Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age (Acting with Technology)

By Jennifer Earl, Katrina Kimport

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Much attention has been paid in recent years to the emergence of "Internet activism," but scholars and pundits disagree about whether online political activity is different in kind from more traditional forms of activism. Does the global reach and blazing speed of the Internet affect the essential character or dynamics of online political protest? In *Digitally Enabled Social Change*, Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport examine key characteristics of web activism and investigate their impacts on organizing and participation.Earl and Kimport argue that the web offers two key affordances relevant to activism: sharply reduced costs for creating, organizing, and participating in protest; and the decreased need for activists to be physically together in order to act together. Drawing on evidence from samples of online petitions, boycotts, and letter-writing and e-mailing campaigns, Earl and Kimport show that the more these affordances are leveraged, the more transformative the changes to organizing and participating in protest.

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- Sales Rank: #1265205 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-03-04
- Released on: 2011-03-04
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"A provocative look at how e-activism is changing the nature of contentious politics. Social movement scholars may want to rethink some of their assumptions." **W. Lance Bennett** , Ruddick C. Lawrence Professor of Communication and Professor of Political Science, University of Washington, and Director, Center for Communication & Civic Engagement

"Earl and Kimport deliver a compelling and layered argument that dissects how and when activists' uses of the Web profoundly alter the fields of power that organize social movements (and, just as importantly, when the Web doesn't matter all that much). If you want to know how Web-based mobilizations, movements, and tactics have irrevocably redefined activism, read this book! It is critical reading for digital media scholars but also a must-read for anyone who cares about grassroots organizing and social change." **Mary L. Gray** , Department of Communication and Culture, Indiana University

"Even as e-tactics have proliferated and commentators have advanced hyperbolic claims for the effectiveness of cyber activism, systematic studies of this brave new world have lagged behind. No more. With their groundbreaking study of 'digitally enabled social change,' Earl and Kimport have gone a long way toward filling the void. Must-reading for anyone who hopes to understand online and offline activism in the age of the Internet." **Doug McAdam** , Professor of Sociology, Stanford University

"Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport convincingly apply the classical concerns of social movement theory to mobilization in today's media environment. They reveal that many of the roles that were once the unique domain of social movement organizations are now melting away in the era of Web-enabled collective -- and individual -- action. This book has wide-ranging significance for the study of sociology, politics, and communication." **Andrew Chadwick** , Professor of Political Science and Codirector of the New Political Communication Unit, Royal Holloway, University of London

About the Author
Jennifer Earl is Professor of Sociology at the University of Arizona.

Katrina Kimport is Assistant Professor with ANSIRH, a program of the Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health at the University of California, San Francisco.

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