In 2004, Howard Dean aspired to be a presidential nominee for the Democratic Party. However, unlike his predecessors, he had an unusual weapon in his artillery for generating political fundraising – the Internet. Although, Howard Dean was unsuccessful in his race for a Presidential nominee bid, he illustrated that campaigns, whether local or national, could utilize the Internet as a newfound strategic tactic. In the collaboration of short works, *Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaign Communications*, Costas Panagopoulos reveals through the eyes of different authors how new media technologies such as emails, text messaging, and social networking sites impact the electioneering process. Panagopoulos demonstrates that for political campaigns to remain in touch with technology’s ever-changing effect on the political landscape, campaigns and strategists must learn to embrace these new opportunities while not neglecting traditional methods of political campaigning. He proposes the underlying theme behind the book by noting that the “current state of technology and new media foreshadow a future of campaigns and elections in which the tech-savvy will be rewarded. Those

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who embrace these advancements head-on will find themselves leading the pack, while those who do not risk being left behind.”

The book is structured as a collection of case studies where each respective author deconstructs and assesses a particularized form of new media in relation to a particular campaign. Panagopoulos organizes the book by first introducing case studies that highlight relevant factors that determine which technologies candidates utilize when constructing a website. In recent elections, candidate websites were ubiquitous, but not all websites included the same features such as video clips and interactive features for online viewers. The studies show that candidates consider personal interaction an important factor while keeping in mind the competitive nature of the race. Based on the rapid nature of technology, the studies imply that the candidates have a strong preference for retaining control over their message as it is reflected to the electorate. Essentially, those candidates who have little to lose are more likely to allow their message to be at the free whims of electorate interpretation.

Following the discussion of websites, the second section addresses the role of the Internet with regard to fundraising and voter mobilization. The studies illustrate the power the Internet has bequeathed to online fundraising. These studies note that in 2002, John McCain raised 2.2 million dollars in the matter of four days solely from online fundraising for his presidential election campaign. The premise of these studies on online fundraising disclose the apparent benefits of merging politics with technology while making clear that technology is not the sole

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strategic tactic that will make or break a campaign. This section also looks at the effect text
messaging and mass emails have on voter mobilization. Text messaging has boosted voter
turnout by three percentage points in some elections, as compared to mass emails which have
failed to add any significant advantage.\footnote{David W. Nickerson, \textit{The Impact of E-Mail Campaigns on Voter Mobilization: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaign Communications}, 150, 141–151, (Costas Panagopoulos ed., 2009).} Still, traditional techniques of door-to-door canvassing
prove to be more beneficial.

The next two sections go on to reflect an international viewpoint of utilizing campaign
techniques and how the growth of new media has affected recent elections in the United States.
Panagopoulos included the international outlook to demonstrate how techniques such as
blogging and text messaging are used abroad in campaign elections, particularly their effect in
Germany and Spain. The inclusion of these international elections is an attempt to give the
readers a worldwide perspective of the relationship between politics and technology.

Next, he introduced case studies on the use of social networking tools such as MySpace,
Facebook, and YouTube, which suggest that these tools force the candidates to be clear, direct,
and honest with the electorate. The studies note that in 2008, all of the democratic candidates for
the presidential race announced their bids to run via videos on YouTube.\footnote{Vassia Gueorguieva, \textit{Voters, MySpace, and YouTube: The Impact of Alternative Communication Channels in Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaign Communications}, 243, 233–248, (Costas Panagopoulos ed., 2009). See also Edward Lee, \textit{Warming up to User-Generated Content}, 2008 U. ILL. L. REV. 1459, 1523 (2008)(Article discussing a successful feature of YouTube called “YouChoose” which allowed the electorate to view videos posted by presidential candidates).} This sets the stage for
the idea that the Internet is not just an option in political strategy, but rather more of a necessity.
The overall point of utilizing these social networking sites is to have an engaged and informed
electorate prior to election day.
A noteworthy aspect of the book is that some of the case studies provide succinct and riveting examples of the profound effect of new social media on campaigns. The anecdote surrounding the controversy regarding the 2006 Connecticut Democratic Party election proved to hammer home the overwhelming effect blogging can have on an election. There, the controversy stemmed from a kiss on the cheek between President George W. Bush and Senator Joe Lieberman during a State of the Union address. When Ned Lamont decided to run against the incumbent Lieberman political pundits did not believe he would have the political infrastructure to run such an insurgent campaign. However, bloggers who were admonished by this kiss united by dissatisfaction with Lieberman to form a network that was parallel to a traditional political party. The study boldly illustrated that the blogging around the dissatisfaction generated from one kiss laid the foundation for an insurgent campaign, which Lamont was successfully able to take advantage of.

However, while the case studies, on their own, possessed some profound insight on the amalgamation of politics and technology, Panagopoulos fails with the organization and structure of the book. Although he attempts to divide the book into sections that focus on a different aspect of the relationship between technology and politics, he falls into the trap of providing repetitive information to the readers albeit from a different case study. The growth of new social media tactics in politics is a fairly new phenomenon and therefore, the amount of information and examples that can be utilized to illustrate this intertwining relationship are few and far between. This is prevalent as many of the case studies focus on the same campaigns such as those of Howard Dean and John McCain. Panagopoulos tried to offer a broad variety of viewpoints on the

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interplay between politics and technology, but essentially ended up misconstruing his offer. This was in part because many of his selected case studies provided the same underlying point regarding the effectiveness of each form of new social media. So, although the premise for each case study may be different, the reader is left feeling as though he is reading a book on repeat.

Much like the disarray of the structure of the book, the section relaying the international perspective of technology used in politics seemed to be out of place. Panagopoulos introduced case studies pertaining to only two countries and even though the purpose for showing the international viewpoint is noteworthy, he left the reader wanting an additional case study. Perhaps, if he had selected one more international case study in place of one on online fundraising, then he would have achieved a balanced outlook.

Despite these criticisms, *Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaign Communications* does offer an informed overview on the Internet as a groundbreaking campaign strategy. The relationship between politics and new social media is a modern phenomenon that certainly needs to be addressed, and Panagopoulos does a decent job of laying out the groundwork for a more concise book in the future. This book is very much an introductory piece for those readers who are interested in learning about the effects of a new campaign strategy and enjoy repetition in order to recall the important points. However, underneath the confusion and tautology of theories, there are some great anecdotal campaign stories that any lover of politics will genuinely appreciate.