

The Community Informatics Initiative (CII) is a research and teaching center focused on working with communities to address their information and technology needs. Our mission is to address literacy in the Internet age, equitable access to the means of digital production, and policy related to communities and information technology.

What We Do :

Research

Create new knowledge about experiences, needs, successes and failures relating to access and implementations of information technology (IT) that supports communities;

Teaching

Reach out to communities to increase the social capital of community members, the educational outcomes of participants, the career trajectories of underserved populations, and awareness of IT issues;

Public Engagement

Bring high-tech to low-income communities, particularly in the area of digital media, and learn from local community needs and experiences;

Institutional Infrastructure

Support the coordination and facilitation of all these efforts, including scholarly research, training, and civic engagement networks

Selected Partners

- Department of African American Studies
- Books to Prisoners
- La Casa Cultural Latina
- Center for Democracy in a Multiracial Society
- Independent Media Center
- East St. Louis Action Research Project
- Illinois Community Technology Coalition
- Puerto Rican Cultural Center (Chicago)
- University of Illinois Extension

Selected Sponsors

- Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership
- Office of the Chancellor
- Office of the Provost
- Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement
- Carle Hospital Foundation
- U.S. Institute for Museum and Library Services

The Community Informatics Initiative...

Practices sound research to discover how people use technologies, and how information professionals, community organizations, and local residents can work together on health, education, environmental, cultural and other issues.

- The TOP Data Archive Project analyzes data from over 600 U.S. federally funded community technology programs
- eBlack Illinois uses citizen-collected data about Black communities to create a database for scholarship about the Black experience in Illinois
- The São Tomé project assesses needs and develops digital resources in West Africa

Rethinks academic boundaries and recognizes the learning that takes place outside the classroom.

- CII graduate students learn through long-standing partnerships with community organizations in Chicago, East St. Louis and Champaign-Urbana
- The annual Community as Intellectual Space Symposium brings university and community representatives together in Chicago's Paseo Boricua neighborhood to experience and reflect on the intersection of knowledge and community
- CII helps schools design programs that integrate family strengths and cultural knowledge into the curriculum

Empowers citizens to close the digital divide, critically assess and create technology, and become cyber organizers

- CII provides computer training, consulting to non-profits, and has built over 60 public access computing sites across the region using recycled computers
- The Afya (Swahili for "health") project helped SisterNet members participate in the creation of digital technology and resources that improve access to health information for African American women

Builds bridges between underrepresented groups and the university, creating educational opportunities for at-risk youth

- The B.T. Washington After School Program provides volunteer tutoring to at-risk youth (K-7) in Champaign and connects their families to community resources
- Teen Tech Team provides East St. Louis youth (aged 14-18) with basic computer training and business skills; students are also introduced to educational and job opportunities through university tours and apprenticeships

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