

## Participatory journalism meets public journalism —and a new era begins

By Leonard Witt  
Chair, CJIG

New tools and the sheer volume of public interaction on the Internet indicate that all media are facing a sea change, which will especially affect how the various media interact with their audiences. Journalists, researchers, mass communication schools and educators will need to react.

Scholars whose interest has focused on public or civic journalism over these past 15 years are especially well-positioned to help journalists, other researchers and teachers understand this new era and its effects.

Perhaps the most innovative, interactive Web-based tool is the Weblog, the low-cost, easy-to-use self-publishing tool. Howard Dean's presidential campaign used Weblogs to bring people together electronically and then used another electronic resource, MeetUp, to inspire and facilitate more than 170,000 people nationwide to register for face-to-face meetings.

The Dean Weblogs made it possible to organize some 3,500 people to come to Iowa to work on his campaign and to raise millions of dollars from the bottom up. The top-down leadership helped set up the tools, but this was a decentralized movement.

Private citizen-run Weblogs like

the Daily Kos, the Daily Dish and InstaPundit.com have more than a million unique visitors coming to each of their sites each month. One Saturday morning before noon, 435 people posted thoughtful comments at Daily Kos, Markos Moulitsas Zúniga's left-leaning, political oriented site.



Leonard Witt

The Japan Online Media Review at the University of Southern California reports: "Three years ago, a crew of four people quietly launched the South Korean 'citizen journalism' Web site, OhmyNews. Since then, the site's full-time staff has grown to 53—including 35 full-time reporters and editors—and the number of 'citizen reporters' writing for the site has grown from 700 to about 26,700.

"Citizen reporters submit about 200 articles every day, and about a million readers visit OhmyNews each day. The site mixes straight news reporting and commentary. Its influence at the grassroots level has been widely credited with helping President Roh Moo-hyun win the popular vote last December."

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Assistant Professor Pablo J. Boczkowski writes in an excerpt from

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## CJIG secures good slots for Toronto program

By Tony DeMars  
CJIG vice head and program chair

Thanks largely to great leadership from Leonard Witt, the Civic Journalism Interest Group fared very well in Atlanta, securing good slots for Toronto.

Through several weeks of deal-making leading up to the mid-winter meeting and more negotiations in Atlanta, CJIG will be well-represented on the 2004 program.

For the AEJMC convention this year, we start with a pre-convention workshop at 1 p.m. Tuesday. Our competitive research session is at 8:15 a.m. Wednesday, along with co-sponsored panels at 10 a.m. with RTVJ and at 1:30 p.m. with MAC. Our members meeting is at 6:45 p.m. Thursday. Friday, we have a mini-plenary on Blogs at 1:30 p.m. with CTP and Council of Affiliates, then a 5 p.m. panel co-sponsored with the International Communication Division.

On Saturday, the final convention day, CJIG co-sponsors sessions at 10 a.m. with Advertising and at 1:30 p.m. with the Commission on the Status of Women.

All in all, not bad for an interest group with half as many chips as divisions!

Several important issues also were discussed in the Council of Divisions meeting in Atlanta. In

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## CJIG Panels in Toronto

(More convention program information on Page 4, insert page)

# Love & Loathing of the Body Politic: Perceptions of Media Bias

By Mike McDevitt  
University of Colorado

O'Reilly vs. Franken vs. Fox vs. Moore. In the echo chamber of ideologically crude discourse, claims about media bias are often predictable to the point that they seem scripted before a debate takes place. And charges of politically skewed reporting are hardly novel, as aficionados of Agnew alliteration will readily recall those "nattering nabobs of negativism."

However, a confluence of contemporary trends—in journalism and in the larger political culture—suggest that perceived media bias has emerged as a phenomenon that resonates strongly with a large, and perhaps expanding, sector of the citizenry.

A CJIG panel will explore perceived media bias from the following perspectives, along with interdisciplinary approaches that bridge

these perspectives:

- News content. How are charges of news bias affecting the structure of story frames and news agendas?

- Journalism sociology. How do these charges, coupled with press reaction to them, influence the production of news? How will news organizations react to—or eventually subsume—grassroots Internet sites that promote ideological niche views?

- Political science. How might belief about media bias—and press reaction to it—influence campaign strategy and governance? How might this belief fuel civic participation, both conventional and online involvement?

- Psychology. How does perceived bias structure (or distort) cognitive processing of news, and what are the implications for participatory democracy and deliberation in the public sphere?

