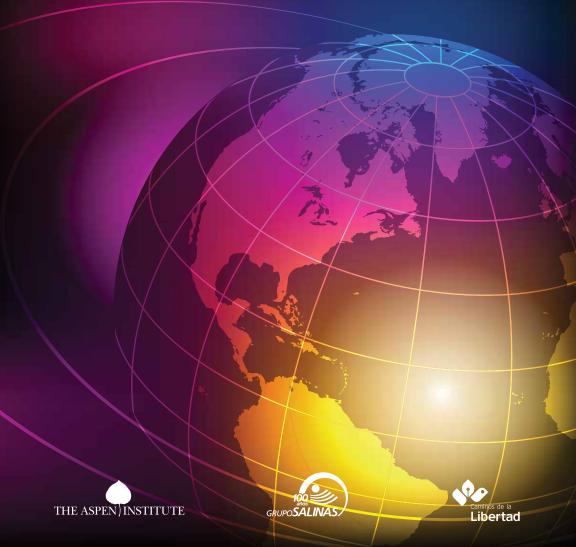# Freedom and Connectivity:
Advancing the Freedom to Communicate in the Americas

A Report of the First Aspen Institute Forum on the Freedom to Communicate

Amy Korzick Garmer, Rapporteur

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Communications and Society Program
Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
Washington, D.C.
2012

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Freedom and Connectivity: Advancing the Freedom to Communicate in the Americas

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Executive Summary

As society moves deeper into the digital age, issues surrounding the freedoms of expression and connectivity are becoming more urgent. Approaches to managing the risks and opportunities of this new era can differ widely from country to country. Some governments are moving to restrict individual rights and access to information while other nations promote or even guarantee provision of the digital tools increasingly necessary for participation in a global society.

Connectivity and the freedom to communicate are important for personal, social, economic and political development. The Internet is quickly becoming a critical gateway for accessing jobs, education, banking, healthcare, government services and civic participation. It is a critical element of business growth and presents new opportunities for local, regional and national economies. It facilitates communication and information sharing among citizens and between citizens and elected officials. This, in turn, can foster more responsive and transparent government institutions. Without the access and skills needed to connect to the Internet, these become lost opportunities that impede progress and further widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots in society.

As communications-related issues rise to the top of local, national and international agendas, policymakers often find themselves caught between competing obligations and values. Questions arise around building the digital future: What is the proper role of government? What are the responsibilities of business, civil society and citizens? What policies and practices are emerging as indicators for future success?

The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, in association with Grupo Salinas and Caminos de la Libertad, convened the first Aspen Institute Forum on the Freedom to Communicate to examine the issues surrounding the freedoms of expression and connectivity in the Western Hemisphere and to develop actionable steps that can enhance these freedoms in the Americas. Forum participants examined what steps nations can take to foster a fully connected society where prosperity and freedom thrive. With a particular focus on Mexico,

they concluded that economic and political success in the 21st century information age will depend upon the country's ability to address critical issues of connectivity, competition and censorship. Sustaining healthy democracies throughout the hemisphere will depend upon each country taking concrete steps to protect the free flow of ideas and foster environments in which freedom, communication and creativity can flourish.

In Mexico and throughout the Americas, there are troubling disparities in connectivity. These disparities threaten to undermine the ability of nations to advance development and other goals unless those nations directly address the gaps and other barriers that impede progress and freedom. These include lack of infrastructure, lack of political consensus around a comprehensive and coordinated agenda, insufficient telecommunications investment, lack of competition in markets, high costs of service, legal issues, social and cultural barriers such as digital literacy and other Internet adoption issues, and censorship.

Forum participants offered a series of recommendations for ways in which Mexico's government can foster connectivity, strengthen journalism and cultivate an environment for the free flow of information and ideas that honors the values of liberty and democracy. They also said there are great opportunities in U.S.-Mexican partnerships that could be advanced through the Internet. The forum's recommendations have five main goals:

1. **Develop a national consensus and plan for the digital society.** Mexico's elected leaders need to make telecommunications one of the top items in the national agenda. In partnership with a broad group of societal stakeholders, they should create a national campaign to drive investment and engagement in the digital society.

2. **Develop the digital infrastructure.** Mexican leaders first need to improve markets by promoting competition and rejecting discrimination. Where markets fail, government has a role to subsidize investment to spur the development of broadband infrastructure. Targeted investments in areas such as education can help, but government should first do no harm.

3. **Develop a culture of innovation.** Mexico needs to develop a culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism in which creativity and bold ideas are encouraged and rewarded. Research institutions like the Tecnológico de Monterrey can play an important role in helping to develop the human talent and models of social entrepreneurship that will foster a culture of innovation in Mexico.

4. **Develop an ecosystem for investment in innovation.** To complement a culture of innovation, Mexico needs to develop an ecosystem for access to venture capital funding that feeds innovation. Wealthy corporations and citizens in Mexico can play a leadership role to make this happen.

5. **Develop an enabling environment for freedom and connectivity.** Mexico needs to develop legal structures for freedom. This means institutional frameworks across all levels of government that more fully support the freedom to communicate. All stakeholders, but particularly leaders in government, business and civil society, must adopt new ways of thinking and advance policies and actions that are consistent with a more democratized and digital world.

In this regard, participants made several recommendations. First, Mexico must preserve a free press and protect the freedom to communicate. Government should not censor infrastructure access or content. The same proposal was directed at businesses that seek to protect property rights and other economic interests through overly broad and restrictive legislation and policies. Authors' rights should be guaranteed in ways that do not diminish the fundamental freedom to communicate.

Second, Mexico's government should reevaluate the electoral reform law of 2007 to lessen its damaging impact on political discourse and free expression in Mexico.

Third, the Mexican government should complete enactment of the constitutional amendment giving the federal government the authority to investigate violent crimes against journalists and provide adequate funding for enforcement. The government should seek additional ways

to help protect the security of journalists in Mexico. The media can help themselves by adopting voluntary internal codes of conduct that minimize the sensationalism of reporting on violence in Mexico without compromising the principles of independence and good journalism.

Fourth, Mexico and the United States should initiate an ongoing dialogue on Internet governance issues in the same manner that the two countries have been meeting for years under the auspices of the U.S.-Mexico High Level Consultative Commission on Telecommunications. The purpose would be to address common concerns and, where feasible, align decision-making in ways that benefit both countries.

Finally, the People of Mexico, with or without assistance from the government, could help to shape the nation's culture in the direction of unification by doing the following:

- Do not allow impediments to the free flow of information.

- Do not allow intimidation by the drug cartels. In Colombia, for example, people took it upon themselves to rise up against the drug cartels.

- Do not allow intimidation by online bullies. Citizens can be a strong voice against intimidation and bullying if they call it out and deal with it when they see it.

- Do not allow intimidation by government. Mexico's citizens have an important role to play in asserting their rights. It is government's duty to protect these rights.

FREEDOM AND CONNECTIVITY: ADVANCING THE FREEDOM TO COMMUNICATE IN THE AMERICAS

Amy Korzick Garmer

Freedom and Connectivity: Advancing the Freedom to Communicate in the Americas

Amy Korzick Garmer

Today we find ourselves in a revolutionary new era, the digital information age. The tools of this era are disrupting established business, social and political orders. They provide profoundly new ways for people to connect to one another and to create, manage, distribute and control information and knowledge. As society moves deeper into the digital age, issues surrounding the freedoms of expression and connectivity are becoming more urgent.

Approaches to managing the risks and opportunities of this new era can differ widely from country to country. Some governments restrict individual rights and access to information while other nations promote or even guarantee provision of the digital tools necessary to participate in a global society. In the world of business, established companies compete mightily against one another and new entrants to preserve business models, create new ones and gain market dominance. In the realm of civil society, the opportunities for citizens to engage in the social, educational, political and cultural life of the nation are moving increasingly online. Without the access and skills needed to connect to the Internet, these become lost opportunities that impede progress and further widen the gaps between the haves and the have-nots in society.

As communications issues rise to the top of local, national and international agendas, policymakers often find themselves caught between competing obligations. On the one hand is the desire that governments not interfere with the proper functioning of markets to pick winners and losers. On the other is the duty of governments to advance policies in the public interest and assume limited roles to lessen the impact of market failure, ensure security and opportunity for their citizens and mitigate other harms. In building a digital society, what is the proper

role of government? What are the responsibilities of business, civil society and citizens? What policies and practices are emerging as indicators for future success?

The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, in association with Grupo Salinas and Caminos de la Libertad, convened the first Aspen Institute Forum on the Freedom to Communicate to address these questions, examine the issues surrounding the freedoms of expression and connectivity in the Americas, and develop actionable steps that can enhance these freedoms throughout the region. The Forum featured 16 distinguished journalists, business leaders, government leaders and academic experts from the United States, Mexico and other Latin American countries who met in Mexico City on February 22, 2012. A complete list of forum speakers appears at the end of this report.

Sergio Sarmiento, a highly-regarded journalist, writer and media personality at Mexico's TV Azteca (a Grupo Salinas owned company) and Charlie Firestone, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, co-moderated the forum. The forum included sessions on freedom and connectedness, journalism in the new media ecosystem, policy and regulatory issues to be considered by Mexico's new administration, and the enabling environment needed to strengthen the freedom to communicate. Aspen Institute President and CEO Walter Isaacson and Grupo Salinas Founder and Chairman Ricardo B. Salinas delivered keynote remarks during a private dinner on the eve of the forum.

The Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (also known as Tecnológico de Monterrey) in Mexico City provided the venue and an audience of several hundred students, faculty and other interested persons. Consequently, much of the conversation focused on the state of broadband connectivity, telecommunications competition and censorship in Mexico. An international audience participated online, viewing the live video stream on the web and interacting with the forum on Twitter.

Forum participants examined what steps Mexico can take to foster a fully connected society where prosperity and freedom thrive. They

concluded the following: Mexico's economic and political success in the 21st century information age will depend upon the country's ability to address critical issues of connectivity, censorship and competition. Sustaining healthy democracies throughout Latin America and the entire hemisphere will depend upon each country taking concrete steps to protect the free flow of ideas and foster environments in which freedom, communication and creativity can flourish.

This forum report details the conclusions and recommendations that emerged from the conversations. These proposals reflect a range of perspectives and ideas for navigating into territories for which detailed maps do not yet exist. As the forum recommendations indicate, there is a growing body of research and insights on best practices from which to chart paths going forward. While participants found agreement in many areas, the purpose of the forum was not to achieve consensus. Rather, the forum's goal was to raise issues and suggest wise solutions to many of the barriers that impede freedom and connectivity throughout the hemisphere. Accordingly, this report is not a consensus document. It is a summary of ideas written from the perspective of an informed observer at the forum. Unless specifically attributed to a particular person, none of the comments or ideas contained in this report should be taken as embodying the views or carrying the endorsement of any individual panelist at the forum or of Grupo Salinas.

The Freedom to Communicate:
An Essential Value in the 21st Century

> *Does the freedom to communicate—do the free press, free speech and the free flow of ideas—lead inexorably to democracy and more freedom?*

Walter Isaacson, President and CEO of the Aspen Institute, posed this question in his keynote remarks to begin the forum, calling it "one of the great questions of our era, or maybe of all eras." It is an especially timely question given the current state of world affairs. Take, for example, the cases of China and the Middle East in the early months of 2012. China has grown to have the largest Internet-using population in the world, with more than 500 million Internet users, but has

no democracy and strictly limits the freedoms enjoyed by its people. In Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere in the Middle East, mobile phones, computers, blogs and social networks played a significant role in connecting pro-democracy advocates to one another and the world during the Arab Spring events of 2011, but progress toward greater democracy and freedom in the region has since slowed or stalled. It is natural to question at pivotal times such as these whether values that societies have understood as enduring and universal are, in fact, still relevant and essential.

There is ample historical evidence to suggest that the answer to this question is yes; that the capacity of a society to progress socially, economically, politically and culturally is tightly linked to the freedom and opportunities that its people have to connect with one another and the rest of the world. Communication is basic to the human condition. It is fundamental to the ways in which people conduct their lives, organize their communities and structure their systems of commerce, education and governance. As information exchange and trusted connections between people have multiplied, democracy and commerce have flourished.

