computer-supported cooperative work
- Uses and implications of the Internet for democratic participation
- E-consultation and E-rulemaking
- Online facilitation and community-building
- Research on virtual communities
- Uses of groupware in organizations
- Online learning communities
- Social decision procedures for online environments
- Analyzing online dialogue
- Email and listservs
- Chatrooms and instant messaging
- Message boards and blogs
- Collaborative editing and wikis
- Online organizing and petitions
- Teleconferencing
- Mobile communication and "smart mobs"
- Smart rooms and iRooms
- Immersive virtual environments

- Multilingual online communities and machine translation
- Secure communication and voting
- Information systems support for deliberation
- Lessons from "offline" deliberation and democracy
- Distributed design
- IP, ownership and "copyleft"
- Digital divides and accessibility
- Free speech and censorship online
- Communication across platforms

All of the above topics bear on whether Internet tools for deliberation can truly deepen democracy -- in groups, communities, and societies --and, if so, how. But work on these topics is spread over many and diverse disciplines: computer science, the cognitive and social sciences, education, law, public policy, philosophy, social work, and information science, just to name a few. It involves scholars, designers, and practitioners from all over the world. This conference, like the one at CMU in 2003, is an attempt to bring these perspectives together so that we can all widen our horizons.

The focus of the conference is not the Internet, society, and politics *generally*, but rather work that is especially related to online deliberation tools and their use. "Deliberation" denotes "thoughtful, careful, or lengthy consideration" by individuals, and "formal discussion and debate" in groups [1]. We are therefore primarily interested in online communication that is reasoned, purposeful, and interactive, but the power and predominance of other influences on political decisions (e.g. mass media, appeals to emotion and authority, and snap judgements) obviously make them relevant to the prospects for deliberative e-democracy. Topics such as technology policy and social networks are of interest, but proposals around such topics for this conference should relate them to online deliberation.

Each of the fields mentioned above has a large and growing literature. Human-computer interaction approaches emanating from computer science tend to emphasize tool design and the use of networked computing by teams of problem solvers [2], while more theoretical work in computer science has focused on designs for secure voting systems [3]. Political communication researchers, on the other hand, tend to study the effects of web access or messaging software on civic engagement or voting among citizens outside of their work environments [4]. Social choice theorists have developed powerful aggregation procedures that are now feasible given the storage and computing capacity of the Internet [5]. Meanwhile, there is a great deal being done and written by practitioners outside of academia that is changing how people work and dialogue together online [6].

Within these broad groupings, many scholars and practitioners have shown great interest in building bridges between design, research, and practice applied to online deliberation [7]. But, although the Deliberative Democracy Consortium has established a working group called the [Online Deliberative Democracy Consortium \(ODDC\)](#) which may be a base on which to build, the relevant communities remain somewhat isolated from each other and lack a single tent under which to gather. The CMU conference in 2003 was a first move in creating such a tent, and we intend the 2005 Conference on Online Deliberation: Design, Research, and Practice, together with the book and possibly the new organization that will emerge from it, to advance this goal further.

Notes:

[1] *Collins English Dictionary* (1979).

[2] See, e.g., the proceedings of the [Computer Supported Cooperative Work \(CSCW\)](#) conferences and the [CRIWG - International Workshop on Groupware](#) series.

[3] See [Jefferson, Rubin, Simons, and Wagner \(2004\) \[pdf\]](#) and [Helger Lipmaa's electronic voting links](#).

[4] See for example the online journals [IT and Society](#) (especially [Price and Capella \(2002\) \[pdf\]](#)) and [Journal of Computer Mediated Communication](#); and [Fishkin \(2004\)](#).

[5] See, e.g., [Casella, Gelman and Palfrey \(2003\)](#) and [Shah \(2003\) \[pdf\]](#).

[6] E.g. [Davis \(2001\)](#); [Rheingold \(2002\)](#); [Allen \(2004\)](#); [Scahill \(2004\)](#); and [Torres, Streufert, and Goldman \(2004\) \[pdf\]](#).

[7] See, e.g., [Schuler \(1996 and 2004\)](#); [Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School \(2000\)](#); the papers in [Shane \(2004\)](#); [Deliberative Democracy Consortium \(2004\)](#); [Davies, O'Connor, Cochran, and Effrat \(2004\) \[pdf\]](#); [Kim \(2004\)](#); the [CommunityLab](#) project; and [Shirky \(2004\)](#).

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