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Street Maps in Political Hues

By TOM McNICHOL

FOR proof that all politics is local, look no further than Fundrace.org, which follows the political money to your front door. While records of campaign contributions have long been available online, Fundrace has a twist: plug in any address and retrieve a list of all the donors in the neighborhood, the names of their favored candidates and the amount bestowed.

For Melissa Kramer, a Democrat in Oakwood, Ohio, it was a part of the political process she had not anticipated. "I got an e-mail from a friend that said, 'Take a look at this site; it'll blow your mind,'" Ms. Kramer said. "I took a look and I thought, 'Oh, my goodness.'"

The site noted her \$1,983 in contributions to Gen. Wesley K. Clark's presidential campaign and her home address.

"It really bothered me," said Ms. Kramer, 36. "I live in a community that's overwhelmingly Republican; all the moms have Bush-Cheney bumper stickers on their minivans. I'm literally one of two Democrats on my entire street. So even if it's a very small possibility, I think there could be repercussions in some neighborhoods - petty vandalism, a slashed tire or graffiti."

Whatever its perils, the idea has proved irresistible to many. The six-month-old site says it is attracting up to 150,000 visitors a day. With its localized search feature, national politics has rarely hit quite so close to home.

Fundrace was created by a small team at Eyebeam, a New York-based nonprofit arts organization that focuses on emerging technologies. The basic data at the site - the names, addresses and occupations of contributors and the amount of money they have given to a presidential candidate - is part of the public record and supplied by the Federal Election Commission.

But Fundrace takes the information further by subjecting the location data to geocoding, a process that assigns a latitude-longitude coordinate to an address. Once a donor's address is pinpointed, it can be searched according to its proximity to any other point - say, your address.

"All of a sudden, campaign finance is not some abstract thing," said Jonah Peretti, 30, the director of research and development at Eyebeam. "You're actually able to see that the guy on the third floor of your apartment building gave money to Kerry and your boss gave money to Bush and one of your co-workers gave to Edwards."

Many visitors to Fundrace call the site a guilty pleasure.

"The site is very addictive," says Julia Miranda, a 25-year-old resident of Hollywood who is not listed as a donor. "When I typed in my address, I was very surprised to see two people nearby who gave to George Bush."

This is an extremely liberal neighborhood, and people around here usually won't admit to being a Republican. This is a sort of a way to smoke them out."

The site also presents several indexes that use census data to rank candidates by the characteristics of their contributors. A GrassRoots Index shows who has received small contributions from all over America (President Bush is first); a Devotion Index shows who inspires repeat giving and financial sacrifice, (Mr. Bush is first again); and a FatCats Index ranks who gets large contributions from the wealthiest Americans (Senator John Kerry is tops).

The site features maps of the top 10 donating cities, showing Democratic and Republican contributions as blue or red circles superimposed on a street map. The map of Manhattan clearly delineates geopolitical fault lines - the bulging blues of the Upper West Side squaring off against the red of the Upper East Side, the blue Lower East Side giving way to the red of Wall Street.

Fundrace also ranks the top buildings for presidential contributions in each of the top 10 cities. New York's top Democratic building is the El Dorado at 300 Central Park West, the graceful twin-towered apartment house between 90th and 91st Streets, responsible for \$65,600 in Democratic contributions. The city's top Republican building is 85 Broad Street, the home of the investment firm [Goldman Sachs](#), whose managing directors accounted for most of the \$29,500 that went to President Bush.

Such information has not gone unnoticed by those close to the action. Fundrace says it gets considerable traffic from inside Goldman Sachs, with the investment firm's Web servers accounting for up to 3,500 pages viewed in a day.

Checking up on the bosses, perhaps? "I call it the bored-at-work network," Mr. Peretti said. "People e-mail their bored colleagues at work about our site, and it spreads from there."

The site also lets users search contributors by name, which lends itself nicely to celebrity sleuthing. Bill Gates is the most searched-for name, and the result is somewhat anticlimactic: his lone contribution as an individual is \$2,000 to Mr. Bush. (By law, \$2,000 is the maximum amount an individual can donate to a candidate.) Many prominent donors routinely provide a work address - Mr. Gates lists his address as "1 [Microsoft](#) Way, Redmond, WA" - or, in the case of Hollywood, the address of a studio or an agent - in the records compiled by the commission.

Other popular celebrity searches include George H. W. Bush (\$2,000 to his son), Ben Affleck (\$2,000 to General Clark, \$1,000 to Representative Dennis J. Kucinich), Robert DeNiro (\$2,000 each to Mr. Kerry, Howard Dean and General Clark), and Morgan Fairchild (\$600 to Representative Richard A. Gephardt, \$500 to Senator John Edwards, \$250 to Dr. Dean). Donald Trump characteristically has all the angles covered, giving \$2,000 to both President Bush and Mr. Kerry. Jerry Seinfeld gave \$2,000 each to Mr. Kerry and General Clark, while his wife, Jessica, kicked in \$2,000 for General Clark. (The figures are for donations in 2003-4, current through March 31.)

Fundrace goes further than some Web sites by displaying contributors' full addresses on its first results page, rather than just the city or ZIP code. It has received hundreds of complaints about the addresses, and dozens of people have asked to have their own information removed.

One Fundrace visitor, Madison Moorehead-Lang, a bookkeeper from Oceanside, Calif., listed as giving \$450 to Dr. Dean's campaign, wrote to the Federal Election Commission complaining that the site was violating his civil rights. "A future employer could give a job I was applying for to someone that shares their political philosophy,"

he wrote, "and I might never know the reason I was overlooked." He said he had received no response from the commission.

Not everyone is so concerned. David J. Blumberg, 45, managing partner of a venture capital firm in San Francisco, is the sole contributor to George Bush in his ZIP code, which includes the Haight-Ashbury district. "I suppose someone could look up my name and target me for a hate mailing," Mr. Blumberg said. "But frankly, I'm more afraid of putting a Bush sign in my window. In my neighborhood, that's asking for someone to throw a rock."

Fundrace has declined to remove any addresses on the grounds that they are part of the public record and can be found (with a little digging) at the election commission's Web site.

"Obviously, we don't want people being stalked, but the address information is already pretty widely available online," Mr. Peretti said. "And posting the address does give you an interesting window into electoral politics."

Besides, he said, Fundrace is meant to provoke public debate, not only about money and politics, but also about what constitutes a public record in the information age. Clearly, though, Fundrace's window offers a voyeuristic thrill.

"When you look at all of those addresses you think, 'This is something I shouldn't be seeing,' " Ms. Miranda said. "But of course, when you say that, you want to see it all the more. I know I'll probably go back and look at it again even though I know it's wrong. It's like chocolate."

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