Opportunity Spaces (33)

Opportunities help determine the possible paths to the future that are available to people. Hence the opportunities that society offers are of critical importance. An "opportunity space" presents possible steps that people might take as they plan for, and move into, the future. Opportunities can include classes and seminars, volunteer positions, jobs, contests, access to the media, timely announcements, mentoring, scholarships, grants and others.

What opportunities exist? Do they exist for all citizens or just privileged ones? How are these opportunities developed? Do people know about them? It is important to devote attention and resources (including policy, services, media and technological systems) to help create new (and improve existing) "opportunity spaces" for people and communities who need them.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Citizen Science (37)

The role of science in the modern world will become increasingly critical in the years ahead, as health care, energy, resources and the global environment become ever more problematic. Science can appear to serve powerful institutions, such as stock markets and the weapons industry, more that it serves the people most affected by these problems. Meanwhile, the resources of society's professional scientists are overtaxed by the amount of data to be collected and the need to distribute expertise over a wide area. Science needs greater participation from people at large, and people need a greater voice in science. We need to develop new approaches to collaboration between science and communities. Citizens, policymakers and professional scientists all benefit by bringing both scientific knowledge and local knowledge to bear on the problems that they experience.

Written by Stewart Dutfield

Meaningful Maps (47)

People are often unaware of the state of the world around them, especially when the relationships are "invisible", second-order, or abstract. Many of the important issues for the community, the environment and for humanity are difficult to see.

To improve the world, we must understand the current situation, highlight the important factors, and help others to understand the issues. Meaningful maps can provide a focus for relevant information and present it in a way that it easy to understand. Groups need to target their resources carefully to achieve the maximum impact. They also want to communicate their concerns and encourage others to support their work. To be effective the maps often need to reveal hidden relationships.

Written by Andy Dearden and Scot Fletcher

Public Library (59)

Obstacles to diversity of ideas and freedom of thought are obstacles to human development, whether in wealthy countries, rich in Internet connections, or in rural regions of Peru short of roads and electricity. Not all people have access to information and ideas from which they might benefit, and the proliferation of ideas does not guarantee that people will encounter them.

The public library enjoys broad public respect and support, and promotes principles central to democracy and development: (a) intellectual freedom, (b) access to information and to ideas both fashionable and unfashionable, and (c) serving the needs of the underrepresented. If the Navajo call the library a “house of papers,” it can be much more; through new technologies, new partnerships, and new services.

To create access to information, civic participation, and life-long education, use what public libraries already offer and work with them to implement new services. Where there is no library, use the power of books to build public support. Where there is a public library, work with it to further the principles of intellectual freedom for all.

Written by Stewart Dutfield and Douglas Schuler