## Civic Journalism and Journalism Education in the Third World

**Panelists: Shelton Gunaratne, Minnesota State University, Moorhead; Melinda Robins, Emerson College; Leonard Teel, Georgia State University. Moderator: Lee Becker, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Research and Training, University of Georgia.**

Can civic journalism help impoverished Third World countries build their civil society? Is it a more useful practice than American-style journalism, with its ideals of objectivity and charge to be a watchdog on government?

As journalism schools proliferate to

feed an emerging private, commercial press under pressure from the world lending institutions, educators are looking to the West for guidance and resources even as they recognize that a free press is untenable under repressive regimes.

This panel will look at the status of civic journalism in Third World media development and journalism education. It will address the potential of civic journalism to help build civil society in impoverished countries with repressive governments, despite political, educational or other restrictions.

## ATLANTA

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a report on membership, Council Chair Carol Pardun reported a 17 percent growth in international members and a total of 3,514 members. The (as currently named) Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Interest Group approval was announced (with another interest group pending), followed by a discussion regarding how to allocate chips with as many divisions and interest groups as there now are. A task force will be selected to help make the decision.

Two other major points were also discussed at the Council of Divisions meeting. First, the deadline was extended to Feb. 1 for award nominations for the Deutschmann (research) Award and the Blum (service) Award. Also, the annual report system—the frequency of when groups file reports and the procedure for reporting—will change. Instead of simply filing a written report, groups will report at an AEJMC meeting. Q&A and a discussion of concerns followed this announcement. The system will start in Toronto; those who will be reporting will be notified.

The business meeting concluded with details to heads and vice heads about how to conduct the chip session for convention programming, a report about past division and interest group competitive paper acceptance rates, and information for people needing to make contacts in Toronto.

Now it's time to get those competitive papers submitted by April 1!

*Tony DeMarrs teaches at Sam Houston State University.*

### New Civic Journalism books

- Lew Friedland: *Public Journalism: Past and Future* (Kettering Foundation Press, 2003)

- David K. Perry: *Roots of Civic Journalism: Darwin, Dewey, and Mead* (Rowman and Littlefield Pub Inc., 2003)

## \$31-million grant at Missouri connects with civic journalism

By Tom Warhover

In early February, official types showed up with the long-awaited announcement of a \$31-million donation from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation to create the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri. Its stated goal, beyond giving the Missouri School of Journalism a cool new building, is to advance journalism and its role in democratic societies.

At first blush, the institute might be called the Public Journalism Institute. The j-school dean has talked about the need for the institute to bring journalists, educators and citizens together. The day after the announcement, he talked about the arrogance of journalists and journalism, and how the public might help better inform our work.

The language sounds familiar.

More interesting to me is that it is an institute with a vague idea but no specific plan, or at least none that I've been privy to. There are outlines for an executive director and visiting professors, but no manifesto outlining the work of the institute.

In other words, the institute is a work in progress. Potentially, that is



Tom Warhover, Cheryl Gibbs at meeting.

its greatest strength and one of the real lessons of public journalism. I hope the Reynolds Journalism Institute can begin in a spirit of humility and curiosity. I hope it can do what the academy doesn't or won't—worry not only about what is but also about what might be. I hope that it can be a true place of collaboration among citizens, educators and working journalists—a partnership that helped public journalism become public journalism.

Odds are against all those things happening. Already the special interests are circling the doors (technology, convergence and, yes, public journalism). At least, though, the early signs are encouraging.

*Tom Warhover is associate professor and executive editor of the Columbia Missourian, University of Missouri.*

## Do we need a name change?

By Leonard Witt

Last November, I wrote in the *Columbia Journalism Review*: “to rename public or civic journalism would be like dropping the name Protestant because it outraged the Catholics.”

I am having second thoughts. Here is what I wrote at PJNet.org, the Web site for the Public Journalism Network:

“In the past, public journalism theory and practice were driven by journalists and educators. Now, public journalism's tenets have the best chance of being advanced by the public using Weblogs and other electronic communication tools. Citizens, who are so much a part of the public journalism philosophy, no longer have to be invited into the mix. They are part of the mix.”

So how do we incorporate that mix into our name to show that public journalism has taken a leap forward? One term I particularly like is “participatory journalism,” as described in the We Media white paper produced for the Media Center at the American Press Institute. Participatory journalism includes the wide range of citizens involved in independent publishing, critiques of news organizations, collaboration and citizen journalism. They are changing the top-down pattern of traditional journalism. So maybe our new name becomes the “Public and Participatory Journalism Interest Group” or the “Civic and Participatory Journalism Interest Group.”

