

# **Seattle Journalism Commons Final Project Report**



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# EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

The intent of the project was to cultivate a robust, collaborative regional network of people in the news and information community by sharing resources, learning from one another, and documenting area activities – doing journalism on journalism.

## What did we do?

We reached out to understand what the local journalism community wanted. They told us that they would like:

- The means to connect in person and online
- An online space to share resources and learn from each other
- A simple means to know what's happening in the area – a shared calendar and reporting on activities

We organized to meet these needs and took action. We brought people together face-to-face and online, curated a calendar, and did “journalism on journalism”. For example, we have original coverage of local journalism activities not found elsewhere:

<http://journalismthatmatters.org/seattlejournalismcommons/category/events-2/>.

We reflected on the experience and made plans for our next steps (see “What’s next” below).

One team member analyzed the online information flow among food organizations in the Puget Sound region.

## How did it go?

We took a nebulous concept – a “journalism commons” and gave it form. We drew people in, formed a great working team, and found wonderful partners – notably Lisa Skube and the *Journalism Accelerator*. Our biggest obstacle was technology. The site wasn't as user friendly as we hoped and our technical support person took a full time job just as we were getting started.

## What did we learn?

- Fertile soil makes for healthy growth.
- Partners help!
- A trusted agent on the team provides access.
- Diversity is a good thing.
- Face to face matters.
- Technical expertise is a precious and essential resource.
- Dedicate adequate time.
- Keep evolving.

## What's next?

We're reaching out to the leaders of the local chapters of:

- Society for Professional Journalists
- Asian American Journalism Association,
- Online News Association, and
- Hacks and Hackers

We believe that we share goals and expect that partners can help with technology, infrastructure, and funding support.

We are investigating an alternative technology route: integrating tools people already use, such as Google Groups and Twitter, into the site.

The mapping of the food network may inform another initiative of Journalism That Matters: identifying and addressing “media deserts” – areas of limited news coverage.

### **How does our work connect with others in the field?**

Given a healthy local news and information ecosystem is essential to a healthy community, this project has helped to shed light on how to foster a spirit of collaboration among people of the local news and information ecosystem.

What’s our advice to others?

- Get clear about who your community is and what they need
- Focus on delivering on a few pivotal needs
- Seek partners that, together, bring expertise, adequate time, funding, infrastructure, and access to key people in the community
- Keep experimenting and adjusting as you learn

# NARRATIVE REPORT

The intent of the project was to cultivate a robust, collaborative regional network of people in the news and information community by sharing resources, learning from one another, and documenting area activities – doing journalism on journalism. We are testing the premise that cultivating such a network creates a news and information ecology in which:

- News and information is abundant
- Media outlets grow even more collaborative
- All voices are heard – the public can see themselves in the stories that are told
- Stories inform, inspire, and activate the public, leading to increased civic literacy and engagement

Our approach was to bring the expertise of Journalism That Matters in convening face-to-face meetings among the diverse community of people who are shaping the emerging news and information ecosystem to an online space in the Seattle area.

## What did we do?

- **Reached out to understand what the local journalism community wanted**
  - Convened a cross section of the Seattle area journalism community to understand its needs
  - Conducted a survey among Journalism That Matters alumni in partnership with the *Journalism Accelerator*
  - Defined requirements for collaboration among the Seattle area journalism community
- **Organized to meet that need**
  - Tested the potential of "journalism about journalism" by creating an online site for news and interaction among the Seattle area journalism community – [www.seattlejournalismcommons.org](http://www.seattlejournalismcommons.org)
  - Demonstrated the site at a Hacks and Hackers meet-up
  - Created a regional calendar of relevant journalistic activities
- **Took action**
  - We have 20 event posts, many with original coverage not found elsewhere:  
<http://journalismthatmatters.org/seattlejournalismcommons/category/events-2/>; Examples:
    - [Fresh advice on what news organizations can learn from startups](#)
    - [Ben Huh – CEO of Cheezburger Network](#)

- [Team up report with Hacks/Hackers Seattle & The Knight-Mozilla News Innovation Challenge](#)
  - Invited people from the Seattle area journalism community to participate
  - Collaborated with the *Journalism Accelerator*, providing content, questions, and comments
  - Ran a practice Tweet-up with support from the *Journalism Accelerator*
- **Reflected on the experience and made plans for next steps**
  - We have clarity on what people want:
    - The means to connect in person and online
    - An online space to share resources and learn from each other
    - A simple means to know what's happening in the area – a shared calendar and reporting on activities
  - Next steps include:
    - Continuing to report and comment on local journalism-related activities
    - Reaching out to other local organizations as partners – SPJ, ONA, AAJA, Hacks & Hackers
    - Joining together to seek funding
    - Seeking technical support to re-work the web site based on what we've learned

While the bulk of the effort was focused on the Seattle Journalism Commons, one team member worked on a related initiative – the Puget Sound Civic Communications Commons (PSCCC). After seeking an appropriate entry point, she developed a network map of the online information flow of food network organizations. We think the approach could be helpful in understanding the information flow among news and information organizations.