"I firmly believe that the freedom to communicate and the free flow of ideas, gradually but inexorably, bends the arc of history towards democracy and that will be the story of the 21st century," declared Isaacson. Reflecting on his own question, he continued:

> When I asked [Apple founder] Steve Jobs the key to his success, he always said, 'I question authority. I think different. I stand at the intersection of creativity and the new technologies, because that's what allows us to come up with new ideas and to rebel against the stale old ones.' Imagination and innovative thinking depend, as he and one of my other subjects, Albert Einstein, put it, on the free flow of ideas. You cannot think creatively, you cannot innovate well, you cannot have an economy that is based on the information age technologies unless you're comfortable with the freedom to communicate and the free flow of ideas.

Héctor Schamis, Adjunct Professor in Latin American Studies at Georgetown University and the Director of the Latin American Democracy Monitor, considered the relative strengths of freedom and

democracy in Latin America today. He said that democracy entails more than a method for choosing government. "Democracy is also a series of rules that determine how to use state power once [a government] has been elected," he noted. "One of the things we have seen is that the first definition of democracy hasn't been much of a problem in the region as a whole. Voting is for the most part free, fair and clean. But when we look at the second dimension, the series of rules that determine how the government is supposed to use state power, we see lots of problems."

> ## A decline in the enforcement of citizenship rights [is] a troubling deficit in democracy across the region.

Schamis described a decline in the enforcement of citizenship rights as a troubling deficit in democracy across the region. Past violations of human rights, such as torture and forced disappearances, are no longer accepted across the region. There is, however, a new form of violation of human rights according to Schamis: "the curtailment of individual freedoms, civil liberties and in particular, freedom of expression and freedom of the press."

In Mexico, one of the most dangerous countries for journalism work in the world, journalists face a dismal reality in their day-to-day work largely due to the violence and intimidation of the drug cartels. Schamis noted that Mexico is not the only country facing problems. He listed others: "Ecuador, where the president files law suits to press charges against media organizations; Venezuela, where the president grants, revokes or suspends licenses; Argentina, where the government passed legislation to take over the production and importation of newsprint. That has implied a dramatic decline in the quality of democracy in the region as a whole," said Schamis.

Healthy societies require an environment that includes the free exchange of ideas. It is one of the essential elements for progress. Ricardo Salinas, Founder and Chairman of Grupo Salinas, shared

Isaacson's assessment that the freedom to communicate bends the arc of history toward greater democracy. "History has demonstrated that efforts to censor and control communication will not succeed. Ideas have consequences that can transform society," said Salinas. With greater freedom of communication and connectivity, the prospect for transforming society for the benefit of all, while not ensured, is greatly strengthened.

> **"History has demonstrated that efforts to censor and control communication will not succeed. Ideas have consequences that can transform society."** *- Ricardo Salinas*

The Global Village and Technologies of Freedom

At the start of the forum, co-moderator Sergio Sarmiento reminded participants of the predictions of Marshall McLuhan, the mid-twentieth century Canadian social theorist and critic who wrote widely on the subjects of media, technology and culture. Recapping McLuhan's prediction, Sarmiento spoke of a rise in a global village, a village in which all human beings would be able to know, at any given point in time, what the rest of humanity was doing. We would be able to have very narrow relationships with the rest of the world. "On February 22 of 2012, the fact is that this global village is already here with us."

This global village is the product of an increasingly networked world, but it does not come to us solely from television and radio, as McLuhan thought it would. Instead, Sarmiento observed, it comes through the many digital devices and platforms that enable people to connect directly to information networks, knowledge databases, social networks and one another: television, radio, movies, satellite, computers, music players, cellular telephones and other increasingly personalized and portable technologies. Another twentieth century social scientist, Ithiel de Sola Pool of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, called these digitally networked, converging technologies the "technologies of freedom."

As digital technologies and global networks continue to spread, it is clear that the relationships, environments and rules surrounding the global village are shifting. "We understand that we have moved from a center-out communication system to a many-to-many communication system," said Charlie Firestone of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program. "People can create content and reach many other people in the world. The problem is, not everyone is connected."

The Importance of Connectivity

In all aspects of life—personal, social, economic, political—the functions of an open society depend on information and exchange. The reasons for connecting to the Internet and its vast information and communication resources are as varied as the people who want to connect.

Personal. Individuals cultivate connections to create fulfilling personal, family and social lives. The Internet is quickly becoming a critical gateway for accessing jobs, education, banking, healthcare, government services and civic participation. Connectivity enables people to maintain stronger personal and family relationships and to share life experiences even if loved ones live far away.

Social. Communities promote connectivity among their members to build the social capital needed for bridging differences and solving problems. Connectivity enables communities to tap into the knowledge and talents of members and encourage pro-social activities that benefit the entire community.

Economic. Connectivity is a critical element of business growth and presents new opportunities for local, regional and national economies. A study by the international management consulting firm McKinsey and Associates found that the Internet accounted for 3.4 percent of GDP in the 13 countries studied and 21 percent of GDP growth in the last five years in mature countries. The study also found that 2.6 jobs were created for every one job lost as a result of Internet-related factors.[1] The availability of timely, high quality information can level the playing field in asymmetrical markets, leading to more competitive markets, as research from the Inter-American Development Bank shows.

Digital Connections Promote Economic Development

Research evaluations by the Inter-American Development Bank have shown that improving access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) can help to reduce asymmetries in markets in ways that benefit rural farmers, their families and communities.[2]

In Honduras, one study has shown that farmers with access to market and pricing information through SMS text messaging were better able to negotiate prices for their produce and gain higher returns. Farmers with access to SMS reporting information received on average 12.5 percent higher returns for their crops due to better market information.

In Peru, where a government-funded initiative provided public satellite pay telephones in rural villages, the IADB found a 16 percent increase in price received per kilogram of agricultural production with the introduction of technology allowing for faster and better connectivity to markets. At the same time, agricultural costs fell by 24 percent, for a net increase in agricultural productivity of 20 percent. And, the study found an additional benefit: once family incomes rose, child labor declined by 32 percent and child agricultural labor declined by more than 26 percent, leaving more time for children to be in school.

Political. Connectivity encourages broader participation in democratic governance and political life. It facilitates communication and information sharing among citizens and between citizens and elected officials. This greater exchange can foster more responsive and transparent government institutions. Citizens, government officials, civil society organizations and political parties are leveraging the power and efficiency of networks to gather and report information, organize, vote and promote more direct participation in decision-making.[3] They also are building ad hoc networks to respond to the needs of specific populations, such as emergency preparedness and disaster response. Communications networks, mobile phones and Twitter played a critical role in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Responders

relied on these technologies to aid search and recovery, identify needs and target resources, reunite families, raise money and provide information on services and aid assistance.

The value of connectivity goes beyond merely linking to useful, interesting or entertaining information. The deeper value of connectivity is in the knowledge that lies beyond the information, how it empowers individuals and provides opportunities for free expression and self-determination. In the digital information age, being connected is a prerequisite for having access to knowledge and power. Sergio Sarmiento explained:

> It is important that we keep in mind that there is also something behind the information…something important there known as knowledge. We have to understand that if we take advantage of this information, not only to absorb all the information we receive from the outside, but also to make decisions and try to create a better world, then knowledge will make us free. We have to transform this knowledge we get from the information that we are receiving. There cannot be knowledge if we do not have freedom. There cannot be knowledge if a businessperson or a politician decides what we should think. We cannot have knowledge if we are not the ones that make our own decisions for good or ill.

Enrique Tamés, Dean of the School of Humanities at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, expanded on this idea. He considered the rise of a generation of digital natives—young people who have grown up with digital information and communication technologies—to be a pivotal development in defining the future. In particular, his comments suggest the need for a set of digital literacy skills that are part of the condition of being connected. Speaking directly to the large number of students in the audience, Tamés said:

> Nowadays, we are forming and creating the paradigm of the digital society, where you are experts in handling, manipulating, transforming, and moving the information. You are not satisfied with locating it. You are not satisfied with understanding it. At this moment, in the digital society, it is fundamental that you know how to handle, manipulate and transform the information that you have.

Andrés Roemer, Executive Director of Poder Cívico, described how individuals become empowered through the exponential scope of connections made possible by the Internet. This power is at the core of several of the most well-known principles used to describe the growth and value of the Internet (Moore's Law, Metcalfe's Law, Reed's Law, Beckstrom's law and others).

For some institutions, Roemer cautioned, the exponential power of connectivity presents a threat to the status quo. "Being connected implies power. It implies that I am connected with you, you with her…it is the opposite of how we are used to thinking [linearly]," said Roemer. "We do not realize this is exponential…thinking exponential is power. And the power, when it's not held on one hand only, when it belongs to the citizens, and anybody can express it, it begets threats. Here is where the important word of freedom comes into play, because you can threaten the status quo, because you can generate and empower the citizen."

Debating Internet Rights: Is There a Right to Connect?

In January 2010, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton delivered a major foreign policy address in which she proposed that there is a fundamental right to connect to the Internet. She posited that the right to connect is a natural extension of other universally recognized rights and freedoms, including those in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. "The freedom to connect is like the freedom of assembly, only in cyberspace. It allows individuals to get online, come together, and hopefully cooperate," said Clinton.

A year later, in the immediate aftermath of the pro-democracy revolution in Egypt, Secretary Clinton reinforced her call "to protect human rights online as we protect them offline." She said, "The rights of individuals to express their views freely, petition their leaders, worship according to their beliefs—these rights are universal, whether they are exercised in a public square or on an individual blog." In that speech Secretary Clinton identified major challenges to protecting and defending a free and open Internet. These challenges include achieving ends that at times seem contradictory: protecting liberty *and* security, transparency *and* confidentiality, free expression *and* a culture of tolerance and civility.

Alec Ross, the Senior Advisor for Innovation to Secretary Clinton, was a featured speaker on the forum's first panel, which addressed the topic of freedom and connectivity. He stated that there ought to be no distinction made between online and off-line environments when it comes to protecting the freedoms of expression, the press, association and assembly. Ross explained:

> If you believe in universal rights in the year 2012, if you believe in the freedom of expression, if you believe in a free press, if you believe in the freedom of association and assembly, then you have to believe in all these things as exercised on the Internet. Expression increasingly takes place in the Internet. The press increasingly publishes on the Internet. Organizing doesn't happen as much in basements in the middle of the night, secretly, it takes place on the Internet. These things take place on the Internet.

The question of Internet rights has been the subject of vigorous debate over the past decade. International organizations like the United Nations and the World Summit on the Information Society have taken up this question.[4] The European Union has required that member countries guarantee a minimum level of connectivity to telecommunications networks and services. National courts and parliaments have declared access to the Internet to be a right in Costa Rica, Estonia, Finland, Greece, France and Spain.[5] In some cases, however, the "right" is a right of connection to the basic telecommunications infrastructure at certain minimums of cost and speed of access, and not a universal right to the power of broadband connectivity and content. (One exception is Finland, where in-home broadband Internet at 1 MB/s download speeds became a legal right on July 1, 2010, with plans to increase the guaranteed speed to 100 MB/s by 2015.) Reed Hundt, who served as Chairman of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission from 1993 to 1997 and is currently the CEO of the Coalition for Green Capital, emphasized that the freedom to connect is much more robust than the ability to log onto the Internet somewhere at a particular price. He said the freedom to connect must include these four elements:

- Connecting must be affordable; it cannot be only for the rich or only at some privileged institution where it is possible.

- When on the Internet, you should have access to all of the world's information.

- You should be able to speak to anyone in the world, facing only the challenge of getting them to pay attention to you.

- You should be able to associate with anyone in the world. You should be able to decide to be part of the 700 million person group that is Facebook, or be a participant in one of the very tiny groups.

The freedom to connect is much more robust than the ability to log onto the Internet somewhere at a particular price. – *Reed Hundt*

Hundt endorsed the goal of enabling the entire world's population to connect to the Internet, but cautioned that a willingness to accept Internet access as a human or civil right raises certain troubling implications. Chief among these is the heavy hand of government regulation and censorship.

Hundt cited a *New York Times* editorial by Vint Cerf, recognized as one of the technical inventors of the Internet, in which Cerf argued against the notion of Internet access as a human right. "Technology is an enabler of rights," Cerf wrote, "not a right itself. There is a high bar for something to be considered a human right. Loosely put, it must be among the things we as humans need in order to lead healthy, meaningful lives, like freedom from torture or freedom of conscience."[6] Cerf

went on to assert that instead of putting individual technologies into the same "exalted category" as universally recognized human rights, leaders in technology and civil society ought to identify, promote and defend the outcomes that society is trying to ensure. "These include critical freedoms like freedom of speech and freedom of access to information—and those are not necessarily bound to any particular technology at any particular time," Cerf wrote.

