Collaborative Policy Networks: Coordinating Disability and Technology Policy

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Introduction

This paper addresses key factors and practices that can be used to develop a set of virtual interactive tools which support a community of practice focusing on disability and technology policy; in other words, what contexts leverage research, academic, and advocacy nodes of the disability community into effectual policy-making? Disability policy, both its development and implementation, is critical to reducing technological inaccessibility and participatory barriers for people in the community and workplace. A difficulty in the successful development of policy approaches, instruments, and initiatives is believed to be the somewhat disparate nature of the disability community, divided by multiple issues, disabilities, and philosophies. There are over 60 definitions of disability in the U.S. Code (CESSI).

The first part of this research paper provides a brief review of three distinct bodies of literature: policy networks, online social networking, and communities of practice. Understanding policy networks and collaborative policy-making processes will shed light on how independent, specialized people and organizations can uniquely contribute to disability and technology policy. To some, a review of current online social networking trends might seem tangential, but these types of websites have been the source of and the inspiration for collaborative online networks used in business, policy, and academia. Of particular interest is the "community of practice" model: its problems and possibilities as well as its utility in the policy process. All three bodies of literature lead into one another. How policy networks can mimic social networks in a specific community of practice is the foundational case to be made.

The second part of this research paper asks three questions. Given the current policy activities of several National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) projects, what approaches might be explored to improve the communication and collaboration amongst different entities on policy issues? In 2005, NIDRR conducted a survey of Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERCs), Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs), and Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRPs) about collaborative research work. Survey results pointed to a more than moderate interest in

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collaborative projects. If interest in collaborative research is high, what kind of interest and opinion do NIDRR-funded projects have toward collaborative policy networking? Depending on answers from the previous question, a next step would review and possibly create online tools that best facilitate such activities. Going forward this project expects to provide an innovative, more integrated way of informing disability and technology policy.

In its most recent *Long-Range Plan* for fiscal years 2005-2009, the NIDRR outlined its goals for eliminating disparities between persons with disabilities and the general population in a number of areas, such as employment, participation and community living, and health and function (U.S. DOE, 2006). NIDRR has directed that its sponsored projects will engage directly in short-term outcomes: capacity building, research and development, and knowledge translation. It also hopes to indirectly pursue several intermediate outcomes: principally, the adoption and use of new knowledge leading to changes/improvements in policy, practice, behavior, and system capacity (U.S. DOE, 2006). The Logic Model established by NIDRR notes that while one agency and its projects cannot possibly be responsible for effecting long-term changes on its own, fulfillment of the direct short-term outcomes and indirect, intermediate outcomes will contribute to effecting long-term change in ameliorating barriers to physical and social inclusion faced by persons with disabilities (U.S. DOE, 2006).

One area in which NIDRR-sponsored research projects may contribute to the fulfillment of these outcomes is in the area of policy: through collaborative policy research, dissemination, and related activities. Policy-related activities among NIDRR projects, most notably RERCs, RRTCs, and DRRPs, have historically been somewhat ancillary to the primary missions of these projects, usually the investigation into, development of, and dissemination of topic-specific technologies, processes, products, and environmental adaptations for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, many of these centers are uniquely situated so as to be able to comment on aspects of the regulatory structure and policymaking affecting persons with disabilities. NIDRR-sponsored projects engage professionals who are experts in their various subject areas and who are capable of responding to how policymaking and legislation may help realize or impede NIDRR's stated goals, especially in technical areas and in the movement of NIDRR's research products onto the market for the benefit of persons with disabilities. The involvement of subject experts in collaborative policy activities is consistent with NIDRR's stated interests in knowledge translation and policy change. Collaborative policy activities represent an extension of the outcomes-based practices advocated by NIDRR in its most recent *Long-Range Plan*, and such activities afford opportunity for various stakeholders to affect change in new ways.