I suggest the name change now because it gives us all until August to think about it and then make a decision at the AEJMC convention in Toronto Aug. 4 through 7.

## CJIG research paper call for Toronto

The Civic Journalism Interest Group invites you to submit papers for the August 2004 AEJMC Convention in Toronto. Submissions may address any aspect of civic journalism, including but not limited to civic mapping, community conversations, civic journalism in a multicultural environment, civic journalism and new technologies,

and teaching civic journalism.

Papers should be submitted according to the AEJMC Uniform Paper Call to: Charlyne Berens, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 238 Andersen Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588.

The deadline is April 1. For complete details, go to the AEJMC convention pages at [www.aejmc.org](http://www.aejmc.org).

**Make plans for Toronto in August 2004!**

# NEW ERA

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his new book, *Digitizing the News: Innovation in Online Newspapers*, that a trend toward more user-centered online news could de facto deepen the civic or public journalism movement, which has sought a greater involvement of the citizenry in the editorial process and the publication of "all the news that citizens want to know" (Arthur Charity, "Doing Public Journalism," 1995).

Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis do an excellent job of describing and analyzing the potential of electronic participatory journalism in "We Media," a white paper written for the Media Center at the American Press Institute. They write:

"...the seed from which civic journalism grows is dialogue and conversation. Similarly, a defining characteristic of participatory journalism is conversation. However, there is no central news organization controlling exchange of information. Conversation is the mechanism that turns the tables on traditional roles of journalism and creates a dynamic, egalitarian give-and-take ethic."

Jay Rosen, chair of the New York University journalism department, is an excellent example of the role public journalism scholars can play in this new, participatory journalism movement. Since starting his Weblog PressThink in mid-2003, he has become a leader in developing the theoretical underpinning for participatory journalism and its relationship to mass media. The issues discussed at his

Web site, from horse-race mentality in election coverage to the question of press bias, are familiar to public journalists. Now, they translate well into the electronic participatory journalism movement. As a consequence, Rosen often headlines panels dedicated to Weblogs and electronic interaction at conferences like the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Bloggercon at Harvard and the Digital Democracy Teach-In in San Diego.

I have written an essay at the PJNet.org, the Public Journalism Network Web site, saying the infusion of participatory journalism has changed the very DNA of public journalism and will enable public journalism to accomplish many of the goals that public journalists have aspired to accomplish over the years. The key points of my essay are:

- There has been a power shift. In the past, the mainstream arguments dealing with public journalism were between people like Rosen and the top editors at places like *The New York Times* or *Washington Post*. Now, that argument is moot, because the voices of a wide range of citizens are being heard loud and clear on the Internet, mostly through Weblogs.

- *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* could dismiss the public journalism advocates, but can't dismiss the Markos Moulitsas Zúnigas of the world who have massive audiences. And, since audience time is finite, one has to suppose bloggers are taking away audience share from the mainstream press. And then if one adds the thousands of much smaller social network sites, like the PJNet, the audience shift from mainstream to self-publishers is even greater.

- Public journalism, civic journalism, participatory journalism, the public's journalism: It's all part of an evolution that has taken public journalism theory to practice. . . .

After reading what I have written so far, the skeptics and scholars among us probably have their own set of questions about the potential, limitations, pluses and minuses of participatory journalism. Perhaps first of which is: Is it a sea change or just another e-bubble?

To help frame the issues and questions, a special one-day, pre-AEJMC convention conference is scheduled Aug. 3 in Toronto. It's titled: "Exploring the Fusion Power of Public and Participatory Journalism." It will be co-sponsored by the Civic Journalism Interest Group, the Public Journalism Network (PJNet), the Canadian Newspaper Association and the Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communication at Kennesaw State University. Read more about it in this newsletter.

I am also proposing that the Civic Journalism Interest Group consider taking on a new name: The Public and Participatory Journalism Interest Group. Similarly, I am suggesting the Public Journalism Network, an independent professional society, consider becoming: The PJNet: A Public and Participatory Journalism Network.

As I said at the onset, public journalism professionals, researchers and teachers are well-positioned to be a force in this new media era. All we must do is react to it.