Hundt went further with his warning, saying that if government assumes the responsibility to ensure a universal right to connect, then censorship and regulation are likely to follow. "Government never subsidizes anything without regulating," he told forum participants. "Almost certainly, what will come along with the warm embrace of concepts like universal service is the dark hand of censorship."

Forum participants concluded that sustaining healthy democracies throughout the hemisphere will depend upon each country taking concrete steps to protect the free flow of ideas and foster environments in which freedom, communication and creativity can flourish. The next section briefly looks at the regional trends in Latin America and Mexico more specifically. Following sections identify some of the barriers to connectivity and the freedom to communicate, and recommend steps that governments, businesses, civil society organizations and citizens can take to advance these essential freedoms.

The Digital Landscape in Latin America

By the end of 2011, there were nearly 231 million Internet users across Latin America, with a penetration rate of 39.9 percent of the total population of the region.[7] The percentage of Latin Americans using the Internet is slightly above the 32.7 percent global penetration rate. Brazil and Mexico account for 52 percent of all people accessing the Internet in Latin America. Table 1 shows the number of Internet users and penetration rate by country.

Table 1. Internet Users in Latin America, December 2011

Country	Internet users, December 2011	Penetration Rate (as percentage of total population)
Argentina	28,000,000	67.0 percent
Bolivia	1,985,970	19.6 percent
Brazil	79,245,740	39.0 percent
Chile	10,000,000	59.2 percent
Colombia	25,000,000	55.9 percent
Costa Rica	2,000,000	43.7 percent
Cuba	1,702,206	15.4 percent
Dominican Republic	4,120,801	41.4 percent
Ecuador	4,075,500	27.2 percent
El Salvador	1,257,380	20.7 percent
Guatemala	2,280,000	16.5 percent
Honduras	1,067,560	13.1 percent
Mexico	42,000,000	36.9 percent
Nicaragua	663,500	11.7 percent
Panama	1,503,441	43.4 percent
Paraguay	1,523,273	23.6 percent
Peru	9,973,244	34.1 percent
Puerto Rico	1,698,301	42.6 percent
Uruguay	1,855,000	56.1 percent
Venezuela	10,976,342	39.7 percent
Regional Total	**230,928,258**	**39.9 percent**

Source: Internet World Stats, Latin American Internet Usage Statistics, updated for December 2011, www.internetworldstats.com/stats10.htm. Copyright © 2000 - 2012, Miniwatts Marketing Group. All rights reserved.

Social networking is a big part of the online experience in Latin America. According to a study by market research firm comScore, 114.5 million people in Latin America visited a social networking site during June 2011.[8] This total represented 96.0 percent of the entire online population in the region. "Half of the top 10 worldwide markets by time spent on social networking sites are in Latin America with Argentina leading the region at 10 hours per month in June 2011," reported comScore.

The report found that Facebook, Windows Live Profile, Orkut and Twitter were the four most frequently visited social networks in Latin America. Video sites are popular in Mexico where four out of five online users watched an online video on sites such as YouTube and

Top 10 Markets for Facebook.com by % Reach of Visitors

Argentina Visitors Age 15+ Home/Work Location

Market	% Reach
Philippines	93.5%
Turkey	92.5%
Chile	90.9%
Argentina	89.9%
Columbia	89.5%
Peru	89.3%
Israel	88.6%
Malaysia	88.2%
Venezuela	86.9%
Indonesia	86.7%

Source: comScore Media Metrix, June 2011, graph reproduced at comScore Data Mine,
"Top Markets for Facebook by Percent Reach" (September 21, 2011). Available at: http://www.
comscoredatamine.com/2011/09/top-markets-for-facebook-by-percent-reach/

Facebook. The number of Latin Americans engaged in social network-
ing is growing, with 16 percent growth in audience over the past year
according to comScore.

Top Categories in Mexico by % Share of Online Minutes

Persons Age 6+ at Mexico Home/Work Locations

Category	% Share
Social Networking	28.6%
Portals	27.6%
Instant Messengers	16.5%
Entertainment	14.2%
E-mail	6.9%

Source: comScore Media Metrix, July 2011, graph reproduced at comScore Data Mine, "Social
Networking Accounts for Largest Share of Minutes in Mexico" (September 6, 2011). Available
at: http://www.comscoredatamine.com/2011/09/social-networking-accounts-for-largest-share-of-
minutes-in-mexico

Many governments have announced national programs to expand Internet access and spur Internet adoption.[9] For example, Brazil has a national broadband plan, Plano Nacional de Banda Larga (PNBL), which aims to bring broadband service to 40 million households by 2014. Colombia launched its national digital plan, Vive Digital, in 2010 and aims for a four-fold increase in the number of Internet connections, from 2.2 million to 8.8 million connections by 2014. Argentina's national telecommunications plan, Argentina Contectada, was introduced in October 2010 as a combination of efforts aimed at advancing public investment in the deployment of communications infrastructure, equipment and services. In August 2011, Ecuador's communications minister announced plans to launch a national broadband plan as part of the country's Estrategia Ecuador Digital 2.0, with the goal of providing broadband access to 75 percent of Ecuadorians by 2017.

Mexico's National Development Plan (Plan Nacional de Desarollo) includes goals for the development of the digital society in Mexico. The AgendaDigital.mx details these objectives, as well as specific strategies and actions to be undertaken by government and civil society in areas such as digital inclusion, education, health and digital government.[10] In January 2012, the government of Mexico released a new broadband action plan, *Acciones para el Fortalecimiento de la Banda Ancha y las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación*, that details plans for 2012 to promote the expansion and adoption of high-speed Internet access in Mexico.[11] President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa announced an auction of licenses to use state-owned fiber optic lines and build networks in communities currently without broadband service. Contracts awarded under the auctions will include connecting schools and other public places to high-speed Internet. "We're promoting social connectivity with broadband," President Calderón said at the time.[12]

In March, President Calderón unveiled a new initiative to address the digital divide in Mexico. The CompuApoyo program is designed to help low-income households purchase computers and Internet connections through subsidies and loans. The initiative is expected to assist 1.7 million Mexican households with the purchase of computers through direct government subsidies (of 1,000 pesos per household), loans (of up to 3,500 pesos through credit provider Infonacot), and a reduced fee monthly internet subscription (of 99 pesos) for at least one year.

While the trend lines show positive growth in Internet access, the growth is slow and not sufficiently equitable in distribution. Limited access to broadband means that not enough people in even the most connected countries of Latin America will be online by the end of 2012 unless nations make serious, coordinated and sustained efforts. Access is only the first step. National broadband plans are important, but they are insufficient by themselves for addressing the larger issues at the heart of creating an environment in which creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship can thrive.

> **"It's not that important to have access, to be connected, when the most important element is the content and we do not have the freedom to express ourselves as we want to express ourselves."**
> *- Andrés Roemer*

Each nation must develop an environment in which markets are open and competitive, and people have the resources, skills and freedom necessary to connect for personal, economic and societal benefit. Each nation must confront the problems of direct and indirect censorship, violence and intimidation that plague much of the region. Andrés Roemer emphasized this point during the forum: "It's not that important to have access, to be connected, when the most important element is the content and we do not have the freedom to express ourselves as we want to express ourselves."

Barriers to Connectivity in Mexico

Several weeks before the Aspen Institute Forum on the Freedom to Communicate met in Mexico City, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a report on telecommunication policy and regulation in Mexico. The OECD conducted the study at the request of the government of Mexico. The *OECD Review of Telecommunication Policy and Regulation in Mexico* made headlines for its highly critical assessment of the Mexican telecommu-

nications environment, noting especially the shortcomings of the country's regulatory structures and policies, including competition policy and price regulation. The report found that these shortcomings present significant hurdles to achieving broad digital connectivity throughout Mexico. The OECD concluded:

- For the five year period of 2005 to 2009, the Mexican telephone industry overcharged customers $13.4 billion a year. This overcharging, combined with estimated loss of business due to the high prices, equaled 1.8 percent of GDP per annum, or USD 129.2 billion (2005-2009).

- Prices for high-speed Internet in Mexico are among the highest in OECD countries.

- Ineffective regulatory and legal systems have impeded the development of more balanced, competitive markets in Mexico.

- The 80 percent fixed-line market share and 70 percent mobile market share of América Móvil is "extremely high." Insufficient market penetration for fixed-line, mobile and broadband has left Mexico ranking 34th, 33rd and 32nd, respectively, among the 34 OECD nations.

- Significant barriers to infrastructure sharing prevent new entrants from establishing meaningful competition.

- Mexico ranks last in telecommunications investment per capita among OECD countries.[13]

Forum participants addressed many of the concerns raised in the OECD report and identified a series of barriers—structural and economic, legal and institutional, social and cultural—that inhibit progress in closing the digital divide in Mexico. They called upon the Mexican government to take a leading role in addressing critical issues of connectivity, competition and censorship going forward.

Lack of Infrastructure

The first critical barrier to connectivity in Mexico is a lack of well developed, open and accessible infrastructure. Infrastructure tends to be highly concentrated, with large disparities between urban and rural areas. The U.S. State Department reports that the fixed-line teledensity rate in Mexico is 18 percent, below the average for Latin America as a whole. Although wireless penetration is higher, at more than 75 percent, the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs has noted that many wireless customers in Mexico rely on prepaid cards or use their phones to receive calls only.[14]

According to the Mexican Internet Association (AMIPCI), there are an estimated 34.9 million Internet users in Mexico.[15] Just over 30 percent of Mexico's total population of 112 million is connected to the Internet, but participants noted that only 10 percent currently has access to the higher-speed broadband connections and services. Data from Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography show that the proportion of households with a computer was 29.8 percent at the end of 2010 and homes with an Internet connection made up 22.2 percent of the total number of homes in Mexico.[16] Almost 52 percent of Internet users in Mexico have said they access the Internet at a site outside the home.[17]

While many Mexican households lack fixed-line telephone access, mobile telephony is filling many of the gaps. There are over 90 million mobile telephone subscriptions in Mexico.[18] (The number of Mexicans who actually own a mobile phone is less than the number of subscriptions because some individuals and organizations hold multiple phone subscriptions.) Given the rapid growth and inherent advantages of mobile telecommunications over landlines, it seems likely that digital mobile technologies will be important components of the drive to universal connectivity in Mexico, particularly in rural and geographically remote areas.

Despite the size of Mexico's telecommunications market (11th largest in the OECD based on 2009 revenues of USD 26.6 billion), in terms

of fixed lines per 100 inhabitants, Mexico ranked 34th out of the OECD countries in the OECD report cited above. Mexico ranked 33rd in the OECD for mobile subscriptions and 32nd for broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants.[19] At 10.45 broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, Mexico was well below the OECD average of 25.0 broadband subscribers per 100 inhabitants in December 2010.[20]

> ## "It is unacceptable that about 70 percent of Mexicans are still disconnected from the digital networks." *- María Elena Meneses*

"It is unacceptable that about 70 percent of Mexicans are still disconnected from the digital networks," said María Elena Meneses. "To this digital gap, you must add the gap of speed and the gap of broadband." Broadband access is important, she noted, because there are an increasing number of applications and services, including video, that require the ability to upload and download at higher speeds in order for the access to be practical and meaningful. "Imagine a professor in a far away, poor municipality of Mexico who wants his students to watch a video in high speed. He couldn't do it without broadband," she said. Gaps in access to broadband exacerbate the "gap of knowledge, the cognitive gap that has a direct link with education," said Meneses. "This is the nodal point for the entrance of Mexico into the society of knowledge."

Fernando Gutiérrez, Chairman of the Communication and Digital Arts Department at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, pointed out that those without access are the ultimate losers in the Mexican economy.

Sergio Sarmiento punctuated the need for ubiquitous infrastructure in Mexico, remarking, "We will never be able to compete with China or with Vietnam if we try to compete by lowering our workers' income. We must raise the income for our workers. To do so, we must have workers that are better educated, with better access to telecommunications, and we must have the infrastructure that allows us to do this."

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Lack of Political Consensus

Juan Ludlow, Chief of Staff to the Chairman of the Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones (Cofetel), joined the forum for a special session to discuss government policies that would strengthen the freedom of communication and significantly expand connectivity in Mexico. Ludlow appeared in place of Cofetel Chairman Mony de Swaan Addati, who was called at the last minute to appear before a committee of the Chamber of Deputies. He agreed that the situation in Mexico is unacceptable.