Policy Networks and Social Networks

Connection

When individuals collaborate, meet new people, and move amongst a web of relationships, common parlance refers to such action as *networking*. Policy activity, research practice, and even personal relationships take on a similar character in the Information Age. According to the literature, policy networks and social networking have three interrelated functions: connection, collaboration, and feedback. One of the initial uses of the Internet was to connect professionals to one another. By the year 2000, over 90 million Americans had participated in online groups, 50% of which belonged to a professional or vocational group of one form or another (Horrigan, 2001). Academia has been particularly affected by this technological change. For many years professional researchers and academics have

corresponded and collaborated through the long tradition of academic journals, but in recent years, online discussion groups have allowed for more frequent communication and updated information on colleagues' research. A 2004 European survey of academically-oriented Internet discussion group users concluded that users find social connections far more important than research collaboration (Matzat, 2004). The Nature Network, for instance, is a website where scientists can show work, form interest groups, and review research online (Cohen, 2007). An unintended but much welcomed consequence has been the usefulness in recruitment and hiring of faculty and research scientists: transforming the arduous process of *curriculum vitae* dissemination in more visible ways. Online scholarly activity is being taken very seriously throughout the academy. In fact, Sigma Xi, a scientific research organization, connects scientists using Facebook. Social networking and professional connections have not only transformed interaction, but also created opportunity for further capacity building and collaboration.

Similarly, policy networks are organizations, institutions, and individuals linked together in small, specified policy arenas, much like academics in their fields of specialization. These networks are more than simply a group of individuals or organizations who are connected; policy networks are communication channels for the exchange of ideas, data, and trust which identify gaps and opportunities within a policy domain (Lippman & Pentland, 2004; Mikkelsen, 2006; Sherraden, Slosar, & Sherraden, 2002). A policy networks is a nexus of expertise working to make policy change happen (or not happen, as the case may be). Connections among people and organizations, particularly ones operating within policy networks, are known as "weak ties" – a form of social capital. Accumulating resources through relationships – the definition of social capital – is nothing original, but recent attempts to build it online are the newest approaches. Emerging software and websites, such as Facebook, enable users to maintain such relationships and ties cheaply and easily; however, the current literature suggests that social networking sites only support relationships and maintain ties from *offline* interaction. Survey research has demonstrated that new relationships are rarely created solely in online venues; building social capital in social rather than professional networking sites is extraordinarily rare (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Ellison, 2006). For policy networks, new software facilitates information flow and connection, but the literature indicates that software applications and websites are no the whole story. These technologies seem focused on maintaining relationships, not creating them.

Collaboration

Research that examines the creating of social capital is essentially research in collaboration: between individuals, institutions, etc. Much of the research on collaboration reflects similar outcomes from online social capital investigations: "the more the online interaction of the members is embedded in interactions outside of the online group, the higher the degree of social embeddedness of the group" (Matzat, 2004, p. 80). Human behavior patterns matter online as well as offline. An individual's motives are the foundation of all collective organizing and collaboration online: for what purpose are individuals gathered? Is it a common interest, common goal, common experience? Or are individuals operating out of self-interest to achieve some result? Many articles have been written about the revolution in collaborative work because of the Internet, but there are social consequences to be taken into account. Human competitiveness, free-riding, social loafing, trust, and bounded rationality are user costs in any online collaborative practice (Matzat, 2004; Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996; Jarvenpaa, 1999; Schoberth, 2003). Online collaboration, like face-to-face encounters, can be complicated and subject to actors' personalities and motives. Though online collaboration can be

romanticized as the perfect strategy for policy networks and policy change, there are other considerations besides the human factors.

Institutional factors – like structure, procedure, or mission – also contribute to the usefulness of online collaborative activities. Rethemeter (2006) utilized a descriptive case study method and examined two different online policy network domains: mental health policy and adult education policy. The initial findings showed that the Internet, though it enhances existing relationships, does not create new ones. The project also tried to characterize the Internet's effect on policy process, yet the results demonstrated, contrary to the initial hypothesis, that the Internet "has not become a democratizing force for democratizing policy decisions" (279). The study found that the competitiveness for funding created tensions among coordinated organizations, and because of inter-group tensions, inter-group projects suffered. According to Mintzberg (1979), the function of a network, by its very definition, assumes a "division of labor into various tasks to be performed and the coordination of these tasks to accomplish the activity" (as cited in Carlsson, 2000, p. 508). The scope of collaboration is determined by the quality and quantity of the links and actors; more integrated, small networks can focus on niche areas, like technology and disability policy, while broader systems, more similar to issue networks, may address many more aspects of a policy arena, like disability policy more broadly. On the issue of curbing competitiveness, the research is silent, though one may infer that collaborative success is more a function of the network structure than a particular policy arena. If small, focused groups divide tasks and contribute different knowledge sets, chances of conflict can be mitigated.