### **How did it go?**

We were able to take a broad concept -- a journalism commons -- and give it sufficient specificity so that we could move towards creating it. The calendar of what's happening and reports on local journalism-related activities are among the most tangible artifacts.

At first, many people we reached out to were skeptical of the need. Through interactions with us, an appreciation grew for the value of connecting people, learning from each other, and providing the means to share resources, information, and stories.

The team we formed worked well together. We shared ideas, supported each other, generously offered time above and beyond what anyone was paid for, had patience when tasks weren't clear, took responsibility to make them happen when they were, and overall had a fun and productive experience.

Lisa Skube and the *Journalism Accelerator* were pivotal in getting the SJC launched. Lisa's early commitment gave the project the nudge it needed to launch. Her involvement throughout brought ideas and the *Journalism Accelerator* provided an avenue for sharing content with a broader audience. The JA team's help with the practice Tweet-up provided expertise that put us on a fruitful track.

Less successful was our approach to an online interactive space for the community. In spite of solid work to engage the community, the technology simply did not support easy engagement. The issue was exacerbated because our technical person took a full time job just as the project began. The result was limited availability for tuning the online environment. The combination of limited funds and scarce technical talent interested in this type of venture is a hurdle we haven't solved!

The online food mapping was revealing, leading to several recommendations:

- **Connect non-profits and businesses for increased synergy.** For example, businesses could sell products at non-profit events. Non-profits could increase their outreach through collaborations with businesses.
- **Create a food system wide community calendar.** Nearly every site had a calendar. A common calendar could benefit everyone.
- **Utilize the education system's presence in the network.** Washington State University is well positioned to help connect food related organizations. Additionally, their journalism program could help strengthen the food system news and information flow.
- **Connect organizations on the periphery.** They bring additional news and information that can benefit the whole system.

### **What did we learn?**

**Fertile soil makes for healthy growth.** Seattle has a collaborative spirit. The Seattle Journalism Commons (SJC) benefitted from and further fostered that spirit of cooperation among news and information outlets large, small, academic, for-profit, non-profit, with people of all ages and ethnicities. The SJC has the potential to weave a strong net of cooperation to not only support the individuals and organizations doing journalism in our region, but to do collaborative journalism, drawing on the strengths of the disparate parts of the journalism ecosystem.

**Partners help!** We are a small organization with little infrastructure. By reaching out to partners who share our goals, we hope to find more support in curating the calendar, reporting on local events, handling the technology and funding the effort.

**A trusted agent on the team provides access.** As a "heavy hitter" in the local community, who is also well respected, Mike Fancher opened doors that made us credible in spite of our size and start up status. Having a well-connected and trusted member of the team, who has the gravitas to engage any journalistic entity in town make activities possible that are unlikely to happen otherwise.

**Diversity is a good thing!** Our team had a mix of ages and expertise that allowed us to do a lot with a small group. For example, just as Mike brought credibility and access, Jacob brought energy and social networking savvy.

**Face to face matters.** The in-person meetings we held were well attended by a diverse mix of people from the news and information ecosystem. They let us know how important the chance to engage with people from other parts of the system is to them. Further, the conversational methods drawn from JTM's practices for exploring meaningful questions got high marks from participants.

**Technical expertise is a precious and essential resource.** A major lesson from the project is the need for sufficient technical support. Finding tech people with good relational skills, who are interested in journalism, and willing to work for a fraction of what they are paid in other fields, makes them particularly challenging to find.

**Dedicate adequate time.** We had a great team, each contributing as time allowed. Having at least one person on the team with significant time dedicated to the project is a must!

**Keep evolving.** When pioneering, obstacles are a given. As we get stuck, we step back, revisit what we want to accomplish, and come up with alternatives. Continuous adaptation is part of the territory as needs are clarified and as people move in and out of the initiative.

### **What's next?**

Our next step is to reach out to natural partners – the local chapters of the Society for Professional Journalists, the Asian American Journalism Association, the Online News Association, and Hacks and Hackers. Together, we may have greater access to the technical expertise and infrastructure to provide the support desired by the community. We expect such a collaboration will also be more attractive to funders.

We recently regrouped around our technology and are investigating an alternative route: integrating tools people already use, such as Google Groups and Twitter, into the site.

The online information flow network map of food organizations was instructive in understanding how a community engages with news and information related to a specific topic area. Journalism That Matters is considering a project to identify and address “media deserts” – areas of limited news coverage. The methodology used to identify the food news and information network may be useful in furthering that effort.

## **How does our work connect with others in the field?**

According to the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), connection among citizens is the most powerful force in American democracy, and news is high on the list of activities that create connectedness.

Our premise is that connection is fractal. In other words, if connection is good for the public, it is good for the people who serve their news and information needs.

Given a healthy local news and information ecosystem is essential to a healthy community, the more we understand what the news and information community needs and how to meet those needs, the better equipped we are to be a model for other communities.

This project has helped to shed light on how to foster a spirit of collaboration among people of the local news and information ecosystem. What we've learned about uncovering needs and meeting them can be of service to local news and information communities anywhere.

The network mapping methodology could be useful for understanding topical coverage in different geographies.

What's our advice to others?