"In Mexico, if you take the poorest 40 percent of the population, only 4 percent has access to the Internet. Less than 50 percent has access to a mobile phone," said Ludlow. "What does Mexico need to do so that this picture changes radically over the next ten years?" He explained that Cofetel's objectives include raising telecommunications to be a top item in the national agenda and delivering access to mobile Internet service to 80 percent of the population over the next ten years.

To achieve these goals, national leaders must adopt institutional and legal reforms. Calling the OECD report "realistic about what is going on in Mexico," Ludlow said that it provides "good diagnostics" for beginning to act on two key recommendations: instituting institutional reform and creating a broad political consensus around goals for connectivity.

"Mexico needs a big effort to change its institutional framework to provide communications regulators with all the instruments that it needs," said Ludlow, who compared the "five or six…not so strong" provisions empowering Cofetel to the independent British regulator Ofcom's "38 very strong provisions."[21] Instead, companies and individuals with special interests frequently have used the judicial process, including injunctions and appeals, as a *de facto* regulator of telecoms in Mexico. Ludlow continued, "It is clear that the design that we have today has produced the results that it has produced, and that those results are not necessarily in line with the objectives that we want to accomplish….Without a strong, independent regulator, there is absolutely no way that the market gets steered, directed, corralled into a competition environment that can produce such a result."

Mexico needs a comprehensive digital strategy built around a broad consensus among stakeholders from across Mexican society, civil society as well as government and telecom enterprises.

Second, Mexico needs a political consensus that such a plan is necessary. "Political consensus pushes the reality," noted Ludlow. His statements echoed earlier remarks by participants that Mexico needs a comprehensive digital strategy built around a broad consensus among stakeholders from across Mexican society, civil society as well as government and telecom enterprises.

Societal leaders and institutions may be the drivers of a national consensus, or consensus may result from a bottom-up process such as a multi-stakeholder approach described by Reed Hundt and detailed later in this report. Ray Suarez, Senior Correspondent for PBS NewsHour, suggested that creating a bottom-up approach in Mexico might be difficult considering the extreme poverty and wide needs of the poorest 40 percent of the population. "If we went into family-built homes

in a village in the mountains, would people say that this is what they want?" Suarez asked. Ludlow responded that, when actually given the choice between a paved street or the Internet, villagers have chosen the Internet because it enables them to get access to education, communicate with peers in the business world and lower transaction costs. "The sensitivity to the Internet is staggering across the country," Ludlow remarked, predicting that it will become a major social issue if leaders in society do not step forward to solve the problem of connectivity.

Insufficient Telecommunications Investment

Investment in the communications sector has declined over a decade, based on the latest data available from the Ministry of Communications and Transportation. From 2001 to 2010, both private and public investments in the sector have declined in real terms, as the data in Table 2 show. While there have been modest investments in infrastructure in certain areas, the consensus among participants was that it lags behind what is needed to deliver mobile broadband connectivity to all parts of Mexico. Participants attributed the weak investment in the sector in part to the lack of competitive markets, the relative weakness of the telecom regulatory regime, and the absence of a coordinated, widely endorsed national broadband plan. Furthermore, participants observed that Mexico lacks a culture of investing in innovation and an ecosystem for supporting the needed investments.

Table 2. Public and private investment in the communications sector in Mexico (millions of pesos).

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010[P]
Total Sector	53,826.3	30,325.4	28,088.0	40,961.5	38,525.4	40,541.1	35,976.8	40,793.3	36,703.7	41,378.3
Public	113.2	90.1	203.6	149.4	238.0	222.5	209.3	319.6	217.4	37.9
Private	53,713.1	30,235.3	27,884.4	40,812.1	38,287.4	40,318.6	35,767.5	40,473.7	36,486.3	41,340.4

Preliminary figures at the end of the year. Source: Estadística de Bolsillo 2010 and Estadística de Bolsillo 2011, Ministry of Communications and Transportation. Available at: http://www.sct.gob.mx/ uploads/media/EB-2010-final.pdf and http://www.sct.gob.mx/uploads/media/EB-2011.pdf

Lack of Competition

The communications sector in Mexico is highly concentrated. One company, América Móvil, with its subsidiaries Telmex and Telcel, dominates both the fixed-line and mobile telecommunications markets (80 percent and 70 percent, respectively). Trends show slight year-to-year declines in América Móvil's market dominance. Telefónica is a distant second at 2.4 percent of fixed-line and 21.8 percent of the mobile market, followed by Televisa (2.1 percent of fixed-line) and Iusacell (4.4 percent of mobile), according to OECD figures. The market for broadcast television shows similar concentration, with Televisa dominating 70 percent of the market for broadcast television.[22] (Televisa also controls 45 percent of Mexico's cable television market and 60 percent of its satellite market.[23]) TV Azteca is the second largest broadcaster in Mexico, with close to 30 percent of the market. Televisa and Azteca together control almost 100 percent of Mexico's terrestrial television market.

Table 3. Market share in Mexico's telecommunications market, May 2011

Operator	Fixed Line	Mobile	Pay TV	Internet (fixed)	% total market share revenue
América Móvil (Telmex & Telcel) *Market share* *Revenue share*	79.6% 79.9%	70% 69.2%		74% 66%	66%
Telefónica *Market share* *Revenue share*	2.4% 1.9%	21.8% 12.3%			7.1%
Televisa *Market share* *Revenue share*	2.1% 1.4%		48.9%		5.7%
Nextel *Market share* *Revenue share*		3.8% 13.5%			7.2%
Iusacell *Market share* *Revenue share*		4.4% 5.0%			2.7%
DISH			16.6%		
Others *Market share* *Revenue share*	15.9% 16.8%		33.6%	20% 28%	11.3%
Total	19.6 million lines	91.3 million subscribers	10.2 million subscribers	11.4 million subscribers	USD 27 billion

Source: OECD Review of Telecommunication Policy and Regulation in Mexico, © OECD (January 2012), 26. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264060111-en

The lack of competition is a long-standing problem. "In Mexico, as long as there is a dominant market where competition is not allowed, we are not going to really have quality, efficiency and accessible prices for the consumer," said Andrés Roemer, Executive Director of Poder Cívico. Participants identified institutional decision-making, protection of powerful incumbents, vertical integration and entrenched attitudes as primary impediments to a more open and competitive marketplace.

Several participants (including representatives of Grupo Salinas) cited the difficulty that Televisa, Mexico's dominant broadcaster, encountered in seeking to purchase a 50 percent stake in cellular company Iusacell. Mexico's antitrust authority initially moved to block Televisa's $1.6 billion purchase on the grounds that the investment would harm competition by uniting the two dominant broadcast media companies. This decision came in spite of the potential for increasing competition and consumer choice in Mexico's mobile market, which has some of the highest prices in the developed world.[24] After an appeal by Televisa and Iusacell's parent company, Grupo Salinas, the Comisión Federal de Competencia (Cofeco) approved Televisa's purchase of half of Iusacell but imposed tough conditions on the deal.

"I think that we should open cellular telephony, landline telephony and the Internet to competition," said Sergio Sarmiento. "I also think that we should open up the free television market and the paid cable television…. I am in favor of opening up the markets for television and for cellular telephony. I do not think the function of the authority as a regulator is to impede those investments that strengthen a smaller competitor in a market dominated by another, stronger competitor."

Participants cited high interconnection fees charged by the dominant carrier as another factor hindering competition, although government agencies have moved to reduce interconnection charges. In May 2012, Cofeco announced a deal with América Móvil that will lead to lower interconnection fees for calls placed into the Telcel network and end discounted rates for its customers calling other Telcel users through 2014.[25]

Moreover, vertical integration presents an additional roadblock to competition. Ludlow noted that vertical integration stifles creativity and progress as companies seek to control the entire supply chain, from the wires and mobile towers to the applications, like online banking.

Greater openness in the infrastructure might lead to an explosion of applications across many platforms.

Reed Hundt commented on how entrenched attitudes have held back competition in Mexico:

> For many years, the view was that countries that did not have a big middle class and that had many poor people could not afford the luxury of competition. They had to have a monopoly provide whatever service—electricity, transportation, education, communications. That was a very widely held view. It was the view of the World Bank officially until 1993, and it's a view that continues to be in the minds of many people in government. It is a view that is not true. It is not true because technology is capable of providing many means of access today. There are many means, and they can be provided very cheaply. So what's necessary is for governments to empower Cofetel, to empower regulators in every country, to open the door to alternative means of access and to allow entrepreneurs to discover the bottom billion.

Cost of Service

"Price is one of the most important indicators of performance. In an efficient, effectively competitive market, prices (wholesale and retail) are driven down toward costs," noted the OECD in its report, which found that the cost of telecommunications services in Mexico is extremely high. This is especially true of fixed line service in Mexico. While still high, prices for mobile service are more in line with other OECD countries and, according to the OECD, have improved in recent years. "Why does it cost so much less to get on a mobile phone in India than in the United States or Mexico?" asked Reed Hundt. "It is not because the technology is different." Ludlow defined affordable service as "anyone in Mexico should be able to buy unlimited Internet for 200 pesos (US$15-16) a month." In 2011, the average monthly broadband subscription for speeds between 2.5 and 15 Mbps exceeded US$90.[26]

Legal Issues

The digital environment presents new challenges in the area of law. Forum participants identified some ways in which governments are responding to these challenges as a source of potential threats to free and open networks, noting two problems. On the one hand, applying analog era laws to digital era services becomes problematic when those laws do not sufficiently reflect the fundamentally new characteristics, relationships, norms and business models emerging in the digital society. On the other hand, when governments do attempt to craft new laws for digital spaces, they often restrict, or have the effect of restricting, user rights in a manner not commensurate with the harm that they are trying to prevent.

Applying analog era laws to digital era services becomes problematic when those laws do not sufficiently reflect the fundamentally new characteristics, relationships, norms and business models emerging in the digital society.

In this latter case, several participants and audience members cited concerns over a series of laws proposed or passed in the United States, Europe and Mexico and known best by their acronyms and sponsors: SOPA, PIPA, ACTA, HADOPI, Sinde and the Doring law in Mexico.[27] They considered the SOPA, for example, to be an over-reach in attempting to address the problem of piracy on the Internet. Penalties for violating the proposed law would have included terminating network access of violators, regardless of whether the violations were made knowingly or not. As proposed in SOPA, the alleged violator's Internet access could be terminated at the simple request of the rights holder or author. Alec Ross noted that it violated the principle that above all else, government should "first, do no harm." The SOPA, he said, "would have undermined an open Internet."

Some participants considered these laws to be a form of censorship that actually reflect both sides of the legal conundrum described above: they attempt to attack the problem of Internet piracy and protection

of authors' rights with old paradigm thinking. At the same time, the burden of policing and removing infringing material, and the consequences for not doing so, criminalize many valid uses of the Internet and make media companies and Internet service providers (ISPs) responsible for content sent over the networks. "I agree that without property rights that are protected and correctly established there is no development, but trying to solve the piracy problem by putting in danger the freedom of the power of being connected is like trying to cure a flu by causing a cancer," said Andrés Roemer.

Social and Cultural Barriers

As important as the infrastructure and gadgets are, there are other hurdles to digital inclusion that go beyond the physical connection to a network. People need additional tools, skills and understanding in order to use information effectively. These skills are often referred to as digital literacy and media literacy skills. Digital literacy is learning how to work the information and communication technologies in a networked environment, as well as understanding the social, cultural and ethical issues that go along with the use of these technologies. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, reflect upon and act with the information products that media disseminate. Without opportunities to develop these skill sets in schools, libraries, community centers or other places, some people will remain disconnected.[28] Thus, as María Elena Meneses noted, cognitive gaps and lack of educational opportunities create barriers to connectivity.

Individuals must also find the experience of being connected to be safe and relevant to their lives. Some people perceive dangers online that inhibit them from becoming connected. Just as in the offline world, there are risks and negative aspects in the online environment, including some that can be quite problematic. These include bullying and intimidation, fraud and other criminal activity, pornography, privacy violations and an overload of information that can make it confusing or difficult to find good content or to distinguish high-quality, credible information from falsehoods or marketing ploys. Addressing these concerns through education, training and rational policies and laws will help to alleviate some of the fears that people have about connecting to the Internet.

Direct and Indirect Censorship

Censorship of the Internet, and of the communications and media system as a whole, creates formidable barriers to a free and connected society. Forum participants commented that censorship has many authors and it can take many forms: direct censorship, indirect censorship and self-censorship.

Direct censorship is the absolute suppression and control of information by governments or other societal actors. This includes the enactment of specific laws which aim to control the free flow of information by deliberately prohibiting the time, manner or content of speech or suppressing certain speakers.