When actors and organizations build an online consortium, there is a perceived utility in the consortia's objective for their individualized purposes: either they derive benefits from the knowledge in the consortia or individual actors and organizations more effective joined with other organizations. University-related collaborative groups have long had a high status with regard to research, innovation, and policy, though when collaborative networks compete on public sector issues, there can be a segregation of institutions and organizations, many times leaving small, private firms out of the loop (Barnett, Mischke, & Ocasio, 2000, p. 349). Over time, studies have shown that collaborative groups based out of universities obtain more funding and recognition than independent groups. This fact cuts both ways. On the one hand, a difference of prestige translates into distinct circles of actors functioning independent of one another, but on the other hand, it allows for universities and related research institutional programs, like NIDRR projects, to have a particular weight to their research and policy activities.

Feedback

Other, more short-term relationships have been created by institutions and corporations who utilize social networking sites. These relationships are one-way and do not emphasize collaboration as much as they do connecting *to* individuals. Instead the focus is on feedback. The National Health Service in the U.K. has recently begun a program connecting patients to some of the inner-workings of the institution with the goal of facilitating more patient involvement (RCN). Corporations have been using social networking sites in a variety of ways, but principally as a tool for product feedback. In an era where robust marketing is the cornerstone of any business strategy, corporations are tapping into vast networks of individuals as cheap and easy evaluators and testers for new products, advertisements, and corporate sponsorship schemes. Newsgroups and major media outlets, especially local newspapers, are using online social networking to hone there content and features to more targeted audiences. Institutions of higher education use online networks as a recruiting tool, whether it be for MBA

programs or science majors. The feedback dynamic of online networking is characterized by its power relationship. In all of these instances, power is maintained by the organization conducting the process. There is a sense of collaboration for participants, but participants are not getting to same benefits as the larger entities within the relationship. In more collaborative settings the power dynamic is more diffused and shared amongst participants.

In policy networks the feedback dimension is similar in that one entity tends to take the leading role in dictating the flow of communication. Research has shown that there are definitive leaders in policy networks: typically lead government agencies (Ryan, 2001). Statutory authority and technical expertise guide a policy network, but networks also have a multi-dimensional aspect of their leadership – analysts, researchers, stakeholders, advocates, scientists. When all these actors are combined in a network change (or the lack thereof) can occur – in regulatory negotiation particularly. The practice of rule-making and the interaction with the public illustrates this characterization of policy networks.

Policy networks are not without their own problems. Koppenjan and Klijn (2004) highlight a frequent "substantive uncertainty," that is, disparate members of a network differing on images and/or framing of the problem. Also, "institutional uncertainty" can create tensions and/or gaps in communication, whether that is by differing methods of contact and interaction or trust and familiarity between institutions. These issues could plausibly be solved by proper management, yet management itself is problematized by Robinson. The literature "often exhibits a triumphalist view of networks as unproblematic solutions," but qualitative data seems to suggest otherwise (Robinson, 2006, p. 593). Strategies that attempt to mitigate uncertainty about membership identities, clarity of goals, or challenges of diversity typically refashion networks in hierarchical structures which are antithetical to the very idea of policy networks (Huxsom & Vangen, 2005). The myth of spontaneous organization to resolve policy problems is rarely true; policy networks are intricately crafted, governed, and relatively stable. A policy network's structure correlates to specific types of policy change; the character of a network – who founded it, who leads it, who participates, and how – says a lot about whether there's a paradigm shift or only incremental change (Howlett, 2002). When crafting a collaborative policy network, these foundational issues are critical to shaping the direction and effectiveness of the network.

Communities of Practice

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of individuals who share experience, understanding, data, and tools about an area of common interest. It could be further defined as a group of individuals who have common causes, capabilities, or problems within a certain field, discipline, or context, and individuals who deepen their knowledge and expertise through these online interactions consistently and continuously. This form of knowledge management and manipulation has many effects on learning in various sectors and on various scales. There are three elements of a CoP: (1) "a domain, or a defined set of issues (2) a community, or a network of relationships; and (3) practices, or standardized ways of "doing things" (Lin & Lin, 2006). These three elements draw from various iterations of social and professional networking, and the CoP's utility and business will be an example for policy activities.

A CoP's domain can be any set of issues that a networked community decides to address. Collaboration on research projects, business endeavors, technological innovation, advocacy training, educational approaches, or matters of public policy can all be considered as a domain of

knowledge. Unlike social networking websites soliciting feedback and consumer opinion, CoPs are more than one-way channels for information dissemination or solicitation. CoPs are also more than a social connection; they are a vehicle for knowledge management not in one place, but in many places at once. With differing types of knowledge, practitioners can enter in to, contribute, reshape, or critique knowledge, in any manner they wish, within a particular CoP. This horizontal movement of communication fragments power and authority and allows for more people to be knowledge managers themselves.

