Symposium Outline For Second Portion (Nancy):
SimplyInfo.org Chicago Symposium

INTRO:
Hi, I'm Nancy Foust from SimplyInfo.org**.** My involvement with the Fukushima nuclear disaster and with SimplyInfo was quite by chance. Like many of our group's members I was compelled to investigate the disaster. The tragedy we saw unfolding impacted so many lives and the magnitude of the disaster was just too much to ignore. My background is in technology and communications, like many of our members, we came from diverse places to work together.

SimplyInfo.org is a public crowd sourced, expert intelligence gathering and evaluation service for nuclear and related issues. Our strength is in our diversity. People from around the globe, from varied professions and industries have come together to research, investigate, analyze and educate.

1. How the group formed and why we did it.

*We formed on the Reuters live blog covering the 3-11 disaster

*Our diverse expertise in nuclear, medical, construction, research, academics and many other fields helped us approach the issues from many angles.

-Our geographical locations gave us a wider knowledge base and news access, many time zones allowed for more "around the clock" coverage.

*Why -

-Misinformation and a lack of information were rampant. Timely & factual information were hard to find.

-The actual situation at the plant was not being told. Authorities and the media downplayed the situation, many conflicting and confusing statements were coming out.

-Some people claimed an accident could not happen at Fukushima as

the accident was beginning to unfold and become undeniable. There were claims of “totally safe” right up until unit 1 exploded.

*People in Japan wanted information as they were getting none on the risks, the real situation at the plant, radiation levels and basic protection tactics.

-Our team efforts quickly found data and answers. More hands made faster work and we frequently found information faster than the media.

-Having people in Japan asking “us” for help to make very life changing decisions was sobering.

*People outside Japan also wanted information about real situation and the potential for risk outside Japan. People worried for those in the midst of the disaster.

*We struggled to find credible sources of information in the media so sought them out.

*These were the catalyst for the formation of the group. People wanted to “do something”.

2. Some of the key things we have done.

*Our research kept us ahead of govt. and TEPCO’s admissions about the plant’s status. We frequently determined issues at the plant weeks or months before they were publicly admitted.

*We dove deeper into technical questions and gathered critical reactor and plant data to monitor and find anomalies at Fukushima.

*Photo and video forensics were done to extract additional data about the reactors. This gave us critical information on damage, meltdowns and the blasts.

*We vetted research, news and “expert” statements to the media for factual accuracy while attempting to remain fact-focused and unbiased.

* We gathered a large body of information as an unbiased historical record of the disaster. We hope it and what we continue to collect is of use for the future research efforts of others. Compiling this information into a larger information collection of documents, data and imagery is our ongoing goal.

*Our team based research compiles news and information into one location. The work we generate includes citing our sources in an effort to bridge the gap between immediate media journalism and slower generated academic works.

3. Some key things we found.

*Unit 1 experiences earthquake to corium effect. Earthquakes of 6.0 or higher caused significant increases in radiation readings in the drywell of unit 1. Including increases as high as 57 sV/h.

*A ground fissure at unit 1 that runs up to the building foundation was found by image investigation.

*Unit 1’s rapid meltdown & the extent that certain of failure points played in the systems demise.
(IC shut down, didn’t anticipate SBO in manual, conflicting manuals)

*Unit 3's explosion may have been a combination of a hydrogen explosion and an ex-vessel steam explosion

*Unit 3's MOX fuel may have caused confounding issues (fuel vaporizing, hot spots, existing damage)

*Unit 4's SFP instability. Workers confirmed to us that unit 4's SFP was of great concern in April 2011 and that work to support the pool structure was a priority, TEPCO didn't admit this publicly for months. Unit 4's fuel pool will continue to be a risk until it is emptied due to structural integrity issues and fuel corrosion.

4. Challenges we experienced in addressing the disaster.

*Language was an issue – Documents frequently were in Japanese only, there is difficulty communicating with witnesses or victims

*Fear and intimidation tactics by government. The "harmful rumor" law in Japan had a chilling effect on participation. We lost contributors from Japan and people have mentioned various other forms of harassment in and outside of Japan.

*Attempts to frame the debate, downplay situation or inject misinformation by government and industry has made finding accurate information more difficult or time consuming.

5. Things that stuck in our minds

*People online who were trying to figure out if they should evacuate, find/take iodine pills, or trying to find an evacuation route

*Images of the tsunami, the massive damage and unit 3 exploding

*Photos of people, the worried face of a young mother, a woman crying among the rubble.

*Safecast informing older locals of very high radiation outside a restaurant, they had no idea.

6. Government(s) response and risk

*The government and TEPCO gave over optimistic reports, vague information and conflicting information in an effort to protect their personal interests.

*This caused great anxiety and indecision for people directly impacted by the disaster. What was a concern about evacuating and safety measures is now turned into anxiety and indecision about the ability to return home and people's unknown health status.

*People everywhere still struggle with "what to believe" as they hear such differing information about safety and risk.

*The lack of timely honest information caused some to be exposed unnecessarily and took away the ability for people to make their own decisions due to lack of information.

*Government responses continue to make aspects of the disaster worse, such as food supply concerns and a lack of health testing.

*The status at the plant is still somewhat temporary and unstable. Further building damage or fuel changes could cause a considerable problem yet the government is discussing returning home and reactor restarts.

*Public reporting has been scaled back, resulting in less factual information for people to use.

7. Where SimplyInfo is now and in the future

* We developed a lean organizational & technical structure that allowed our quick evolution over the last 13 months

* The live blog has been operational in some form since March 11, 2011. Our website launched in May 2011 and has about 260,000 total page views with up to 10,000 views per day.
  - the live blog has logged thousands of attendees at a time during the early months of the disaster.

* Our work has been picked up by media outlets and prominent nuclear issue activists.

*The disaster will be decades long and may outlive many of us.

* We are attempting to keep a detailed history and archive that will benefit researcher and those who need to understand the problem later on. We want to keep an honest historical record available to the public worldwide. Much of this is work in progress.

* The ability to engage diverse people in research & information sharing creates new ways to approach challenges and understand issues.

* There is value in citizen based news. The engagement, understanding and participation puts people in an active role instead of a passive role. This empowers people to share that new knowledge among their circles and may turn many into life-long activists.

I would like to thank Dr. Field and the symposium for allowing us the opportunity to share our work. I would also like to thank all of our members worldwide who could not make it today. Without all of them, our work would not be possible.