

Vermont Open Data Summit Talking Points

Vermont's Civic Hackers and Why They Care About Open Data

3:15pm - 4:00pm

- Civic hacking is a participatory effort to improve communities through technology.
- Code for America is a national organization that is trying to improve government by improving citizenship.
- Code for America has several programs:
 - Fellowship: 2013 class includes 28 people
 - Accelerator: 5 teams received a \$25K grant each in 2013
 - Brigade: 30+ local volunteer groups
 - Peer Network: "membership-based, peer learning community that will mobilize innovation in cities by supporting and connecting forward-thinking local government leaders across the country."
 - Code for All: initial partners are in Mexico City, Germany, and the Caribbean
- Examples of Civic Apps that have come out of Code for America:
 - Adopt-a-Hydrant
 - Textizen
 - Prepared.ly
 - LocalData
- Code for BTV is a Code for America Brigade that develops, deploys, and maintains modern civic software and infrastructure for the benefit of communities in the greater Burlington area.
- Code for BTV has engaged over 55 civic hackers on more than 15 projects. We've estimated that well over 1,500 hours of volunteer time has been contributed.
- Code for BTV partners include:
 - The City of Burlington's Mayor's Office
 - Big Heavy World
 - Fletcher Free Library
- Code for BTV was launched during the National Day of Civic Hacking in June and has held monthly meetups/hackathons since then. The plan is to continue the monthly hackathons and hold major hackathons, like the National Day of Civic Hacking, about every four months.
- Hack the Stacks is a two day hackathon at Fletcher Free Library on Saturday, October 26 & Sunday, October 27. Civic hackers will be:
 - creating apps for Fletcher Free Library
 - helping Big Heavy World promote and preserve Vermont-made music
 - working with the Vermont Digital Economy Project to build WordPress websites for Vermont's non-profit organizations

- We're encouraging policymakers and anyone interested in learning more about civic hacking to take a guided tour of the hackathon. Register at hack-the-stacks-tours.eventbrite.com or email us at info@codeforbtv.org for more info.
- Lakecraft is an educational tool that engages youth and adults in science by gamifying the Lake Champlain Basin using open data and a custom modification to Minecraft. The ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center has been holding Minecraft camps and has experimented with using Lakecraft as a teaching tool.
- School Juice is a team of Code for BTV volunteers brainstorming ways to begin providing electricity usage data from Burlington's new smart meters in some useful and open ways to the public. This information could be used by the public, by students, and by the city to assess progress along the city's energy reduction goals. The concept is to present the energy usage data of all area schools in a way that can be searched, accessed by API and visualized.
- The Civic Cloud is a project which aims to make cloud computing resources available for non-commercial Internet applications with a focus on public, educational, and government access. The Civic Cloud is being developed by the Civic Cloud Collaborative, a group eight burlington-based organizations.
- The City of Burlington is in the early stages of providing open data through Socrata. The City is working with Code for BTV to help choose which data sets to release first.
- Tim Berners-Lee's 5 Star Open Data Plan (5stardata.info):
 - 1. make your stuff available on the Web (whatever format) under an open license
 - 2. make it available as structured data (e.g., Excel instead of image scan of a table)
 - 3. use non-proprietary formats (e.g., CSV instead of Excel)
 - 4. use URIs to denote things, so that people can point at your stuff
 - 5. link your data to other data to provide context