Mexico's electoral reform law of 2007 has institutionalized censorship of political speech in the country. The law bans the broadcast of political messages paid for by private individuals or groups, bans negative advertisements in politics, and gives the government's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) tight control over political speech broadcast in the country. Ricardo Salinas spoke to participants about the damaging consequences of the 2007 electoral reform law. "Right now it is impossible for a citizen to publish his views on television. Right now it is impossible to have a political debate on television. And right now it is impossible to call someone corrupt. Why? Because the law prevents it," observed Salinas.

In another example, the Veracruz State Assembly briefly made it a crime to use Twitter and other social networks to spread information that undermines public order. The state government rescinded the law after public outcry denouncing it. A similar law reportedly was under consideration in the state of Tabasco.

Indirect censorship occurs as the result of policies and decisions made to address one problem but lead to restrictions on or punishments of free speech and other forms of expression. Several participants noted that the various legislative proposals aimed at protecting the economic rights of authors and copyright holders (e.g., SOPA, ACTA, Sinde, and the Doring law) risk turning media companies into censors of users' content, or induce users to self-censor, in order to avoid ruinous penalties for unwittingly breaking these laws.

Institutional decisions may also lead to censorship, where the judgments of government bureaucracies result in prohibitions or fines for

exercising the right of free speech. In one case, the IFE fined boxer Juan Manuel Márquez for wearing shorts marked with the logo of a political party during a prominent November 2011 match against Manny Pacquaio. U.S.-based network HBO broadcast the match from Las Vegas. TV Azteca rebroadcast the fight according to the terms of its contract with HBO. In addition to fining Márquez, the IFE also fined TV Azteca 1,300,000 pesos for showing the logo during its rebroadcast of the match.

As bad as any form of censorship is, participants considered the indirect forms of censorship to be particularly destructive when they occur within democratic countries. These restrictions take a veneer of legitimacy from their democratically elected governments, but they put the society on a course that is the opposite of freedom and openness. "They are not as direct as those in North Korea, they are not as ostensible as those in China, they are not as deliberate, and therefore they are more dangerous. Because, accidently on purpose, they censure you," said Andrés Roemer.

Self-censorship is the decision by an author or speaker to avoid expression of a certain kind due to fear of the consequences of engaging in that speech. People frequently engage in self-censorship in environments where direct and indirect censorship are endemic. Violence from drug traffickers, including attacks on journalists and social media users in Mexico, has led to significant self-censorship among journalists.

Carlos Lauría, Senior Program Coordinator for the Americas at the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), described the impact of fear, intimidation and self-censorship on the ability to stay informed and connected. "In several areas of the country, where organized crime directly controls the land, there are information gaps. The press is scared; it cannot comply with its information task," said Lauría. "It's not only a problem for people and society, but it is a problem for politics. Those in charge of public policy find out what's going on through the press. How do they do their jobs without the press?"

Esther Vargas, a Peruvian journalist and Director of Journalism Classes for Agencia Andina based in Lima, noted that she had been following the case of *La Nena de Laredo*, a 39-year-old journalist named Marisol Macias Castaneda whose mutilated body was found with a note

warning residents to stop talking about the drug cartels on the Internet. Vargas said that she had obtained information about this case from the Internet and Twitter. "The terrible aspect of this case is that, incredibly, it has had no wide coverage in Mexico's media, in Mexico City, and in Tamaulipas, Nuevo Laredo, practically nothing has been said," she said. The local press has, presumably, censored its own coverage due to fear of the cartels.[29]

This widespread fear has led governments in Mexico to look for ways to suppress the flow of information that could lead to public panic. Unfortunately, one response has been the enactment of laws like the one passed in Veracruz censoring the use of Twitter.

The Special Role of Journalism

Among all forms of expression, journalism plays an especially significant role in connecting people within communities, across the nation and around the world. Journalism has long been a primary source of information for people to know what is happening in the world around them, as well as a resource to help them act on that knowledge for personal and community benefit. Journalism delivers information, but it also provides context, interpretation and analysis to information in ways that help citizens to make sense of the world. This work is vital to democratic societies, where the informed decisions of citizens form the basis of governance. Whatever form it takes—in newspapers or magazines, on television, radio or the Internet—at its best, journalism functions as the oxygen of democracy.

At its best, journalism functions as the oxygen of democracy.

As the media of communication become more instantaneous, digital and mobile, the world of journalism has seen major disruptions. Forum participants considered how these changes are affecting the environments for free expression and connectivity.

Digital Media Democratize Journalism

"The story of journalism is change in the relationship of story producers and audiences, and change in access to the storytelling platforms. Part of it is economic, part of it is technological," said Ray Suarez, Senior Correspondent for PBS NewsHour. Suarez opened the forum's discussion on journalism and the new media ecosystem by noting the striking differences in the practice of journalism today compared with the profession he entered as a young reporter more than 30 years ago. He spoke about the ways in which digital media have opened up participation in journalism.

"When I first got in, a camera cost $54,000; the lens alone cost $14,000. Now, you could walk into a big box store here in Mexico or in the United States and buy a camera that takes a better picture for $1,000," said Suarez. He continued, "But only a few people could afford that camera, or work for television stations. Only a few people got to define the world in which we live."

Today, in the digital age, the ability of people to use these tools is widely distributed. This means that many people can participate in the creation and sharing of news, analysis and opinion, culture, entertainment and other forms of messaging. "We've created an enormous pool of people who can participate, but we've also created a free for all—a world with very few rules," said Suarez.

Esther Vargas detailed several ways in which social media are democratizing access to information. For example, she observed that the Forum was being webcast, so "no one needs to buy the paper to learn about what is being said here at this moment." Social media, including the micro-blogging site Twitter, expedite the spread of information and originate news that ends up being reported by legacy media. "Scoops are even scarcer. The level of access to information has changed how we learn about things now." She cited newsmakers like the first lady of Peru and the President of France whose tweets regularly become news.

The Search for New Business Models

The implications of the changing media ecology go well beyond who is shooting the pictures, gathering the information and sharing them online. The advertising-based business models that have sustained

journalism for close to a century are crumbling, with no clear picture of what models will sustain journalism work in the long term. "We can no longer command the audience to pay attention to what we are doing," said Suarez. "While information is democratized, the business that used to bring you the information is now being broken up into a thousand different pieces. It's a time of wonderful promise…frightening and wonderful at the same time."

"While information is democratized, the business that used to bring you the information is now being broken up into a thousand different pieces."
- Ray Suarez

Websites and social networks have great capacity as new channels to inform and engage, including as a channel for journalists to gather information, but there is a dilemma. The problem is that the digital content going out is not producing a revenue return that can sustain the enterprise going forward. "We are parasitizing our legacy media in order to build the future," stated Suarez. He explained:

> Managers are asking to push all content online; that's where people are going to see it and engage with it. They are taking the profits created from legacy media, and investing it online, thus doing an amazing magic trick. They are turning legacy media dollars into Internet pennies. It's like they are magicians who are making money disappear, because right now in many organizations there is not yet a profit to be made online. We know we have to build the news distribution technology of the future and we know it already has to be built when our audience wants to use it, but we are also…parasitizing our legacy media and using the funds that come from that in order to build this future.

Monica Lozano has been grappling with these issues of sustainability and the search for new business models as Chief Executive Officer of ImpreMedia, the leading Hispanic news and information company

in the United States. She is also the publisher of *La Opinión* in Los Angeles, the largest Spanish language newspaper in the United States. Lozano agreed that it is a time of great transformation and that the rules of the game have changed.

"We aren't in the business of publishing newspapers. We are in the business of empowering audiences," said Lozano, who emphasized that ImpreMedia's journalists and managers have to think differently about what they do.

"We aren't in the business of publishing newspapers. We are in the business of empowering audiences." *- Monica Lozano*

What does this fundamental transformation of the role of journalism mean for a 21st century journalism company like ImpreMedia? She offered the following insights based on ImpreMedia's experience.

Newsrooms must be capable of creating and distributing content across all platforms. "They are multimedia content producers, so they are trained and prepared to create content distributed across multiple platforms," said Lozano.

You have to be relevant to the audience you serve. It is important to make sure the organization pushes transparency and accountability down to the local level, from coverage of schools and budgets, to how environmental concerns are addressed. "The way that audiences stay engaged is by being empowered at the local level. Media have a critical role to play…to make them literate consumers of all of that information that we say needs to be made available. [We need] to empower communities to take advantage of that information so that they can participate in the democratic institutions of our countries."

A new set of metrics for measuring success is required. The business of a daily newspaper used to be measured by the number of issues printed and circulation. Now, engagement means that metrics must look at how the enterprise interacts with its audience across multiple platforms, and how well that enterprise is prepared to engage across

those platforms. "The other role we play is we connect advertisers to consumers," said Lozano. "Advertisers are looking for engagement… not necessarily the mass that we used to deliver, but an ability to go deep with certain consumers."

You have to pull cost out of areas where there is no value creation. "I don't care if we have a printing press any longer; it's not fundamental to what we do," said Lozano.

Charlie Firestone asked Lozano about the possibility of disaggregating the functions of journalism. Explaining his theory that technological convergence is leading to a disaggregation of media, Firestone said, "As we go forward, there will be companies that create content, companies that create aggregation, companies that distribute, and various different combinations of the functions of journalism—from finding facts, checking facts, creating content, creating context, editorializing, distributing, linking, sourcing—all of these functions will, as we go along, possibly disaggregate."

"It may very well be that we disaggregate," replied Lozano. "We need to have distribution mechanisms, but they are not fundamental to the business."

Winners will be high quality content going forward. Lozano sees brands persevering in the online environment. Organizations that are known for high quality, relevant, powerful storytelling and an ability to bring people together around shared experiences will prosper. "At end of day, we ascribe to the fundamental precepts of high quality journalism. It has to be what distinguishes us," said Lozano. "We need to make sure it is accurate, has been verified, it is relevant, it is high quality and it tells stories appropriate to the audiences that we serve. It is no longer about product but about content. Content that has the same kind of journalistic integrity that has defined journalism all these years."

Preserving the core values of journalism is important. Journalists should maintain the essential principles of accuracy, fact checking, reliability and credibility, regardless of whether their reporting takes place in newspapers, on television or radio, or on social media platforms. Esther Vargas advised that journalists must be careful not to spread unverified information simply because social media make it easy to do so.

Censorship and the Safety of Journalists

In many countries in Latin America, these structural and economic challenges are compounded by legal and physical dangers that face journalists on a daily basis. Participants spoke of particular examples from the Americas.

In Cuba, the Castro government exercises strong state control over the press and the Internet. Despite the fact that a newly laid fiber cable from Venezuela to Cuba will substantially increase Internet capacity to the island, it still is not expected to allow full Internet access to the average Cuban. Still, there is a vibrant blogosphere in Cuba that mostly provides information to the outside world about conditions in Cuba.

In Venezuela, where journalists must be officially licensed to work, the government of President Hugo Chavez has used a variety of tactics to control press coverage: license suspensions; warnings, intimidations and threats; use of government advertising to punish and reward journalists; denied access to cover government meetings; fines for libel and reporting deemed "sensational;" lawsuits against journalists; and physical attacks on reporters by supporters of the Chavez government.

In Ecuador, three directors and a journalist at El Universo newspaper were convicted of libel in a lawsuit brought by Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa. The three faced three years in jail and the newspaper faced a fine of $40 million dollars. Although the editor has been pardoned, he fled to Panama where he received asylum.

In Argentina, the government recently nationalized the only domestic supplier of newsprint. This gives the government the potential to exert influence on news outlets that depend on a steady supply of newsprint.

Forum participants recognized that the situation for journalism in Mexico is especially challenging due to the violence directed at journalists and other information providers. "This has become one of the most dangerous countries for the press, not just in this hemisphere but in the world," said Carlos Lauría. His appearance at the forum coincided with CPJ's release of its annual report on global attacks on the press.[30]

He noted that there have been 40 cases of journalists murdered or missing during the nearly six years of the Calderón administration. Many journalists have given up their craft or fled into exile as the violence has spread. The result has been a near cessation of investigative

reporting and coverage of crime, not only in the most violent states, but throughout most of the country including Mexico City.

In response to the violence and the deteriorating information environment in some parts of the country, Mexicans have turned to the Internet and social media for information that is basic to their survival. Journalists and citizens alike are using social media to report on violence. Twitter, social networks, websites and text messaging are all being used in ways that allow people to anonymously post information about crime in the community. For example, the *Blog del Narco* (www.blogdelnarco.com) and *Borderland Beat* (www.borderlandbeat.com) sites provide up to date information related to the drug cartels. The ability to be connected helps to keep people informed in the absence of a healthy environment for journalism.