As the economy restructures itself, workers connect more to occupation than industry. More and more people are collaborating and reaching out across institutional and organizational lines to connect with those in their field of specialization. In organization theory, there have been studies looking at the competitive forces that drive collaboration, the strategic networking that fosters combining efforts, and resource-based approaches about how individuals and entities acquire the information and knowledge that they need (Hagedoorn, Link, & Vonortas, 2000). Though there is no unified framework for understanding collaborative networks, communities of practice, or research partnerships, their pragmatic applications indicate their scope.

This cross-organizational focus is linking actors between and among cities, states, non-profit organizations, businesses, research alliances, industrial clusters, universities, and transnational corporations. There is great diversity in using CoPs across sectors – public, private, and non-governmental – to spur a innovation. This type of organizational thinking has been beneficial in workforce development strategies, academic research (Cohen, 2007; Richardson, & Cooper, 2003), technology and pedagogy (Leshem, 2007), and public policy (Linehan, Müller, & Cashman, 2005). Health Canada, the federal public health agency, has numerous CoPs that focus on different health policy issues and collaborative approaches to health policy-making. The U.S. Department of Education has several CoPs connected to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP); here, practitioners from around the country communicate directly on theoretical, political, and practical aspects of issues related to disability and education.[2] People with disabilities have created CoPs related to daily living and the shared strategies for a variety of daily considerations for people with a disability (Anderberg, 2006).

Benefits, Costs, and Considerations of a CoP

In a community of practice centered around policy activities, the three categories of benefits would all apply. There are multi-dimensional advantages to collaborative policy activities, according to Etienne Wenger, the creator of CoPs (Winger, 2008). An organization can build knowledge competencies, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and allow for the cross-fertilization of ideas, innovation, and solutions. Practitioners within the CoP build a certain language and method for their work, make avenues for disseminating their knowledge to larger populations, and directly create a store of knowledge – usually catalogued digitally – for when participants leave the CoP. The larger community derives benefit from each individual, but each individual also receives benefit from the community. CoPs are easy ways to stay current with latest knowledge, forge partnerships and leverage disparate knowledge nodes, and create an identity amongst practitioners (Winger, 2008).

A disability and technology policy CoP would be an information node, a juncture of numerous lines of communication and knowledge. Particularly in policy activities, there is a need for quick adaptation which is well-suited to the latest online tools available. Traditional

[2] http://ideapartnership.org/page.cfm?pageid=29

policy activities, like public hearings and comment procedures, will continue for years to come, but how individuals get their information, how collectives craft comments, how public policy is shaped more generally has already and will continue to evolve along with information and communication technologies.

There are costs, however, which must be considered in any online collaborative project. No endeavor online is problem-free, and just as an organization encounters problems, glitches, and inefficiencies, there are also online collaborative practices that should be addressed. The most conspicuous issue is the most important: boundaries. Anytime a community is formed a boundary is drawn. Entities and individuals must constantly reevaluate where that line is draw to maximize effectiveness and inclusiveness. Human competitiveness, free-riding, social loafing, trust, and bounded rationality are user costs in any online collaborative practice (Matzat, 2004; Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996; Jarvenpaa, 1999; Schoberth, 2003). Trust is especially important. Trust has design aspects related to a website's graphics, structure, and content, all of which collaborators expect to be credible, personalized, and predictable (Briggs, P., Burford, B., De Angeli, A., & Lynch, P., 2002; Wang, Y. D., & Emurian, H. H., 2005). Precisely because people are from varying organizations, there may be a tendency to competition, even on a subtle, unstated level; therefore, it is important to establish a team environment, a consortium of actors and stakeholders. No one can manage individuals' contributions, but a cultivated environment of reciprocity and "conversation," especially around a specified project, can keep the CoP's momentum (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Lin & Lin, 2006).

Another consideration is the volume of information, the type of information, and an understanding of human limitations for information consumption; in short, information overload is a problem. From October 2007 to January 2008, the average amount of time users spent online social networking fell 14%, according to a marketing research firm. The abundance and perceived over-extension of online advertising has discouraged some users, the study suggested (Ante & Holahan, 2008). Furthermore, a practice known as gatekeeping – including "selection, addition, withholding, display, channeling, shaping, manipulation, repetition, timing, localization, integration, disregard, and deletion of information" – can be effectively managed, if organizers remain vigilant and keep online communities from moving in a hierarchical direction (Barzilai-Nahon, 2006). Monitoring information flow, how much information is shared at any given time, and the way in which it is shared are all concerns in a CoP.