*Leonard Witt is the Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communication at Kennesaw State University.*

## Panels set for AEJMC convention in Toronto

**"Covering the 2004 Elections: Reporting the full spectrum of opinion."**

This panel will look at 2004 election coverage by addressing ways journalists are providing a forum for voices of independent voters and disaffected citizens, as well as those who identify themselves as Democrats or Republicans.

**"Reporting the World: Islam and local community coverage."**

This panel will address ways news organizations are covering or ignoring religion (particularly Islam) as an active element in community politics. The panel will discuss media responsibilities surrounding public awareness and civic empowerment for a diverse society.

# GROUNDBREAKING CONFERENCE

## Explore the fusion power of Public and Participatory Journalism in Toronto

By Leonard Witt

Participatory Journalism, as defined by the American Press Institute's We Media report, is transforming journalism.

Anyone who pays attention to anything from the Howard Dean Weblog/Meetups to citizen sites like the Daily Kos or Daily Dish, which attract more than a million unique viewers each month, knows that the transformation is under way. People are creating their own content, building social capital and influencing big-media news coverage. They are doing everything that public journalists advocated for and more. It's given public journalism new DNA and maybe a new identity.

So what's it all mean to journalists, researchers, citizens and teachers? Come find out in Toronto. The conference will run from 12:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 3, the day before the official start of the AEJMC convention. Mark your calendars. Firm registration details will be posted at the PJNet.org and the CJIG Web site soon.

It is a cooperative effort by the

Civic Journalism Interest Group, the Public Journalism Network, the Canadian Newspaper Association and the Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communication at Kennesaw State University.

Shayne Bowman, co-author of We Media, will help us build the conference content. He is aiming to make it interactive so it is more than talking heads. Participants will include top public journalists, academics and Web activists.

Here are just some of the names you know who have marked their calendars: Jay Rosen, NYU; Jan Schaffer, J-Lab; Jeff Jarvis, Newhouse's Advance.net; Chris Waddle, Anniston Star; Chris Peck, Memphis Commercial Appeal; Ken Sands, Spokane Spokesman-Review; Gil Thelan and Frank Denton, Tampa Tribune; Lew Friedland, University of Wisconsin; Chris Lydon, Public Radio; Sharon Iorio, Wichita State; Cole Campbell, Kettering Foundation; Rebecca MacKinnon, CNN, and Jon Greenberg, New Hampshire Public Radio.

Topics being developed include:

- How Technology Is Changing

Public Journalism.

- The Power of Participatory Journalism .
- How Participatory Journalism Is Being Used Now.
- Tapping the Fusion Power for Print and Broadcast.

Roundtable discussions: What are take-home lessons, actions or steps for:

- Larger print organizations?
- Broadcast organizations?
- Community newspapers?
- Journalism/media studies classrooms?
- Researchers?
- Bloggers, citizen journalists, etc.?
- The globally connected?

Evening banquet and discussion:

- The global possibilities of Public and Participatory Journalism.
- Discussion led by Rebecca MacKinnon, CNN Tokyo Bureau chief, Weblogger and Harvard University fellow.

Network throughout the conference and at a day-ending cocktail social.

—Excerpted from PJNet.org Post

## On the program in Toronto

### **"Will Weblogs Change Journalism and Are They Doing So Already?" Mini-plenary session, 1:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 6.**

Panelist Jay Rosen, chair of the New York University Journalism Department, says, "In journalism classically understood, information flows from the press to the public. In the weblog world, as it is coming to be understood, information flows from the public to the press." Panelist Jeff Jarvis, creator of Entertainment Weekly, president and creative director of Newhouse's Advance.net and avid blogger concurs. But is it journalism? How should it be taught? What are the

research possibilities? Leonard Witt, CJIG chair, moderates. This session is led by the CJIG in cooperation with the Communication Technology & Policy division and the Council of Affiliates.

### **"Making Diversity Come Alive in the Journalism Classroom" Panel, 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 4.**

Venise Wagner, a former journalist and now professor at San Francisco State, shows how she helped her students better understand race relations by centering a reporting project on community-centered environmental issues. Leonard Witt

of Kennesaw State University tells of a student-run, multi-media project centered on the complexity and diversity of community life in Marietta, Ga.

John Sanchez, associate professor, journalism/news media ethics, Penn State University, will moderate, and William "Buzz" Hoon, assistant professor, communication, Western Illinois University, will provide concrete ideas with examples for introducing diversity and multiculturalism on a daily basis. This panel will be led by the CJIG, in cooperation with the Minorities and Communication Division.