"Eighty-one percent of Mexicans believe that the safety situation will be worse next year than now. Sixty percent of Mexicans consider that the drug traffickers are winning the battle. The government may be winning the battle on the streets, but the fact is that the perception is deeply damaged," said Federico Reyes Heroles, President of Fundación Este País and Founder of Transparencia Mexicana, a national chapter of Transparency International. Reyes Heroles drew attention to a set of voluntary guidelines for covering the drug war that many Mexican news organizations, including broadcast giants Televisa and TV Azteca, signed in 2011. The aim of the guidelines is to protect journalists and avoid glorifying the drug cartel leaders. They include joint publication of stories, standards for when to publish or show violent images and providing better context when reporting on drug violence.[31]

Reyes Heroles acknowledged that the agreement has created controversy within the media and some segments of society. "Many reacted saying: 'Whoa, it wants for us not to inform.' Nothing is more contrary to its objective. The agreement comes really so that we may continue informing," said Reyes Heroles, who considers the extraordinary violence in Mexico to warrant an open mind about these guidelines which others consider self-censorship. He emphasized that the guidelines are voluntary and pointed to Spain and Colombia, where terrorism and drug violence subsided substantially after similar accords were adopted.

One of the main problems is that many of the crimes against journalists go unsolved or unprosecuted. Carlos Lauría noted that 90 percent of crimes against journalists are not solved. This impunity works against

peace; local and state governments and the press are relatively weak, and the drug cartels are stronger. Investigations by local authorities are inadequate. The drug cartels have become big players in Mexican society and there is no magic bullet to solve the problem easily. But one approach, said Lauría, is to make such crimes federal offenses, bringing in the larger apparatus of the Federal Government.

> **Ninety percent of crimes [in Mexico] against journalists are not solved.** - *Carlos Lauría*

"Mexican society needs to have a more adequate legal structure to provide freedom of communication, a legal structure that provides protection to basic human rights," said Lauría. He told the forum that CPJ and other global freedom of expression organizations had been working with the Calderón administration to secure certain federal protections for individuals engaged in journalistic work.

In March 2012, these efforts came to fruition as the Mexican Senate passed an amendment to make crimes against freedom of expression and the right to information federal offenses. Additional action is still needed to bring the constitutional change into full effect. Of course, the amendment will have little impact if the federal government does not act to provide the resources necessary, including adequate funding for investigations and the judicial process, to protect journalists and, by extension, the freedom to communicate in Mexico.

Forum Recommendations

The consensus of the forum was that Mexico should be more connected and committed to the freedom to communicate, and address very specific goals. Despite the many obstacles that hinder connectivity in Mexico, participants were optimistic that considerable progress can be made in the years ahead through shared agenda setting, strong investments in infrastructure and people, meaningful reforms to regulatory and legal systems, and the cultivation of an enabling environment that will foster innovation, freedom and prosperity throughout Mexico.

"As we have heard, freedom and connectivity are connected," said Charlie Firestone. "We've seen the importance of having that open society. Only then can society progress economically, politically, and foster democracy and a culture that is enticing to live in."

Mexico is at a crossroads. In 2012, the Mexican people chose a new government. Now, they must choose what path Mexico will travel into the digital future.

Participants at the forum offered a series of recommendations for ways in which Mexico's government can foster connectivity, journalism and an environment for the free flow of information and ideas in ways that honor the values of liberty and democracy. They also said there are great opportunities in U.S.-Mexican partnerships that could be fostered through the Internet.

The forum's recommendations have five main goals:

1. Develop a national consensus and plan for the digital society in Mexico

2. Develop Mexico's digital infrastructure

3. Develop a culture of innovation

4. Develop an ecosystem for investment in innovation

5. Develop an enabling environment for freedom and connectivity

Many proposals reflect a belief that Mexico should be bold and aspire high as it looks to the future. The discussion which follows includes the proposed recommendations, consideration for how to pay for the investments that Mexico will need to make and an examination of the proper role of government in building the digital future. Participants offered different approaches, with some disagreement on the role of government subsidies. However, the forum concluded that if government does act, this does not mean that government can or should restrict or censor infrastructure or content in the digital ecosystem.

1. Develop a national consensus and plan for the digital society

Mexico needs a comprehensive digital strategy built around a broad consensus among stakeholders from across Mexican society. These stakeholders should include civil society organizations and institutions, universities, citizens and journalists as well as government and business enterprises. The plan must address the goal of universal, high-speed connectivity throughout Mexico. It should have clear targets that ensure network access and service to rural and unprofitable areas, as well as to homes, businesses, educational institutions, community centers and government offices. Beyond infrastructure, the plan should also address the other barriers that hinder broadband adoption and use, such as the need for training and skills development, relevance and affordability. If access is not affordable, then the goals will not be met.

Make telecommunications one of the top items in the national agenda. Participants observed that the countries which are doing the best are those that are planning and investing the most to build digital infrastructure and tools.

Create a national campaign to drive investment and engagement in the digital society. Joaquín Alvarado, who at the time of the forum was Senior Vice President for Digital Innovation at American Public Media, one of the largest public media companies in the United States, noted that the best projects and collaborators build energy and momentum through bold, creative ideas. Initiatives should ignite the imagination and allow ordinary Mexicans to see themselves in the work. Mexico needs ideas that excite people and drive them to want to connect to, invest in and engage with the digital society.

2. Develop the digital infrastructure

Nations that have derived the most success and benefit from the digital revolution are those which are planning and investing the most in digital infrastructure and tools. With only 30 percent of the population connected to the Internet, and only 10 percent connected to broadband, Mexico needs formulas for strong investment in infrastructure. "To raise income, Mexico needs a better educated workforce, with better access to telecommunications. We must have the infrastructure that allows for this," said Sergio Sarmiento. Participants identified insuffi-

ciently developed telecommunications markets as a primary reason for the poor state of infrastructure development in Mexico today.

Nations that have derived the most success and benefit from the digital revolution are those which are planning and investing the most in digital infrastructure and tools.

Improve markets by promoting competition and rejecting discrimination. Mexico needs a communications environment with greater competition in all sectors so new players can enter these markets. The television market, the telecommunications market, and the telephone market should be open to full competition. Government regulators, legislators and judicial authorities should focus on removing restrictions on competition, not on adding new ones. Access to communication networks should come with neutral tariffs.

Government has a role to subsidize investment to spur the development of broadband infrastructure. There were differences of opinion on the extent to which government should subsidize the development of digital infrastructure in Mexico. Several participants advised that government subsidies should only come if there is a market failure. They said government subsidies may be needed in particular corners of the country, but first government should give its attention to improving markets. "In Mexico, as long as there is a dominant market where competition is not allowed, we are not going to really have quality and efficiency, and accessible prices for the consumer," said Andrés Roemer.

Other participants charged that market failure has already occurred, with the evidence being the dismal percentage of Mexicans without meaningful Internet access. Federico Reyes Heroles said he is a great believer in the role of markets to manufacture and deliver the goods and services needed in society. "I am also a believer that the State has a regulatory and supplementary function of the markets in those areas where the markets cannot go," he added. "We have here a problem of social justice. Our society is already a society basically unjust, very

unjust, and we have an absurd system of distribution of the public resources that should be dedicated precisely to those missions."

Reyes Heroles cited the cost of government subsidies of petrol in comparison to what it would cost if the government were to purchase a computer for every student in Mexico. "That infuriates me. I think the Mexican state has an obligation to level the field…so that the children of the North, South and Center may really compete in a way that the capabilities and merits, not the lack of a universal service, are what limits those persons."

Targeted investments can help, but government should first do no harm. Reed Hundt had cautioned the forum about inviting government to secure universal rights to Internet access. Yet governments may still take steps to unleash infrastructure development through limited, targeted policies, as participant Alec Ross noted. Ross agreed with Hundt that there is potential harm in government acting too aggressively. He said the first responsibility of government when it comes to the Internet is to "do no harm." He explained, "The innovation that is unleashed from these networks comes from entrepreneurs. Government can play a very important role facilitating things. For example, in the 1990s, there was a law passed that helped to bring the Internet into every school in the United States, in part because of the leadership of Reed Hundt. Government can do some good things to unleash infrastructure development, but I think we need to be very scared about government reaching into the open Internet."

3. *Develop a culture of innovation*

Mexico needs to develop a culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism, in which creativity and bold ideas are encouraged and rewarded. Successful countries invest in innovation, which springs from the knowledge, creativity and talent of their people. These attributes are nurtured throughout society, but especially where curiosity, inquiry and experimentation are valued and encouraged. This includes universities as well as cultural institutions and corporate research and development centers. Alec Ross and Walter Isaacson noted that research institutions like Tecnológico de Monterrey can play an important role in helping to develop models of social entrepreneurship and foster a culture of innovation in Mexico. They cited the roles that institutions

like Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology played as important crucibles for innovation in the early days of developing the digital economy and society in the United States.

Mexico needs to develop a culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism, in which creativity and bold ideas are encouraged and rewarded.

At the end of the day, however, all it really takes is one person with a great idea and the resources to develop it and bring it to fruition. "Facebook was started by an undergraduate university student in the United States who didn't write a white paper, he didn't ask anybody's permission for what he was doing," said Alec Ross. "So much of America's digital innovation comes from young people in their 20's who are unbound by the notion of what is possible. Whether there will be a digital ecosystem that unleashes a knowledge-based industry in Mexico, I think, will be based on whether the next Mark Zuckerberg or Sergey Brin or other entrepreneur comes from your universities."

Joaquín Alvarado suggested that Mexico has the potential to leap past other, currently more advanced countries if leaders and innovators across society think boldly and build momentum. He proposed several ideas, some of which might be led by government or telecommunications companies, while others may be better suited to the entrepreneurial and creative talents within media companies:

- Start the world's first super high speed public broadcasting network in Mexico.

- Deliver ultra-high speed broadband to every home in Mexico City.

- Make the pursuit of connectivity a reality TV show, featuring a community or an individual family.

Start a licensing program for mobile broadband that is built on the future of the Internet in Mexico. Such programs could be used to cre-

ate citizen networks in every state that provide information useful for journalists, who use it to further expand and nourish public information and knowledge. Bring storytellers to this citizen platform and do a national project for two years that tells the story of Mexico, through the Internet and on television.

> **Mexico has the potential to leap past other, currently more advanced countries if leaders and innovators across society think boldly and build momentum.** *- Joaquín Alvarado*

4. Develop an ecosystem for investment in innovation

To complement its culture of innovation, Mexico needs to develop an ecosystem for access to venture capital funding that feeds innovation. Alec Ross pointed out that it is important for Mexico to develop its ecosystem of access to early stage capital. Without access to sufficient capital in the formative stages of development, start-up companies face significant barriers to reaching sustainability as they struggle to develop the business and their markets. Wealthy corporations and citizens in Mexico can play a leadership role to make this happen. Using the rich venture capital system in the United States as a model, Alec Ross explained: "One thing we have in the United States is access to high-risk capital, and we have a willingness to fund people with a very small company, or an idea of a company." Venture capitalists' support for innovative ideas and small companies was largely responsible for the explosive growth and development of the Internet over the past twenty years, as well as the rise of many of today's most popular Internet companies, including Amazon, Facebook, Google and Spotify.

5. Develop an enabling environment for freedom and connectivity

Mexico needs to adopt policies that will foster a stronger environment for communication in both traditional journalistic media and the newer social media. Addressing environments for competition, innovation and investment are part of the broader issue of the enabling

environment. Leaders must also give specific attention to legal frameworks for freedom, regulatory structures to promote competition, and protection of rights and security without compromising the freedom to communicate.

Preserve a Free Press and the Freedom to Communicate. Following the Ross rule that government should do no harm, the forum made a simple recommendation to government: do not censor. The same proposal was directed at businesses that have sought to protect property rights and other economic interests through overly broad and restrictive legislation and policies like SOPA.

Mexico's newly elected government should reevaluate the Electoral Reform Law of 2007 to lessen its damaging impact on political discourse and free expression in Mexico. The law currently only applies to advertising on television and radio and in newspapers. "There is a window of freedom online that does not exist for radio and television regarding government restrictions on political speech," said Sergio Sarmiento. It is important that the Mexican government not take any actions to close that window.