- Get clear about who your community is and what they need
- Focus on delivering on a few pivotal needs
- Seek partners that, together, bring expertise, adequate time, funding, and infrastructure
- Keep experimenting and adjusting as you learn

# APPENDIX A: REFLECTIONS FROM PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Mike Fancher

## What I did

- Hosted “dream team” meeting of 25 people to solicit ideas for what a journalism commons might do. Among the findings:
  - People said a shared calendar of journalism events would be useful.
  - People expressed a desire to face-to-face meetings as a vital component of a Commons.
- Wrote an essay for the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism Annual State of the Media about the Seattle media landscape, which the Commons used as an organizing entry. Available at <http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/seattle-a-new-media-case-study/>
- Helped seed the *Journalism Accelerator* with questions and comments about issues in the Seattle news and information ecosystem.
- Wrote a Seattle section into my policy paper for the Aspen Institute and Knight Foundation. Available at <http://www.knightcomm.org/re-imagining-journalism-local-news-for-a-networked-world/>
- Assisted in formulating the *Journalism Accelerator* survey
- Attended a “Hacks and Hackers” session at which Brian Glanz demonstrated the Commons functionality.
- Met with representatives of various Seattle area media groups to discuss the Commons.
- Invited several dozen people to participate in the Commons.
- Posted various blog items about what is happening in the Seattle news and information ecosystem.
- Participated in various team meetings and conference calls, including sessions with the *Journalism Accelerator* team.
- Represented the Commons in broader meetings and discussions about the Puget Sound Civic Communications Commons.
- Met with representatives from the Seattle Foundation, Gates Foundation, Northwest Philanthropies, Seattle CityClub, Seattle Center Foundation.
- Attending meetings of various JTMPNW initiatives.
- Participated in the Tweet-up training exercise.

## What I learned

- People often initially questioned the need and value of another platform about Seattle Journalism. Once they understood the idea of a community of journalists sharing insights, they expressed interest.
- We lost some traction early on because of tech glitches and because some functions were self-evident. A first bad experience is very hard to overcome.

- Moderation is essential to building engagement in online communities. That said, the conversations and functions of a Commons must be designed to encourage self-sustaining participation.
- The *Journalism Accelerator* demonstrated the value of moderated conversations. The JA team actively and effectively networked to bring expert views in response to specific questions. The JA established a voice of authority that became a draw for comments. This demonstrated the compounding effect in which comments quickly prompted other comments.
- People respected and reflected the tone set by the hosts of the Commons.
- People have to see the benefit to them before they will engage. Established media don't readily see the benefit or working outside their own domain; emerging media are too busy to commit to any activity that doesn't have some obvious payback. Some emerging media shun any attempts at collaboration that seems too structured. (These are anecdotal impressions.)
- I learned that this is fun and very rewarding. Our little team worked hard and did some terrific work, for which we can be proud.

#### **What I see as next steps**

- Meet with SPJ, ONA, AAJA, Hacks and Hackers to solicit their involvement with the Commons.
- Explore shifting to Google groups for some Commons functions.
- Fix issues with functionality of the website, including the About and FAQ areas.
- Find funding to sustain moderation and technology needs.
- Personally resume posting material and inviting participation.
- Begin to try to engage the public in the Commons dialogue. Public engagement might help stimulate media involvement.
- The *Journalism Accelerator* proved its concept. A logical next step would be to accelerate the Accelerator by increasing the conversations and building out into other communities of interest.

#### **What advice I have for others**

- Have a clear sense of operational oversight. Set clear priorities for workflow.
- Test functionality constantly.
- Have a ready supply of content and bloggers ready at launch. It's important to start with a critical mass of material.
- Build in feedback mechanisms, such as "Was this helpful?" "Report a problem," and "What would you like to see added to the Commons?"
- Fill any vacuums or voids that appear. Be sure to connect back with people who post.

## Peggy Holman

My principle role was strategy and co-ordination. I handled the administrative and financial tasks, coordinated and facilitated meetings, developed requirements for the commons, wrote the project reports.

The project confirmed my belief that launching an online community takes easy-to-use technology and dedicated support from a team. Even when there's clarity about what's needed and terrific support for community cultivation, without an easy-to-use technology platform and adequate technical support, connecting a community online is virtually impossible.

We learned some useful lessons out of this Seattle Journalism Commons experiment. We took an idea – a commons that serves the needs of the people who are shaping the area's news and information ecosystem – and gave it clarity. We know that it includes:

- Supporting face to face connection
- Supporting online connection
- Curating a calendar of regional events and items of interest
- Curating a space for sharing stories, case studies, resources, requests and offers, questions and answers

### **What I see as next steps:**

Simplify the technology and find partners.

### **My advice to others:**

Keep the technology simple, making use of existing social media. Have a team that can work together well (as we did). Listen to the community to understand its needs and priorities, and then focus the work on what's most important to them that you can deliver.

A special note of thanks to Lisa Skube. Without her involvement, I'm not sure we would have taken on the initiative. The synergy with the *Journalism Accelerator* provided a lens from the local to the national and back again. She continually asked questions that sparked ideas for directions to try and stories to share via the JA.

