eRadio: Empowerment through Community Web Radio

by
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Abstract

The eRadio project proposes to be an effective aid to increase interaction and reduce alienation among the members of dispersed communities by using a holistic approach to participatory and interactive web radio-production, with *ad hoc* methodology and *ad hoc* electronic tools.

Through eRadio individuals can contribute to a participatory process of community self-discovery, identification, and assimilation by voicing their concerns and views as well as by expressing aesthetic and cultural ways of rejoicing.

eRadio participators can trigger processes that may lead to the sustainability and empowerment of different segments of the dispersed community, and of the whole, by airing issues of collective importance and thus moving individuals, groups, and institutions to reflection and cooperation.

Volunteers become communicators that get others to tell anecdotes or discuss issues as they audio-record them. Then they creatively edit and transmit the finished audio pieces via the web and, if local conditions permit it, they radio broadcast it.

Interactive transmission from different sites is done by two or more segments of the dispersed community.

The project includes development of a hardware and software package that supports simple task-based production of digital audio files. The hardware is a simple computer called "VoxPopBox" which can be connected to a portable digital recorder in order to download audio clips that have been recorded in the field. The software is divided into four task areas which guide the user through gathering audio, producing a piece, publishing their work, and listening to other audio publications. Each box is connected to other boxes via the Internet.

This thesis describes the pilot implementation of the eRadio project with the Tulcingo community, which is a dispersed transnational community with a hometown in Mexico and about half of its population in New York City.

After two nine-day workshops, we produced and transmitted two radio programs, one from the town of Tulcingo and the other from the city of New York. As a result the Tulcingo community is interested in a long-term eRadio implementation. If done, Tulcingo would be an eRadio seed community from which other communities can bloom.

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