> ## The media can help themselves by adopting voluntary internal codes of conduct that minimize the sensationalism of reporting on violence… without compromising the principles of good journalism.

The Mexican government should complete enactment of the constitutional amendment giving the Federal Government the authority to investigate violent crimes against journalists and provide adequate funding for enforcement. The government should seek other ways to help protect the security of journalists in Mexico, such as the U.S.-Mexico partnerships that will bring $5 million in U.S. aid to help protect Mexican journalists.[32] The media can help themselves by adopting voluntary internal codes of conduct that minimize the sensationalism of reporting on violence in Mexico without compromising the principles of good journalism.

Develop legal structures for freedom. Across all levels of government, Mexico needs to develop institutional frameworks that more fully support the freedom to communicate. These frameworks must include adequate mechanisms to ensure that the day-to-day reality of freedom experienced in Mexico matches the words written into law. Andrés Roemer called this a legal structure for freedom. "Technology opens up, now it is time for laws and actions to recognize that," said Roemer. "It's time to legalize freedom." A more adequate legal structure to protect the freedom to communicate must also protect basic human rights.

Adopt new paradigm thinking. Participants were very vocal about the need to challenge old models, and begin to change paradigms for thinking about how to contend with issues like piracy, safety and security, and privacy in the digital society. "When technology comes into a culture, there is a restructuring of the culture because of this new way of communication," said Fernando Gutiérrez. The new media ecology reflects changing interactions between people and technologies, and changing habits and perceptions within the culture. With each new technology, "there is a new form of comprehending the institutions and a new form of doing politics," said Gutiérrez. All stakeholders, but particularly leaders in government, business and civil society, must adopt new ways of thinking and advance policies and actions that are consistent with a more democratized and digital world.

Embrace a multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance. "People will find a way to get on the Internet better if governments don't step in to guarantee a freedom to connect," said Reed Hundt. He went on to explain how a multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance, a model which has governed the development of the Internet thus far, is a preferable alternative to heavy-handed government regulation as a means of ensuring Internet access.

Hundt noted that this is the model that has successfully guided the development of the Internet since its inception as a network intended to transcend the limitations of national borders and central control. The process begins with a gathering of all stakeholders or stakeholder representatives. There is a document, a set of principles or ideals, although the nature of this approach is that there is no single common statement at the outset. "There are competing bodies and competing common statements until there is one," said Hundt. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a set of

principles in June 2011, and in April 2012 the Aspen Institute released *Toward a Single Global Digital Economy*, a report of its International Digital Economy Accords (IDEA) initiative.[33]

It is a process of dialogue, discussion and debate. Even with large numbers of engineers, technical contributors and others working around the globe, the multi-stakeholder model has been remarkably successful.

The discussion of a multi-stakeholder model for Internet governance has gained importance in 2012. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has scheduled a meeting in December 2012 to address rules for regulating the Internet. Among the countries that have publicly stated they want a government-driven process, akin to other multilateral international governmental bodies, to regulate the Internet are China, Russia, India, South Africa and Brazil. The United States is among those countries that prefer the present multi-stakeholder approach. Hundt proposed that the United States and Mexico initiate an ongoing dialogue on Internet governance issues in the same manner that the two countries have been meeting for years under the auspices of the U.S.-Mexico High Level Consultative Commission on Telecommunications to address common concerns and, where feasible, align decision-making in ways that benefit both countries.[34]

Overcome cultural barriers by working together. Charlie Firestone noted that there is more than one form of culture that is relevant to the discussion of freedom to communicate and connectivity. There is indigenous culture, but also the culture of democracy. "That's not something you can legislate," he advised. "Often, there is a technological solution to a problem, but there is a cultural barrier. Culture can be a solidifier, a unifier, but it can also be a barrier and it's something to be conscious of." He suggested that the people of Mexico, with or without help from the government, could help to shape its culture in the direction of unification by doing the following:

- Do not allow impediments to the free flow of information.

- Do not allow intimidation by the drug cartels. In Colombia, people took it upon themselves to rise up against the drug cartels.

- Do not allow intimidation by online bullies. Citizens can be a strong voice against intimidation and bullying if they call it out and deal with it when they see it.

- Do not allow intimidation by government.

Mexico's citizens have an important role to play in asserting their rights. It is government's duty to protect these rights.

Enrique Tamés observed a similar distinction between those countries whose cultures have chosen to make the Internet a right and others that have not. "There are cultures which favor the state to exercise a right or that set the conditions for a universal right in a way that the whole population may use for the benefit of all. On the other hand, there are cultures in which the magnanimous state feels the absolute temptation of controlling whatever it feels like. What is Mexico's model? Unfortunately, if we look at the past, then our history is not that good." Cultural change does not come from the outside, but from within. Mexico's citizens have an important role to play in asserting their rights. It is government's duty to protect these rights.

Conclusion

The election of 2012 presents a moment of opportunity for Mexico. Alongside the choice of a new government to lead the country forward, Mexicans must also decide what path they will travel into the digital future. As the views of the Forum participants and the research cited in the above report confirm, maintaining the status quo is not a tenable position if Mexico hopes to achieve its full potential as a leader among nations in Latin America and around the world. Markets and institutions, regulatory and policy structures, and attitudes must all change to align with the new realities of a global digital age.

 "The best opportunity to contend with an ossified system is at the moment of change," Reed Hundt wisely observed to the forum.

Government has a pivotal role to play in propelling Mexico ahead to a digital future. The forum advised that governments should ensure that markets are open and competitive while being cautious about intervening directly in markets. Government should not choose winners and losers as markets evolve and mature. Furthermore, there is a distinction between what governments *can* do and what they *should* do. Governments may engage in direct and indirect actions that can help, but these actions ought to be aimed at driving investment in infrastructure, venture capital formation, the culture of innovation and engagement. If governments do act, then there should be an understanding that this does not mean the governments can restrict or censor.

Governments can drive engagement by putting public information online, on government portals and elsewhere, so that people have relevant content and information to access. They can work with other stakeholders to address aspects of the digital divide that inhibit people, especially those from disadvantaged or vulnerable populations, from participating in the Internet society.

Communications and media companies are in a good position to lead change in their own sector.

It is perhaps most important for governments to foster an enabling environment for universal connectivity, freedom of communication and cultural development. Ricardo Salinas observed in his keynote remarks that Mexican legislators have created a number of obstacles to free expression that ought not to be acceptable in a democratic society. When societies have fostered a healthy and free enabling environment, businesses, civil society and citizens can unleash their creativity and build the economic, political, cultural and social milieu that makes their world a better place in which to live.

Communications and media companies are in a good position to lead change in their own sector. They can change their metrics for success from producing products to promoting engagement among people, organizations, institutions and ideas. Staying engaged means being empowered at the local level, which brings the discussion full

circle to the ways in which connectivity empowers people. Media organizations, as well as others, need to help their audiences become more literate in new platforms, including helping them gain new skills and confidence as information consumers and creators. They can also support experimentation and new business models, recognizing that it is a time of great change but also a time of great opportunity.

It is time for all sectors, all institutions and all peoples of Mexican society to come together to address the challenges of the digital information age. The path forward to universal connectivity must be one that all stakeholders in society travel together. A connected society will advance the goals of an open society and open networks. It will promote social, economic and political progress and foster democracy. It is also the only viable path to success in the 21st century.
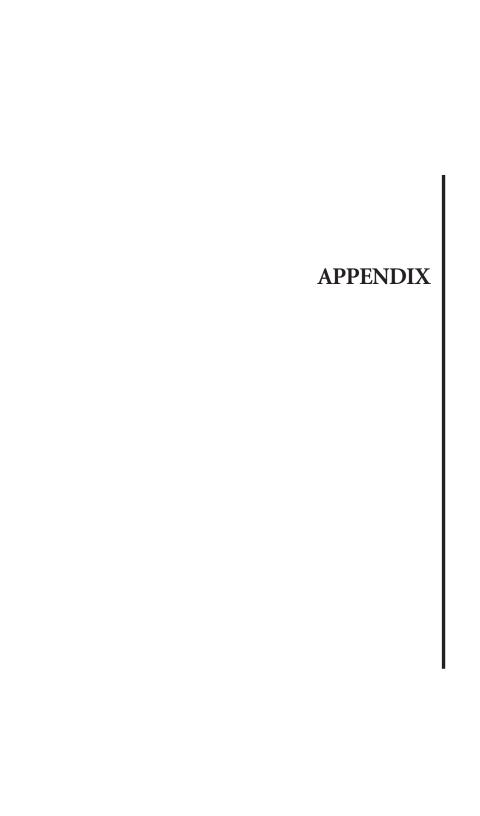
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27. In the United States, the Stop Online Piracy Act, orSOPA (112th Congress, H.R. 3261) and PROTECT IP Act, or PIPA (112th Congress, S. 968), both failed to pass in the 112th Congress. ACTA is the multinational Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, a treaty signed by the United States and seven other countries in October 2011 and later ratified by the European Union and 22 of its member nations in January 2012. HADOPI is the Haute Autorité pour la diffusion des œuvres et la protection des droits sur internet law approved in 2009 in France. The Ley Sinde is part of Spain's Sustainable Economy Act (Ley de Economía Sostenible) passed in December 2011. The Doring Law, proposed by National Action Party (PAN) legislator Federico Döring, is similar to SOPA and is under consideration in Mexico.

28. For detailed discussion of how to implement strategies for digital and media literacy, see Renee Hobbs, *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action* (The Aspen Institute, 2010). Available at www.knightcomm.org/digital-and-media-literacy

29. Major national news organizations in the United States have documented the rise in social media use for reporting on violence in Mexico, with an uptick in coverage following the execution of La Nena de Laredo and a spate of particularly shocking murders in the state of Veracruz in the fall of 2011. "Before the police or news reporters had even arrived at the underpass outside Veracruz where gunmen held up traffic and dumped 35 bodies at rush hour last week, Twitter was already buzzing with fear and valuable information," reported New York Times correspondent Damien Cave in "Mexico Turns to Social media for Information and Survival," on the *New York Times* (September 24, 2011). Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/world/americas/mexico-turns-to-twitter-and-facebook-for-information-and-survival.html

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34. For summary of issues addressed by the Commission for the period 2012-2014, see the *Directory of Bilateral Issues*, High Level Consultative Commission on Telecommunications U.S.-Mexico, United States Department of State. Available at http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/telecom/192031.htm

APPENDIX

Aspen Institute Forum on the Freedom to Communicate

Mexico City, Mexico • 21 February – 22 February 2012

Participants

Joaquín Alvarado
Senior Vice President for
  Digital Innovation
American Public Media

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Executive Director
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  Program
The Aspen Institute

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  Arts Department
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Federico Reyes Heroles
President
Fundación Este País

Reed Hundt
Former Chairman
Federal Communications
  Commission
United States of America

Walter Isaacson
President and CEO
The Aspen Institute

Carlos Lauría
Americas Senior Program
  Coordinator
Committee to Protect Journalists

Monica Lozano
Chief Executive Officer
ImpreMedia

Juan Ludlow
Chief of Staff
Federal Telecommunications
  Commission of Mexico
  (Cofetel)

María Elena Meneses
Professor and Coordinator of
  the Fellowship in Information
  Society
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Andrés Roemer
Executive Director
Poder Cívico

Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of the conference.

Alec Ross
Senior Advisor for Innovation
U.S. Department of State

Ricardo B. Salinas
Founder and Chairman
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TV Azteca

Héctor Schamis
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Senior Correspondent
PBS NewsHour

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Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of the conference.

Walter Isaacson
President and CEO of the Aspen Institute

Remarks on the Freedom to Communicate

Aspen Institute Forum on the Freedom to Communicate
February 21, 2012 • Mexico City, Mexico

One of the things that Mexico and the United States share is a vibrant sense of the power that comes from the freedom of communication. We share a great communications culture which stems from the exuberant belief in the power that comes when ideas flow and people get to debate.

This attitude is ingrained in the DNA of the United States ever since Thomas Paine was standing on the street corner in Philadelphia handing out pamphlets called Common Sense. Likewise, you see it in Mexico for over the past two centuries—a vibrant culture of music, arts, literature, media, newspapers, and now television and radio—all of which makes Mexico the exciting and creative society that it is. This type of tradition, in which the freedom to communicate is not only ingrained in the DNA but celebrated everyday as part of what makes life so special, is crucial to being successful in the 21st century.