## Jacob Caggiano

There once was a time when Mike Fancher ruled the news and information universe for the Seattle/ Puget Sound region. As Executive Editor for The Times, he played a major solitary role in setting the news agenda and could single handedly alter the non-fiction story landscape.

When it became time for him to step down from his perch, there was no doubt in his mind that things have changed forever. Instead of fighting or ignoring the sweeping tide, he's embraced the notion of harnessing "the wisdom of the crowd" and like the rest of us...wanted to know how. I set along to find out with him.

Indeed Seattle is ripe for new experiments in information sharing, just read some of the think tank reports documenting the successful hyperlocal ventures and rich startup environment that is emerging in the area.

i.e.

"Seattle - A digital community still in transition" -

By

- \* Jessica Durkin,
- \* Tom Glaisyer,
- \* Kara Hadge,
- \* New America Foundation

<http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/seattle>

&

"Seattle: A New Media Case Study"

By Michael R. Fancher

<http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/seattle-a-new-media-case-study/>

While the potential here is vibrant, being able to successfully convert this energy into bottom-up action is a challenging science, one that hasn't been attempted until the Journalism That Matters team came into the picture.

In the process of trying to catch lightning in a bottle, we've had some successes and learned many lessons along the way.

Through our [Journalism Commons Blog](#), we've not only helped spread the word about relevant and exciting events in the journalism community, but were the only source covering those events and are still the only place to go to find out what happened there. We documented essential themes, key participants, and elements which transpired and presented these reports in a useful calendar interface. People have told me how helpful it was to read my reports on what happened, especially those who wanted to attend but were unable.

Some examples of the community stories I told

- [Fresh advice on what news organizations can learn from startups](#)
- [Covered Ben Huh – the world famous CEO of Cheezburger Network's talk and](#)

- [shared his controversial thoughts on new media journalism](#)
- [“Team up report with Hacks/Hackers Seattle & The Knight-Mozilla News Innovation Challenge”](#)
  - [Covered the graduate student presentations for the UW Masters of Communication in Digital Media Screen Summit](#)
  - [Spread the word about the Seattle Digital Literacy Camp](#)

and more...

You can see them all here

<http://journalismthatmatters.org/seattlejournalismcommons/author/caggiano/>

As well as stories from Mike Fancher himself here:

<http://journalismthatmatters.org/seattlejournalismcommons/author/mikefancher/>

The online social network we created has many advanced capabilities not offered by Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, or similar commercial networks on the market. Anyone can publish, people can collaborate on stories and draw from a pool of other like minded news junkies.

I believe the work that we’ve done has demonstrated a successful prototype of what’s possible in the world of “journalism about journalism.” However, it will take more time for the experiment to fully bake in with the community.

Herein lies some of the lessons learned.

Everybody has their own technological routines and it takes a highly successful person to figure out exactly how to tap into an unfamiliar group’s collective psyche and motivate them to take action. I believe that subconsciously training people to break in new habits depends on inviting them into an already established critical mass that lays the path for others to follow; one which immediately exemplifies what to do and offers instant incentive for doing it.

It’s going to take a continued and sustained vigilance to reach this critical mass, and I look forward to further tweaking the knobs and documenting what I find. We live in a world where reputation is a crucial element to success, and a commitment to openly engage using the VERY public tools that we are providing poses just as many risks as it does benefits. Often it’s a safer bet to just not opt-in.

That being said, we’ve convinced hundreds to sign up and participate on our network, but need to figure out better ways to get them to fully jump in.

The experiment is still alive and will continue to evolve. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this opportunity to grow.

Sincerely,

Jacob Caggiano  
information entrepreneur and social risk taker

### Sheetal Agarwal

My primary role was as a Community Cultivator, working specifically with the Puget Sound Civic Commons Project. I focused on working with the Food community pilot project.

I attended several food community meetings and had many insightful phone conversations with different leaders in the Puget Sound food network. We spent time listening and understanding what the needs of the community are, focusing specifically on how information can be shared across the network. Many interesting ideas emerged, but it took quite a bit of effort to move it from the idea phase and we were not able to quite get it the point of actual implementation of anything tangible.

Despite the feeling that we were just turning our wheels and not able to move much in a given direction, an opportunity opened up serendipitously that resulted in a mapping of the online information flow of food network organizations using a tool called Issue Crawler. Working with community leaders, we identified critical nodes in the network, and used them to seed a hyperlink analysis, which reveals how the different organizations are connected to one another online. It will help us to identify if there are prominent organizations that many other groups link to, as well as reveal who may exist on the periphery and needs more connection to the broader community. Seeing if information is flowing in a single direction, or if two-way flows exist will help us identify what the most pressing needs are in terms of supporting information flowing between all groups, so that no group is, in essence, left behind or out of the network.

In conducting this work, it became abundantly clear how important it is to make sure groups are guided by the community needs, and not their own agenda. By listening to different group members we learned that there seem to be silos within the larger food network in regards to information and resource sharing. Hearing that community members are interested in expanding these sub-networks to form a larger more cohesive network really motivated the PSCCC group to expand their outreach efforts. The food mapping component is just the beginning. Recently, the idea of sending surveys out to organizations to share with their members has emerged as a next step. This survey will get the group feedback that will help inform whatever next steps the group takes in creating an information hub, or newsletter, or whatever they decided is most appropriate. I am heartened by this, as it emphasizes the importance of listening to and responding to the community.

