# Community network services

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Communities can be large or small, public or private, civic or commercial. All of them need the same kind of services if all members are going to communicate and collaborate effectively.

Community networks provide content-based services to citizens, community and civic groups, non-profits, local government, and schools and libraries. The list below outlines core services (many other are possible and practical) that should be available in every community. CTCs can provide customer service and support for many of these services in partnership with a local community network (CN). Training opportunities provided by CTCs encourage wide use of CN services by individuals and community groups.

- Every person in the community should have an electronic mailbox (email address) regardless of their ability to pay.
    - Technology service: email server

- Every community should support a common electronic mail address space for every person in the community, without regard to how each person accesses the network. This can be accomplished with a community mail forwarding service.
    - Technology service: email server with forwarding for all accounts

- Every person in the community should have affordable access to the network through private and/or nonprofit access providers.
    - Technology service: Internet access via dial-up, cable modem, DSL, dedicated Ethernet, and other broadband alternatives

- Local libraries and other public facilities should be supported as a partner in any community network to provide network access for those who do not have network access at home, and as a source of and access point for network-based information.
    - Technology service: community technology center

- Every community should support a common authentication mechanism (validating a person's identity) that can be used equally by both public agencies and private businesses to facilitate electronic voting and referendums, electronic commerce, and to simplify access to services.
    - Technology service: authentication server and services using public, nonproprietary standards based on open source efforts like PKI.

- Every community should support a public, online directory of email and Web site addresses of all personal, nonprofit, community, and businesses entities.
    - Technology service: Web-enabled database directory system using open source tools, especially LDAP.

- Every community should support wide use of mailing lists to facilitate discussions on any and all topics of interest to the community, especially local government issues, public education, and to facilitate the work of civic groups.
    - Technology service: mailing list server

- Every community should support a World Wide Web server as a community information publishing resource in cyberspace for local civic and government activities.
    - Technology service: community Web site and affordable site hosting services for community and civic groups.

- Every community should support local Usenet server and news groups to facilitate a "town commons" where people can meet to discuss issues of interest asynchronously and to facilitate discussion and local commerce.
    - Technology service: Usenet server

- Every community should support online conference facilities to support moderated asynchronous meetings and civic discussions.
    - Technology service: Web-based discussion forum server

- Every community should support a community historybase to help document and preserve an online, archival record of important community activities and events.
    - Technology service: Web-enabled database publishing server

- Common client intake system for social service agencies that facilitates referrals, reduces repetitive questioning of clients, and provides for client-controlled information sharing among agencies and faith-based groups.
    - Technology service: Web-enabled database client intake and case management system.

# About the author

Dr. Andrew Michael Cohill is an information architect with more than thirty years experience in technology and telecommunications. His educational degrees include a B.S. in Computer Science, a Master's degree in Information Systems (specializing in ergonomics), and a doctoral degree in architecture. He has worked in large and small businesses, in state government, and in academia. He worked for AT&T before, during, and after the breakup in the mid-eighties, and worked at AT&T Bell Labs as well as the manufacturing arm of the company. He has extensive experience in software and data base systems development. His software R&D group at Virginia Tech was designing and deploying Internet-based software in the early nineties, before the Internet became a household word.

In 1993, Virginia Tech selected him to lead the Blacksburg Electronic Village project. Over the next decade, Cohill made Blacksburg a worldwide phenomenon; throughout the late nineties, Blacksburg was widely hailed as the most wired community in the world. More recently, Cohill was selected by the Governor of Virginia to lead the Virginia eCommunities Task Force; in 2000, Cohill advised Hewlett-Packard on the design and management of HP's Digital Villages initiative. He has consulted with more than 100 communities worldwide on telecommunications planning and long term strategy development. He is in wide demand as a speaker and advisor on technology issues because of his non-traditional approach to community development and his dedication to approaching technology issues as part of a larger view of the community. Passionately committed to ensuring that communities get the right technology to prosper in the future, Cohill began working full time as a consultant in the spring of 2002. He is also Executive Director of the Knowledge Democracy Center, and works closely with Communities of the Future on a variety of joint projects.

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