In the information age of the 21st century, nations will be divided into two types of states: those that are comfortable with the free flow of information and those that failingly try to impose an authoritarian regime and feel threatened by the free flow of information. I think that is true of individuals as well. There will be two types of people in the 21st century: those who celebrate the information culture and those who feel left out of it.

This is why the work that Ricardo Salinas is doing in education and education leadership is so important. I do think that both education and communication are going to be the key to nations successfully competing in the 21st century information age.

One of the great questions of our era, or maybe of all eras, is: Does the freedom to communicate—do the free press, free speech and the free flow of ideas—lead inexorably to democracy and more freedom?

This is something that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's innovation advisor Alec Ross has been looking at with his colleagues at the U.S. State Department: how the free flow of information empowers democracy around the world. This is not a new question. It goes way back, certainly back as far as Gutenberg and the invention of the movable type printing press in Europe. The free flow of information caused by the printing press not only broke the stranglehold of all authorities and allowed a reformation and a renaissance of ideas, but it also changed the entire political structure of the period.

There is a great story of William Tyndale, the man who translated the Bible into English for the first time (living in Holland when he did it). He was empowered by Gutenberg's printing press. The bishop of London, being afraid of the free flow of ideas, decided that it was very dangerous to have the Bible in the vernacular, the Bible spread around like that. It contained some subversive ideas that could spread as well. So the bishop sent a very rich patron to buy up all the copies of the Bible that Tyndale had printed in order to destroy them.

This was the first example of somebody fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of media and the free flow of ideas. This was the best business model you could have if you were Tyndale. Tyndale could keep printing the Bible and the other tracts that he was producing with the movable type printing press. The first force that made it hard to stop the free flow of ideas was there in Gutenberg's invention. People who used the old methods to try to repress the free flow of information were a little bit like the Shakespearean characters who railed against the coming of the tides.

Benjamin Franklin knew this well when he ran away at age 17 from a very authoritarian regime which was the Puritan theocracy of Boston. When he arrived in Philadelphia, the first thing he did was create a printing press. In a town that had 11 newspapers, he decided to create a 12th because he believed that the freedom to communicate would empower what he called "we, the middling people" to have our own form of democracy.

That notion of self-rule and empowering people to have liberties could not be suppressed by those whose only form of repression would come by stopping the freedom to communicate. So he created a printing press and he also created the postal system so there could be the

spread of ideas up and down the colonies. The free flow of ideas in the colonies would not have to go back to central authorities in London. Ideas could spread on their own without the compulsory stamp on it that, prior to the repeal of the Stamp Act, declared, "printed by authority." With his printing press and his postal system, Franklin was very much saying, "printed not by authority." The freedom to communicate allowed us—"we, the middling people"—to bring to ourselves the empowerment and take it away from the centralized authority.

I happened to see this when I was a young journalist covering the fall of communism in 1989 in Eastern Europe. I was in Bratislava, having been to Poland and other places (Bratislava was then part of Czechoslovakia). I was at the Forum Hotel which is where they put up foreigners because it was the only place that had satellite, so you could watch broadcasts from out of the country. One day, as I was leaving my room, one of the maids asked, "Can we use your room in the afternoon? The students like to come by because it is the only place they can listen to the music videos." I replied, "Yes, of course." I made a point of coming back early so I could meet some of the students who might be using the room because it was the only place for the free flow of ideas. But they weren't listening to music videos. They were watching CNN and what was happening in the Gdansk shipyards that August of 1989. I realized that the inability to control or to censor or to stop the free flow of information was going to remove from authorities the ability to stop the spread of democratization.

I also saw that in Kashgar, a tiny town in the western part of China. I went to a café where there were students around a computer in the back room. They were on the Internet. I decided to try something and typed in "CNN" and of course it said "access denied." I typed in "Time" and I found it was blocked, too. One of the students elbowed me aside, typed in something, and Time came up and then CNN came up. I asked the student, "What did you do?" and he said, "We know how to go through proxy servers in Hong Kong that the censors are clueless about." Once again it was a lesson to me about how the freedom to communicate would empower a new generation and eventually the free flow of ideas would lead to more individual liberties and more democracy.

We've seen this happen in the past year and a half in Tahrir Square and all over the Middle East.

You may say that it's happening in fits and starts, that whether it's Kashmir, Kashgar or Cairo, maybe it doesn't work all the time. Maybe the free flow of information has its setbacks. And yes, it does. Everything has its setbacks. All progress is two steps forward, one, one and a half, sometimes two steps back. But I firmly believe that the freedom to communicate and the free flow of ideas, gradually but inexorably, bends the arc of history towards democracy and that will be the story of the 21st century.

When I asked Steve Jobs the key to his success, he always said, "I question authority. I think different. I stand at the intersection of creativity and the new technologies, because that's what allows us to come up with new ideas and to rebel against the stale old ones." Imagination and innovative thinking depend, as he and one of my other subjects, Albert Einstein, put it, on the free flow of ideas. You cannot think creatively, you cannot innovate well, you cannot have an economy that is based on the information age technologies unless you're comfortable with the freedom to communicate and the free flow of ideas.

For Steve Jobs, it was summed up in two words, *think different.* Those of you who are scholars of the English language may argue that it should be *think differently*, that it's an adverb. But he said no, *different* is a noun, just like *think big* and *think exciting. Think different.* And think different comes when you are exposed to ideas and information that you didn't have access to before.

I think Mexico and the United States are poised to stand at this intersection of the free flow of ideas that leads to creativity and that creates the thriving economies in which innovation is connected to technology. We share a creative spirit. We realize that the free flow of information will lead to creativity. And most importantly, we realize that the freedom to communicate will not only lead to success in the information age, but will lead to individual empowerment. It will lead to making our lives more meaningful. It will lead to making them better as leaders and human beings.

Thank you all very much.

Ricardo B. Salinas
Founder and Chairman, Grupo Salinas

Remarks on the Freedom to Communicate

Aspen Institute Forum on the Freedom to Communicate
February 21, 2012 • Mexico City, Mexico

As humans we are fundamentally cooperative beings. Collaboration has always been necessary, even in prehistoric times, to our survival. This is why we developed the enormous communication skills that distinguish us in nature.

We started by simply shouting and gesticulating. With time, we developed spoken language to communicate with more precision. We would not have been able to hunt the huge beasts of yesteryear, far bigger and more physically powerful than ourselves, without communicating and working together. Writing gave us a valuable instrument to record our ideas, and the ability to communicate them at a distance through letters, reports and literature. Writing also enabled us to document laws and give people the rules that need to be obeyed in society.

Printing multiplied the number of copies of any given text and gave the written word a newly extended reach. Radio gave the spoken word the same capacity to reach the masses. Television added images to the written and spoken words, completing the first mass media revolution.

The Internet has produced another major advance in this evolution, combining all previous forms of communication. It makes individual writing more efficient and instantaneous, as letters have now become e-mails, but it also encompasses mass media, from books and periodicals to radio and television. Meanwhile, the Internet is becoming a universal library that expands and preserves the collective memory of mankind.

Mobile telephones have become true computers with constant access to the Internet. Social networks have allowed us to recover the close-contact communities we had in the past—before urbanization turned us into islands—even as we remain citizens of a global village. And

this is just the beginning. The construction of the digital world has just begun.

Each one of these steps in the development of communication has required an environment of freedom. Without freedom imagination cannot exist and the ability to communicate does not fulfill its function of developing and exchanging ideas.

Freedom, however, provokes fear among those who wield power. This is the origin of censorship. At first it was aimed at those who defended uncomfortable causes in public places—giving a speech on a soap box was a sufficient reason to jail a dissident. Later, censorship was applied to those who wrote books or articles and to their publishers. In more recent times it is aimed at those who put forth ideas on radio or television. We also see attempts to censor the Internet—and these attempts are not limited to China.

Censorship is an unavoidable temptation for those who want to maintain control of society. The Ecuadorean government imposed a jail sentence of three years and a fine of 40 million dollars for an opinion writer and the owners of the daily El Universo for criticizing President Rafael Correa. The Correa administration "generously" decided later on to lift the punishment, but the message was clear—don't mess with the president in Ecuador. The Venezuelan government has canceled television and radio concessions that were uncomfortable to President Hugo Chávez. In Cuba dissident voices have long been banned or have been severely restricted.

Mexico is not the world's worst offender, but Mexicans are nevertheless suffering various forms of censorship. The 2007 electoral legislation banned ordinary citizens from contracting radio and television spaces to express their political ideas. Political parties and politicians were given a monopoly on using political spaces in the media. They in fact took, without compensation, 25 percent of all commercial time in radio and television stations to use for political propaganda. The same legislation prohibited candidates and parties from criticizing each other in political ads. In Mexico it is a political crime to call a corrupt politician "corrupt" in an advertisement. Maybe this is why corruption remains so pervasive in the country.

Communication requires not only freedom but also equal access. Mexican authorities, however, have allowed Telmex and Telcel, the dominant players in fixed and mobile telephony, to apply discriminatory interconnection fees—they charge less to their clients than to competitors. This monopoly practice has made competition extremely difficult in the market.

In spite of all the barriers and problems, I am an optimist. History proves that, regardless of the attempts to have censorship and restrictions, we have always found ways to sustain the freedom to communicate that we need as a society.

The Forum on the Freedom to Communicate organized by the Aspen Institute, Grupo Salinas and Caminos de la Libertad is an indication of the persistence of the ideas that can transform society. As long as these ideas remain alive and vibrant, we will preserve the freedom to communicate.

About the Author

Amy Korzick Garmer is Director of Journalism Projects for the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program. Her work at the Program examines the impact of digital technology and network communications on journalism and media, communities and democratic institutions both domestically and internationally. Most recently, Garmer led the development, publication and outreach efforts for the Program's white paper series inspired by the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy as series editor. This work has focused on meeting the information needs of individuals and communities through innovative efforts to foster universal broadband access and adoption, local journalism and public service media, digital and media literacy, civic engagement and government transparency.

Amy Garmer has spent almost two decades working in public policy at the leading edge of new media, communications and information technologies and practices. Her portfolio of projects at the Institute has included the Aspen Institute Symposium on Critical Issues in Journalism at the U.S. Department of State (part of the U.S. State Department's Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists), the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Journalism and National Security, and the Aspen Institute Arab-U.S. Media Forum.

She is the author or editor of six books on such diverse topics as advertising and ethnic media (*Unmassing America: Ethnic Media and the New Advertising Marketplace*, 2006), journalism in transition (*American Journalism in Transition: A View at the Top*, 2001), digital broadcasting (*Digital Broadcasting and the Public Interest*, 1998), diversity in media (*Investing in Diversity: Advancing Opportunities for Minorities and the Media*, 1998), and technology in education (*Creating a Learning Society: Initiatives for Education and Technology*, 1996).

Prior to joining the Aspen Institute, Garmer served on the staff of U.S. Senator Sam Nunn. She earned her B.A. in rhetoric and communication studies at the University of Virginia and her M.A. in speech communication from the College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin.

About the
Communications and Society Program

www.aspeninstitute.org/c&s

The Communications and Society Program is an active venue for global leaders and experts from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds to exchange and gain new knowledge and insights on the societal impact of advances in digital technology and network communications. The Program also creates a multidisciplinary space in the communications policymaking world where veteran and emerging decision makers can explore new concepts, find personal growth and insight, and develop new networks for the betterment of the policymaking process and society.

The Program's projects fall into one or more of three categories: communications and media policy, digital technologies and democratic values, and network technology and social change. Ongoing activities of the Communications and Society Program include annual roundtables on journalism and society (e.g., journalism and national security), communications policy in a converged world (e.g., the future of video regulation), the impact of advances in information technology (e.g., "when push comes to pull"), advances in the mailing medium, and diversity and the media. The Program also convenes the Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society, in which chief executive-level leaders of business, government, and the nonprofit sector examine issues relating to the changing media and technology environment.

Most conferences use the signature Aspen Institute seminar format: approximately 25 leaders from a variety of disciplines and perspectives engaged in roundtable dialogue, moderated with the objective of driving the agenda to specific conclusions and recommendations.

 Conference reports and other materials are distributed to key policymakers and opinion leaders within the United States and around the world. They also are available to the public at large through the World Wide Web at *http://www.aspeninstitute.org/c&s*.

The Program's Executive Director is Charles M. Firestone, who has served in that capacity since 1989. He also served as Executive Vice President of the Aspen Institute for three years. He is a communications attorney and law professor who formerly was director of the UCLA Communications Law Program, first president of the Los Angeles Board of Telecommunications Commissioners, and an appellate attorney for the U.S. Federal Communications Commission.