## Brian Glanz

(written by Peggy Holman)

Brian gave us the technological platform for our work. Without him, we would have been hard pressed to take our first steps. He did a terrific demo of the site for a Hacks and Hackers meetup. While he was available, he responded to our requests to tune the site as we learned about what worked where the technology was getting in our way. It is the base we build on as we take our next steps.

# **APPENDIX B: FOOD NETWORK COMMUNITY LINK ANALYSIS**

## **Analyzing the current state of the Puget Sound Food Community's online presence**

**By Sheetal Agarwal**

### **Introduction**

In early 2011 the Puget Sound Civic Communication Commons project identified several information needs pilot projects, including one focused on the food community in the Puget Sound area. This community includes groups and organizations that deal with a broad spectrum of issues related to food such as sustainability, urban gardens, hunger, and supporting local food systems. Rick VanderKnyff led the pilot project, organizing meetings with leaders in the community to discuss what can be done to increase information and news exchange within this diverse group who have a common interest. Through these discussions we learned there was a sense that “silos” existed within the community and there was little in the way of a common information and news exchange taking place in either online or offline spaces. Though there was a clearly defined need and desire to connect and share information, there was a sense that as a whole there was little exchange actually taking place.

In order to explicate the true status of information exchange in the online space, we conducted a co-link website analysis to identify the shape and nature of the network as it exists currently. By conducting a hyperlink analysis we identified how these websites connect to one another. In the following sections we have outline the method for obtaining the network, our general findings regarding the food community's online network status, as well as provide suggestions for strengthening and increasing information exchanges within the community.

### **Methodology**

To understand the link structure of the food community we used webcrawler software to conduct a co-link analysis and visualize the network on the web. Issue Crawler was the primary tool used for this analysis. Co-link analysis identifies network nodes by including those URLs that receive links from at least two of the starting points for that iteration.

The logistical settings for this network crawl are:

- 2 iterations<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Issue Crawler: “An iteration of 1 means that the external urls of the pages pointed at by the starting points are fetched. After that a co-link analysis is performed, whereby pages receiving at least two links are retained. For an iteration of 2, after the previous step, the external urls of the pages pointed at by the co-linker set are fetched and a new co-link analysis is performed anew.”

- 2 levels of crawl depth
- Co-link analysis

### *Seed Sites*

To produce a co-link analysis, we must first identify “seed” sites, from which the webcrawler begins its query. Seed sites are foundations for the network since the crawler uses these to identify all other external sites in the network. It is crucial to choose seed sites carefully, as they determine the size, structure, and strength of the network produced through the crawl.

In order to identify the seed sites, we first began by asking community members to contribute to identifying the websites and organizations they felt were important to the community. We created a database of 40+ websites through this process. In order to be included in the seed site sample it was necessary that a website include a “news and information” component, thus we ended up with a total list of 36 websites. The news and information component was necessary for this analysis as it suggested that the organization was indeed interested in exchanging information and supporting a flow of information that was relevant to its members.

We then consulted with Mark Musick, a supporter of the food community in Seattle for the past 40 years. Mark has worked with this community in creating connections via online calendars, updating databases of food oriented websites, and organizing offline events, and began an early “mapping” project called the “Washington Food Systems Directory” which provides links to key food organizations in Washington. Mark has a well-established history with the food community and is closely familiar with all of the organizations included in our database. Mark identified critical sub-networks in the food community that are captured in our seed sites. These networks include:

- Sustainable Agriculture;
- Local food system supporters and;
- Urban Agriculture; and
- Education

We selected a total of six seed sites that represented these food sub-networks, and provide a brief explanation of the mission of each organization as well as an explanation of their information and news status, in the section below.

**Washington State University Small Farms Team:** <http://smallfarms.wsu.edu>

Mission statement: “works with communities and individuals across Washington to foster a profitable farming system, to promote land and water stewardship, and to ensure that all Washingtonians have unrestricted access to healthy food.”

Status of News and Information Component: The website provides a link for a community calendar which interested individuals can click on to find farming related events by county. Beyond this important feature, most of the information shared on this website is static and unchanging, with a note suggesting they are updating the website soon.

**Tilth Producers:** <http://tilthproducers.org>

Mission statement: “Tilth Producers of Washington, a chapter of [Washington Tilth Association](#), is the premier organic farming and sustainable agriculture organization of Washington State. Tilth Producers promotes ecologically sound, economically viable and socially equitable farming practices that improve the health of our communities and natural environment.”

Status of News and Information Component: This website is dynamic and updated regularly offering users information on current food oriented events. Tilth Producers engages users in both online and offline activities including conferences where research is shared, community farm walks, and connecting to social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook to share up-to-date information regularly.

**The Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network:** <http://wsffn.org>

Mission Statement: “Our mission is to engage with partners to keep farmers farming and ensure that all Washingtonians have access to good food. We advocate bringing food from the ranch and farm to the table in a way that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially equitable.”

