



# The Social Media President: Barack Obama and the Politics of Digital Engagement

*James E. Katz, Michael Barris, Anshul Jain*

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Prominent in Barack Obama's political campaigns and presidency has been a promise to use social media tools to engage American citizens in the business of democratic governance, stirring the hopes of millions who believe in the democratizing potential of information and communication technology. Yet what has become of these promises? To what extent have they been realized? Shattering views of social media as a cure-all for limits on citizen deliberation and governmental representation, *The Social Media President: Barack Obama and the Politics of Digital Engagement* analyzes the White House's use of Twitter and other online tools for a wide range of policy initiatives and strategic campaigns. Drawing on interviews, case studies and social-media content, the authors provide a bold take on a subject too frequently prone to exaggerated expectations. By examining presidential campaigns since 1992 and the actions of President Obama since taking office in 2009, a clearer picture emerges about the strengths and weaknesses of social media for public engagement. In terms of setting national policy, or getting systematic citizen input, a social media-enabled future would not only be difficult to implement with foreseeable technology, it could actually erode democratic institutions of voting and representation. Yet social media's prominence continues to grow and it is destined to play an ever-larger role in political rhetoric, campaign strategies, governance appeals and public debate. The thoughtful attention the authors provide to the successes, limitations and missed opportunities of the Obama Administration should command the interest of concerned scholars, practitioners and citizens everywhere.

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