Part 6: AI and Advocacy in our Communities

The goal of these slides is to review the previous week's content and to consider how AI may impact our communities, why having governing policies matter, and what advocacy/citizen participation looks like.

This document is designed to walk you through the content and to collect notes that might be helpful as you go.

Slideshow contents:

- Recap/Looking ahead
- Weekly reflections
- AI and Advocacy in Our Communities
- Why do policies matter?
    - Power to the people… but how much?
- Arnstein's Ladder
    - Steps and definitions
    - Small group discussion
- Three AI Policy Examples
    - Google Translate in Boston
    - The Google Green Light program
    - Use of AI to Control Wildfires in California
- Chat GPT Activity
    - Hand out activity guide
- [Halfway Point]
- Tech equity, bridging the digital divide, the importance of advocacy, and where does AI fit in?
- Debrief on everything that was discussed this week

Last time, we discussed:

- Generative AI: definitions and applications

Today will be about…

- Reflections
- AI and Advocacy in Communities
- Examples and group discussions
- Tech equity
- Bridging the digital divide
- The importance of advocacy
- Where does AI fit in?
    - Slides courtesy of Tech Goes Home
- Debrief

Our Weekly Reflections:

- How it works (schedule)

AI And Advocacy In Our Communities

- Why have a policy?
    - Not a trick question…
    - Every game needs rules
    - Where do you see AI policies today?
        - They're more common than you think!

- Who gets to be involved?
    - How do you think policy is made?
    - Policy design in general has changed over the past 70 years
    - Community engagement is more important than ever
        - Especially with huge issues like AI!

- Power to the people… but how much?
    - Community advocacy groups have revolutionized the way policy is designed.
    - However, tensions remain over who gets how say.
    - Advocating for your community includes making your voice heard

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

[Hand out worksheet]

- Designed in 1969 by Sherry Arnstein, a policy specialist at HUD

- Used to measure just how involved citizens are in projects that impact them

- Eight “steps” of the ladder across three empowerment categories

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation: Nonparticipation

- Manipulation (Step 1): phony power.

- Therapy (Step 2): “Those crazy community members think we’re the problem. We have to teach them otherwise!”

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation: Degrees of Tokenism

- Informing (Step 3): “This is what we’re doing and why. Sorry, no questions.”

- Consultation (Step 4): “This is what we’re doing and why. Sure, you can ask a few questions.”

- Placation (Step 5): You’re there to fill a chair.
    - “We have a person from X community on the board, so we obviously valued their participation!”

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation: Degrees of Citizen Power

- Partnership (Step 6): You're still on the committee, but can make suggestions, vote, veto, etc. But you're playing by their rules.

- Delegated Power (Step 7): Similar to "partnership," but citizens can change the rules if they want.

- Citizen Control (Step 8): You hold all (or at least most) of the cards.

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation: Eight Steps of the Ladder

- These steps add nuance to each of the three categories

- Lines can blur…
    - Hard to distinguish one from the other

- Do you have experience with any of the steps?

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

- In pairs, ask yourselves:
    - How would you describe this workshop? Why?
    - How about your school?
    - Where do you see limits to this classification method?
    - Do you have experience with either a category or a step?

- Arnstein's Ladder isn't perfect
    - Has been criticized for rigidity
    - Works best as a "rule of thumb"
    - My take: helpful to remember if you're doing community engagement
        - Either in internship or in life!

How do we apply this to tech policy and AI?

- Three examples of AI and public use:
    - Boston.gov and Google translate
    - Google and traffic flow
    - AI and forest fires

Scenario #1: Google Translate on Boston.gov

- The key questions:
    - What's the value of this?
    - Is there an expanded way that this could be used?
    - Could there be an ethical drawback?

- What's the value of this?
    - Any guesses?
    - Takeaway: It's an easy, convenient access to critical information for non-English speakers

- Is there an expanded way that this could be used?
    - Suggestions?
    - One suggestion: can automated translation services move beyond the website?

- Could there be an ethical drawback?
    - Thoughts?
    - Drawback: Translation is probably the first one we think of (more in a bit)

Scenario #2: Google's Green Light

- Uses AI and traffic data from Google Maps to adjust traffic signal timing
    - Aims to reduce pollution from stop and go traffic.
    - Currently used in Seattle, as well as 12 other cities around the world

- The key questions:
    - What's the value of this?
    - Is there an expanded way that this could be used?
    - Could there be an ethical drawback?