Status of News and Information Component: The website has several links to farming related legislative issues, projects, and a 2011 annual event. Several pages deep you find links to other calendar events although they have not been updated since 2010. There is a link for a Facebook page which regularly posts updates on agriculture related news stories and events.

**Cascade Harvest Coalition:** <http://cascadeharvest.org>

Mission Statement: “Cascade Harvest Coalition is dedicated to re-localizing the food system in Washington by connecting consumers more directly with producers. We help farmers by connecting them with the tools and resources they need to be more sustainable and provide timely information to consumers so they can make informed food buying decisions.”

Status of News and Information Component: The primary news and information section of the website is a blog that is updated about once a month with events related to farming, education, and community-oriented activities. The blog was last updated in May 2011.

**Seattle Tilth:** <http://www.seattletilth.org>

Mission Statement: “Seattle Tilth inspires and educates people to garden organically, conserve natural resources and support local food systems in order to cultivate a healthy urban environment and community. Our vision is to transform the NW region into the organic gardening capital of the world. “

Status of News and Information Component: Prominently displayed on their website are three tabs, “Get Involved”, “Events”, and “Our Community”, which all provide users

with links to upcoming events and calendars and opportunities to engage with the organization. There is little in terms of news stories, however they provide an opportunity for users to sign-up for email updates that provides access to “special events, classes, and hot topics”. They have a strong Facebook presence with an active community that posts pictures, updates, events, and links to news stories several times a week.

**Urban Farm Hub:** <http://www.urbanfarmhub.org>

Mission Statement: THE WEBSITE WAS NOT WORKING as of 7/21/2011 – 7/25/2011

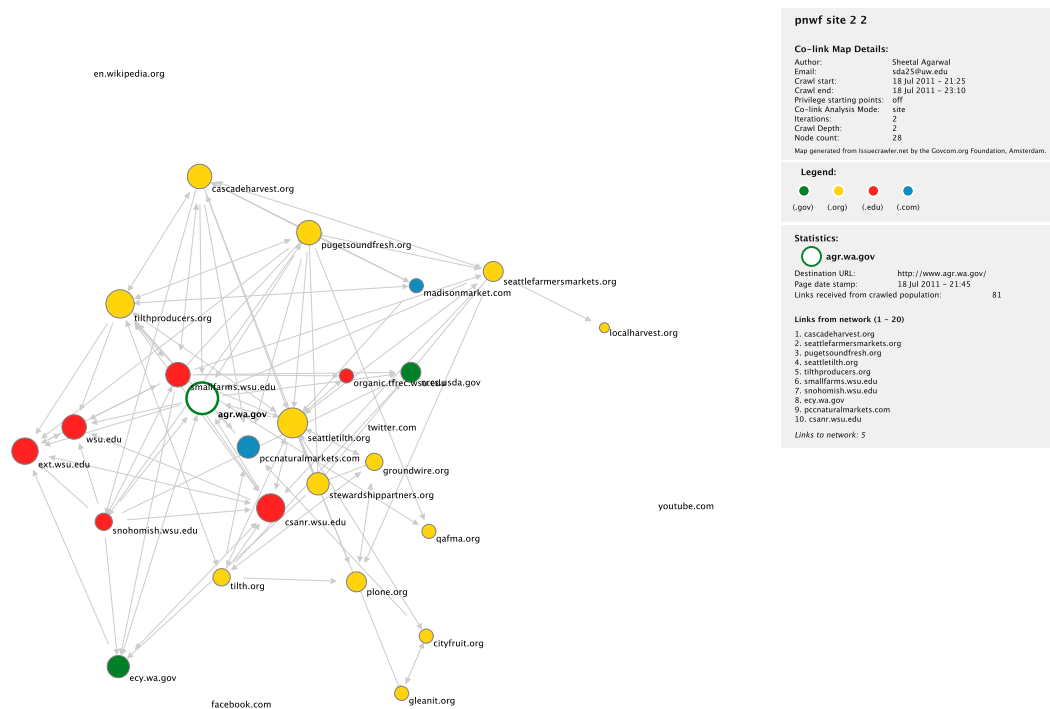
Status of News and Information Component: Using a cached webpage it seems the organization is updating their website on a weekly, if not daily basis. The posts include recipes, updates on hunger issues, as well as general food related articles. There is a link for something called the “Urban Food Map” but it does not load. From a very superficial level it seems this organization does share and provide information regularly and the website is dynamic in terms of news exchange.

Key points:

- There is a moderate amount of information exchange occurring on the core nodes, but some core organizations still lack an up-to-date news section
- Facebook is prevalent across most core nodes, with higher levels of activity than on the websites themselves, suggesting Facebook is seen as a more critical and perhaps easier way to share information with their community members ( perhaps due to low barriers to participate, produce, and share posts)
- Calendars are important to this community, but almost every organization provides its own calendar which may be inefficient for community users.

Findings

A network crawl using the seed sites, revealed a total core and periphery network of 60 nodes (see Appendix A for full listing). The core network consists of 27 nodes, and includes those nodes that receive links from at least two other sites. The visualization only shows the core network. Though non-profits are most prevalent in this network, government, education, and business organizations are also included in the core network.