Online Landscape of Disability and Technology Policy

Before bringing the theory and literature to bear on disability and technology policy entities, an inventory of current online activities is appropriate. In Table 1, there are 20 different entities related to disability. Organizations were included in the matrix if they met *all* of the following criteria and were published in English. Entities were evaluated by the following:

1. Concerned primarily with disability and secondarily with policy, or the reverse.

2. National (as opposed to state/province or local) approach, mission, and constituency.

3. An Internet presence, regardless of the last update, and have (at minimum) active links.

4. Not a government entity, though recipients of government funding not excluded.

5. Online tools that foster collaboration between actors external to the entity.

6. Cross-disability concerns, that is, broader than an entity focused on one disability.

7. Technology as influential component or, if not, noteworthy tools from criterion 5.

8. Documented evidence of either: (1) research, (2) advocacy, or (3) training in policy.

Criterion 8 is the most nuanced. Policy activities generally fall into one of three different categories. Policy research and analysis can be found in nearly half of the categorized entities. This type of work would involve research projects answering questions or evaluating policy actions on some level. Advocacy refers to a wide range of work that explicitly champions particular policies or actions. Training in policy is a broad term meaning any organization that collects and disseminates knowledge to a wide array of stakeholders for strategic purposes.

The contents of Table 1 are by no means exhaustive, but the research hopes to be an accurate portrayal of the online landscape nonetheless. From the Table, it is clear that different entities utilize different tools within their online presence. Some tools are more appropriate to some entities than to others. For example, some research entities were only in existence for a short time (because of finite funding), so their online tools consist primarily of data sets, the tool one would expect from a research collaborative. In another example, the Beach Center on Disability has a policy library within its CoP. They have several other learning online tools as well because their participants are not only professionals, but also concerned parents and teachers of children with disabilities.

Taken together, the online tools in use by disability and/or technology policy entities are diverse and useful on multiple levels. The problem is not a lack of tools, but a lack of coordination among disparate entities working towards disparate goals. The right online tools – whether they are newsletters, a Wiki, a policy library, personal accounts, a glossary, discussion boards, webcourses, podcasts, webcasts, or videos – would facilitate synchronization among the various stakeholders with regard to public policy. This improvement in communication flow and effective collaboration would add a new dimension to the work of NIDRR-funded entities; the common policy concerns reach all Centers and the reverse is also true. Policy concerns from the Centers would extend to a centralized online location where collaboration would take place.

One of the strongest examples of online tools in action is Taking It Global (http://www.takingITglobal.org/). A magazine, podcasts, a library, newsletters, discussion boards, individualized member features much a like a social networking site (members are also searchable), financial opportunities (grant-searching), and well as organizational toolkits are all found on the site. Geared towards involving youth in global affairs, the website hosts approximately 200,000 members as of this writing. Though not a group of professionals necessarily, this website brings together a wide array of individuals, each with their own knowledge sets and interests, to network within the common theme of "youth building social change." In much the same way, a CoP could be created with a similarly wide array of disability and technology professionals, each with their own knowledge sets and interests, to network within the common theme of "experts building policy knowledge." Another set of strong examples are entities involved in non-disability policy activities. The National Association of

Public Administration, the Environmental Defense Fund, Virtual Alabama, and the State of Rhode Island are all experimenting with the possibilities that arise from open source technology (known popularly as Web 2.0) joined with policy matters.

Conclusion

An online collaborative policy network that focuses on disability and technology policy is well within reach. It is a financial feasible and logistically practical way to leverage research, academic, and advocacy nodes within this particular policy niche. Concerns in the literature, namely issues of trust and competition, are easily mitigated since this network will – at least initially – be confined to NIDRR-funded entities. There is no spontaneous organization around a topic which may lose its importance tomorrow. All that is needed are mutually agreed upon policy goals. The first step towards those goals would be to create an additional set of goals for collaboration and the shape it will take online.