- What's the value of this?
    - What's your guess?
    - Some takeaways:
        - Reduces pollution in cities
        - Less stop-and go-traffic when driving

- Is there an expanded way that this could be used?
    - What's your suggestion?
        - One suggestion: If extended to more intersections it could reduce traffic and emissions even more

- Could there be an ethical drawback?
    - What do you think?
    - Some drawbacks:
        - Harder for pedestrians to cross the street
        - Increased number of cars due to less traffic
        - May prioritize certain vehicle types over other

- Imagine…
    - Your city has decided to implement this program at major intersections.
    - A vote will be held to determine the first intersection
    - After the city receives the recommendations from Google, the city traffic engineers will decide whether to approve them
        - Where is this on Arnstein's Ladder?

Scenario #3: Use of AI to Control Wildfires in California

- Alerts fire departments about potential fire before humans detect it.
    - Has significantly helped reduce the spread of wildfires and the damage of properties in California.

- The key questions:
    - What's the value of this?
    - Is there an expanded way that this could be used?
    - Could there be an ethical drawback?

- What's the value of this?
    - What's your guess?
    - One takeaway:
        - Early detection of fire outbreaks, allowing for faster response and

- Is there an expanded way that this could be used?
    - What's your suggestion?
    - One suggestion:
        - This AI system can be used to predict the occurrence of a fire outbreak, allowing fires to be prevented rather than merely controlled.

- Could there be an ethical drawback?
    - What do you think?
    - Some drawbacks:
        - Frequent false alerts and panic. The AI picks up fog, dust, and steam, and falsely identifies them as fires.
        - Training on biased environmental data can cause the AI to perform better in certain areas, leading to some areas being under-protected.

- Imagine…
    - You live in California in a city prone to wildfires.
    - A survey was distributed to gather members' opinions on the newly implemented AI fire detection system.
        - You participated in the survey and provided honest feedback, stating that the system makes you constantly panic due to frequent false alarms.
    - Your city mayor decides to keep the system despite your opinion.
        - Where is this on Arnstein’s Ladder?

[Halfway point] Today, we will look at…

- Tech equity
- Bridging the digital divide
- The importance of advocacy
- Where does AI fit in?
    - Slides courtesy of Tech Goes Home
- Debrief

Tech Goes Home: Digital Equity Matters

- Mission
    - To close the digital divide.

- Vision
    - Tech Goes Home exists to eradicate digital inequity. We believe this problem is solvable by activating the intrinsic power in communities.

- Who We Are
    - Of the people we serve:
        - 86% are people of color
        - (39% Black, 30% Latinx)
        - 52% live in households that make under $20,000 a year
        - 60% are English language learners

- Sampling of Our Impact
    - Digital Access
        - 88% of TGH program graduates have used their new digital tool and skills to **communicate online**
    - Educational Opportunity
        - 80% of caregivers are **more involved in their child's education** as a result of their TGH course
    - Health & Wellness
        - 73% of graduates have leveraged skills they gained in their TGH course to **access health and wellness resources**
    - Economic Mobility
        - 81% of graduates **got a job, got a pay raise, entered a work training program, or started a business**, and 94% of those said TGH contributed to their career accomplishment.

- What does the Massachusetts Digital Divide Mean?
    - In the Commonwealth:
        - 1M without fixed internet connection
        - 16.5% of households lack a computer at home
        - 18% of households lack a broadband subscription
    - What This Means
        - Adults can't apply for jobs at nearly all employers
        - Students can't participate in online learning or complete school work
        - Seniors become ever more isolated and cut off from their loved ones
        - All ages can't access telehealth and critical resources

- Tech Goes Home: Advocacy within the Community
    - [Video Link: Marwa Alnaal Testimony at the Committee on Advanced Information Technology, the Internet and Cybersecurity]
        - The TGH Advocacy Community Fellowship was built to create a group of community members equipped to champion digital inclusion on the front lines. Fellows gain expertise in communication, media relations, policy analysis, and strategic advocacy development. This program fosters professional development for both fellows and instructors, supporting their diverse career aspirations. Centering and elevating the voices of TGH instructors and learners is paramount, ensuring those most affected by digital inequity inform decision-making and drive systemic change, ultimately promoting a more equitable digital landscape.

- Activity (no worksheet needed)
    - Do you think… [pick tech equity question]?
        - Why or why not?
        - Argue in front of "panel"
            - Panel can be comprised of staff/moderators or participants!

- Debrief! A chance for you to tell us how it's going. For instance:
    - What went well this week?
    - What didn't?
    - What are you excited for?
    - What are you unsure about?