The five top-ranked food related organizations in the network include:

- Seattle Tilth (.org)
- Tilth Producers of Washington (.org)
- Washington State Department of Agriculture (.gov)
- Cascade Harvest Coalition (.org)
- Washington State Farmers Market Association (.com)

Seattle Tilth, the largest issue-oriented node, has a total of 12 in-links from the core network and 129 links from the periphery nodes. Given that this is the most central node to the network (that is issue-oriented) it is encouraging to see that the organization is active in sharing and distributing information. Similarly, Tilth Producers of Washington is also one of the most dynamic websites in terms of information exchange, and is likely benefitting from this through in-linking. Though the Washington State Department of Agriculture has a high number of in-links, 81 across core and periphery sites, it only links out to five other sites, which are either government or education based organizations.

The lowest ranked nodes in the Pacific Northwest network all have five or fewer inter-links from the network. These organizations are:

- Dog Mountain farm (.com)
- Sustainable Connections (.org)
- Washington State University 4-H Club (.edu)

- Mukilteo Farmers Market (.org)
- Bluebird Grain Farms (.com)

In some ways, this is heartening, as it seems for the most part there are very few actors that are completely ignored or completely on the periphery of this network. However, not a single node in the core network directly connects to any of the above organizations. Interestingly, the news and information component of these less connected websites is relatively active. For example, Sustainable Connections has a monthly updated e-mail newsletter, calendar, and a member directory meant to connect businesses to one another. A resource like the directory could be useful for many of the core network organizations. In fact, all of the organizations in this lesser linked group have events and calendar postings. Connecting them to the rest of the community could benefit all members of the network.

#### Recommendations

The Pacific Northwest has a vibrant and dynamic community organized around food-related issues and activities. There is however, a major lacuna in information exchange among these organizations. The well-connected nodes are connecting to one another and missing the opportunity to bring lesser-connected groups into the conversation.

*\*Connect the non-profits and businesses:* Connecting these organizations may increase opportunities for businesses to learn about non-profit organizations events, where they can for example, sell their food products. Additionally, those who are campaigning for localized food systems or are trying to serve under-privileged populations may be able to collaborate with businesses and increase their outreach.

*\* Create a food system wide community calendar.* A calendar or “events” tab was present on nearly every single site in this network. It seems it would benefit a wide portion of the community to develop a common calendar that anyone interested in food related issues could search for activities. This is useful for every type of organization in the network. While it is likely more difficult for government organizations to collaborate with community members on some level, the ability to share news regarding food legislature, or town hall meetings would behoove both the community and the leaders that represent them.

*\*Utilize the education system’s presence in the network.* Washington State University has a valuable role in this network. WSU offers potential of harnessing the education system to not only connect food related organizations related to one another, but perhaps expand beyond that and bring in their strong journalism program to help foster a news system to connect even those on the periphery.

## Appendix 1: Full Network List

Actor Rankings (core network and periphery, by site)

1 - plone.org - 22	31 - goodfoodstrategies.com - 7
2 - seattletilth.org - 22	32 - cityfruit.org - 6
3 - tilthproducers.org - 20	33 - ecy.wa.gov - 6
4 - groundwire.org - 19	34 - bellinghamfarmers.org - 6
5 - agr.wa.gov - 19	35 - slowfoodusa.org - 6
6 - cascadeharvest.org - 15	36 - foodalliance.org - 6
7 - wsu.edu - 14	37 - bellevuefarmersmarket.org - 6
8 - csanr.wsu.edu - 14	38 - rodaleinstitute.org - 6
9 - ext.wsu.edu - 13	39 - seattle.chefscollaborative.org - 6
10 - wafarmersmarkets.com - 13	40 - holmquisthazelnuts.com - 6
11 - seattlefarmersmarkets.org - 12	41 - carnationfarmersmarket.org - 6
12 - pugetsoundfresh.org - 12	42 - qafma.org - 5
13 - fullcirclefarm.com - 11	43 - gleanit.org - 5
14 - pccnaturalmarkets.com - 10	44 - nracs.usda.gov - 5
15 - snovalleytilth.org - 10	45 - organic.tfrec.wsu.edu - 5
16 - wsffn.org - 10	46 - southwhidbeytilth.org - 5
17 - tilth.org - 9	47 - skagit.wsu.edu - 5
18 - agbizcenter.org - 9	48 - wecprotects.org - 5
19 - localharvest.org - 8	49 - emmerandrye.com - 5
20 - smallfarms.wsu.edu - 8	50 - seattleglobaljustice.org - 5
21 - madisonmarket.com - 8	51 - bluebirdgrainfarms.com - 5
22 - salmonsafe.org - 8	52 - growfood.org - 5
23 - pikeplacemarket.org - 8	53 - mukilteofarmersmarket.org - 5
24 - foodsecurity.org - 8	54 - snohomish.wsu.edu - 4
25 - vigavashon.org - 8	55 - farmland.org - 4
26 - nashsorganicproduce.com - 8	56 - sustainableconnections.org - 4
27 - stewardshippartners.org - 7	57 - seedalliance.org - 4
28 - watoxics.org - 7	58 - nwei.org - 4
29 - 21acres.org - 7	59 - dogmtfarm.com - 4
30 - organicvalley.coop - 7	60 - everettfarmersmarket.com

