

Cyberpower (25)



Digital inequality often affects the same people as traditional inequalities such as poverty, oppression, discrimination, and exclusion. But the new tools are so powerful that not using them sets individuals, groups and communities even further back. When Cyberpower is wielded, the “goods” — power — are delivered in the real world, in a cycle from actual to virtual to actual. Cyberpower means two related activities related to empowerment: (1) individuals, groups and organizations using digital tools for their own goals, or (2) using digital tools as part of community organizing and development. The general idea is that people can use Cyberpower in virtual space to get power in the actual space. Cyberorganizers help get people Cyberpower just as community organizers help get communities empowered. The idea from Robert Putnam that we’re “bowling alone,” not connecting with other people in an atomized world, can, as Nan Lin asserted, be trumped by the fact that we are not computing alone.

Written by Kate Williams and Abdul Alkalimat

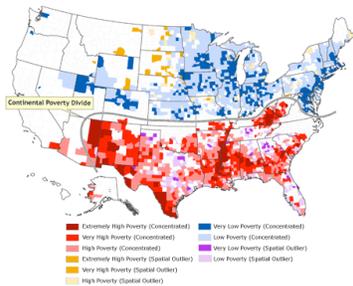
Earth's Vital Signs (26)



The increasing complexity and chronic nature of today's environmental problems requires a revolution of decision making and awareness— the systematic integration of Earth's Vital Signs. Signals detected by scientists and citizens about earth's natural patterns and processes and the impacts of humans on them are earth's signs — indicators of ecological health or the earth's capacity to accommodate human demands. The conditions of earth's systems tend to be worsening on a global scale, but vary dramatically from place to place. Human decisions about how to live on earth drive these trends and can potentially reverse their course. Integrating earth's signs throughout decision making requires that environmental information is widely available, connections between management practices and environmental outcomes are understood, local concerns and local knowledge reach decision makers, environmental implications of policies are translated to the public and policymakers, and that the environmental performance of governments and companies is publicly disseminated. Replication of successful initiatives and further innovations can help ensure that decision making balances human needs with the health of the planet.

Written by Jennifer Frankel-Reed

Big-Picture Health Information (27)



Health information cannot focus solely on the individual. Many detriments to health cannot be eradicated without changes to the physical and social world that people inhabit. If environmental and social changes are necessary to get well, individual patients cannot do so solely by seeking health care and avoiding health risks. Expert medical information and advice is inadequate to create a healthy environment that creates healthy people. Real change to improve health comes from a shift away from acknowledging only expert clinical opinion and toward an awareness of the effect of environment on health: a shift from passive diagnosis and treatment to active engagement with the causes of and solutions to health problems. What can people do to make Big-Picture Health Information more prominent? Demand and produce health information that identifies environmental and social causes of ill-health. Analyze the interconnection between these causes and their solutions, and bring individuals, communities and governments together in putting the solutions into effect. *If the struggle with disease becomes a struggle with established power, you may be on the right track.*

Written by Jenny Epstein

Whole Cost (28)



We leave our mark on the world through the clothes we buy, the food we eat, the cars we drive, the way we dispose of our waste, and how we make a living or recreate. Often the price tag on a product obscures a sordid legacy that could include child labor, environmental abuse such as pesticides in ground water, air pollution or soil depletion, or aspects that are harder to quantify such as the migration of youth to the urban areas or loss of cultural heritage.

San Francisco was the first U.S. city to enact legislation requiring consideration of environmental and health implications when making purchases for the city. Since the city spends about \$600 million every year, this type of legislation could conceivably have a substantial effect. We must realize that amount on a price tag doesn't represent the multiplicity of costs that were and will be incurred. It's important to publicize the "whole cost" of a product as well as the monetary price. Knowing the Whole Cost of a good or service can be educational and it can inspire further action.

Written by Douglas Schuler