By engaging experts in their various subject areas, the work of RERCs, RRTCs, and DRRPs would be greatly enhanced. A new policy dimension would be explicitly set apart and NIDRR-related activities would have an increased effect on the policymaking and legislation that inevitably shapes most aspects of disability and technology issues. This policy dimension, too, would create not only a common language among disparate groups, but an online community would effectively coordinate cross-disability, which would be a tremendous improvement (and perhaps model) in the larger disability policy community.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1. Types of Disability Collaborations on the Internet

Entity	Actors & Stakeholders	Issues	Outputs	Online Tools
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities http://www.c-c-d.org/	Over 100 national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations	25 task forces divided among as many issues	Press releases, articles/letters, reports, testimony	None, just posting
Disability Research Institute University of Illinois *(defunct since 2007)* http://www.dri.uiuc.edu/	28 institutions, primarily universities	Labor & Economics	28 Projects with published deliverables, newsletters	Newsletter, published data sets
International Disability & Development Consortium http://iddc.org.uk/	group of 16 international non-government organizations (primarily European)	International Development	Documents and articles on policy, case studies, and background information	None, just posting
Burton Blatt Institute Syracuse University http://bbi.syr.edu/	Universities, individual researchers, and 14 partner organizations	Law, Employment, & Technology	Articles, data sets	Archived documents, videos
National ADA Centers (DBTACs) http://www.dbtac.vcu.edu/	Wide-range of partnerships	Employment, Technology, ADA Compliance	Publications, newsletters, training programs	Webcourses, archived documents, published data sets, audioconferences, e-alerts, podcasts, webcasts
Disability & Information Technologies Research Alliance (Dis-IT) *(defunct since 2006)* http://www.dis-it.ca/	16 Canadian advocacy and governmental organizations as well as a few dozen faculty and students from Canadian universities	Workplace, e-learning, e-democracy, Public Services	Conference and summer institute reports	Videos, archived documents, accessibility tool, an additional website, http://www.disabilitypolicy.ca/index.html
Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA) Georgia Institute of Technology http://www.catea.org/ and http://www.assitivetech.net		Technology	AT reports on usage, newsletter, resources, links to vendors as well as academic publications, Consumer Network, old Tech Connections & ITTATC Projects	Wiki with 694 articles, RSS Feeds, archived documents and policy tools, and Consumer Network with member log-in

Independent Living Research Utilization Project http://www.ilru.org/	Statewide councils, federal and state rehabilitation agencies, and consumer organizations	Independent Living	Publications, trainings	Webcasts, archived documents, discussion boards
Beach Center on Disability University of Kansas http://beachcop.beachcenter.org	Disability programs (predominantly federal) and individual practitioners	Children	A centralized location for information and discussion	Discussion boards, policy library, discussion boards
Coalition of Organization for Accessible Technology (COAT) http://www.coataccess.org/	74 national and 103 subnational partners	Technology	Drafts of bills, best practices, white papers	Personal accounts, archived documents, glossary
Workplace Accommodations RERC http://www.workplacererc.org/	Employers, voc-rehab professionals,	Employment & Technology	Policy highlights, policy briefs, regulatory assessment, white papers	Documents, online training, online Delphi (policy research)
Family Center of Technology & Disability http://www.fctd.info/	OSEP, ATA, Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER), CATEA, and InfoUse, Inc., & the Academy for Educational Development	Technology	"Knowledge Network"	Organization search tool, abstracts of policy articles, online discussion board (with "expert perspective")
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) http://www.aucd.org/	University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Leadership Education in Neuro-developmental & related Disabilities (LEND) Programs, and Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRCs)	A wide range	Information on processes, statistics, white papers, advocacy tools, conference documents	National Information Reporting System (NIRS), links

Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) http://www.ataccess.org/	41 national centers	Technology	Detailed list of vendors, http://www.ataccess.org/community/vendors.lasso	Online library
Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology Society of North America http://www.resna.org/	OTs, assistive technology association		White papers, testimony, newsletters, published reports	Webcasts, links, archives
AT508.com *(defunct since 2005)* http://www.at508.com/	Private AT companies, advocacy organizations	Technology	All things Section 508 Consumer & policy position papers	Webcasts, links, archives
National Center for Accessible Media http://ncam.wgbh.org/ (nothing updated since 2006)	Corporation for Public Broadcasting, et al.	Media	Published reports	Links, tech downloads
Trace Research & Development Center University of Wisconsin – Madison http://trace.wisc.edu/	Universal Design stakeholders, computer companies	Technology	Published reports, organized links	Links, online presentations, and technology tools
Rehabilitation Research Institute for Underrepresented Populations http://www.subr.edu/science/rehabcounsel/RRIUP/index.htm/	Minority groups, NIDRR	Chiefly Employment	Published reports	Links