## Appendix 2: Food Network Interlinking Connections

<b>Crawl Title:</b>	<b>Puget Sound Food Network Co-link Analysis</b>
<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
21acres.org =>	agr.wa.gov - cascadeharvest.org - ext.wsu.edu - goodfoodstrategies.com - groundwire.org - plone.org - seattletilth.org - snovalleytilth.org - tilthproducers.org - watoxics.org - wsffn.org
agbizcenter.org =>	agr.wa.gov
agr.wa.gov =>	ecy.wa.gov - ext.wsu.edu - foodalliance.org - nracs.usda.gov - smallfarms.wsu.edu - wafarmersmarkets.com - wecprotects.org - wsu.edu
ams.usda.gov =>	
apps.leg.wa.gov =>	
ars.usda.gov =>	
bellevuefarmersmarket.org =>	farmland.org - foodsecurity.org - localharvest.org - slowfoodusa.org - tilthproducers.org - wafarmersmarkets.com - wsffn.org
bellinghamfarmers.org =>	holmquisthazelnuts.com
bluebirdgrainfarms.com =>	fullcirclefarm.com - madisonmarket.com - pccnaturalmarkets.com - salmonsafe.org
brownpapertickets.com =>	
cahnrsnews.wsu.edu =>	
carnationfarmersmarket.org =>	snovalleytilth.org
cascadeharvest.org =>	21acres.org - agbizcenter.org - agr.wa.gov - bellevuefarmersmarket.org - bellinghamfarmers.org - carnationfarmersmarket.org - dogmtnfarm.com - emmerandrye.com - everettfarmersmarket.com - fullcirclefarm.com - goodfoodstrategies.com - holmquisthazelnuts.com - madisonmarket.com - mukilteofarmersmarket.org - nashsorganicproduce.com - organicvalley.coop - pccnaturalmarkets.com - pikeplacemarket.org - pugetsoundfresh.org - seattle.chefscollaborative.org - seattlefarmersmarkets.org - seattletilth.org - skagit.wsu.edu - smallfarms.wsu.edu - snohomish.wsu.edu - snovalleytilth.org - stewardshippartners.org - sustainableconnections.org - tilthproducers.org - vigavashon.org - wafarmersmarkets.com - wsffn.org
cascadianfarm.com =>	
cityfruit.org =>	fullcirclefarm.com - gleanit.org - pccnaturalmarkets.com - seattletilth.org

cityofseattle.net =>	
cru.cahe.wsu.edu =>	
csanr.wsu.edu =>	agr.wa.gov - ecy.wa.gov - ext.wsu.edu - smallfarms.wsu.edu - tilthproducers.org - wsu.edu
csrees.usda.gov =>	
dogmtnfarm.com =>	emmerandrye.com - rodaleinstitute.org
ecy.wa.gov =>	agr.wa.gov - csanr.wsu.edu - ext.wsu.edu
emmerandrye.com =>	
en.wikipedia.org =>	
epa.gov =>	
everettfarmersmarket.com =>	
ext.wsu.edu =>	csanr.wsu.edu - smallfarms.wsu.edu - wsu.edu
extension.oregonstate.edu =>	
facebook.com =>	
farmland.org =>	
farmtoschool.org =>	
foodalliance.org =>	groundwire.org - plone.org
foodsecurity.org =>	agr.wa.gov - foodalliance.org - localharvest.org - madisonmarket.com - nracs.usda.gov - organicvalley.coop - pikeplacemarket.org - seattleglobaljustice.org - seattletilth.org - slowfoodusa.org - tilth.org
fullcirclefarm.com =>	seattletilth.org
gardening.wsu.edu =>	
gleanit.org =>	cityfruit.org
goodfoodstrategies.com =>	21acres.org - bluebirdgrainfarms.com - cascadeharvest.org - farmland.org - fullcirclefarm.com - madisonmarket.com - pugetsoundfresh.org - seattle.chefscollaborative.org - seattlefarmersmarkets.org - slowfoodusa.org - stewardshippartners.org - tilthproducers.org - watoxics.org - wecprotects.org - wsffn.org
groundwire.org =>	21acres.org - foodalliance.org - nwei.org - plone.org - seattletilth.org - stewardshippartners.org - sustainableconnections.org - tilth.org - watoxics.org - wecprotects.org
growfood.org =>	
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holmquisthazelnuts.com =>	bellevuefarmersmarket.org - bellinghamfarmers.org - localharvest.org - mukilteofarmersmarket.org - pikeplacemarket.org - seattlefarmersmarkets.org - wafarmersmarkets.com
ifoam.org =>	
king.wsu.edu =>	

king5.com =>	
kingcounty.gov =>	
localharvest.org =>	
madisonmarket.com =>	bluebirdgrainfarms.com - cascadeharvest.org - pugetsoundfresh.org - seattleglobaljustice.org - seattletilth.org - tilthproducers.org - wafarmersmarkets.com - watoxics.org - wsffn.org
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