

# CIVIC *and* CITIZEN Journalism

INTEREST GROUP NEWS

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ccjig.blogspot.com

SUMMER 2011

## Growth of Patch, indie sites shows citizen journalism going mainstream

**By Jack Rosenberry**  
CCJIG Newsletter Editor

One of the most striking recent developments in the world of online news, and citizen journalism, has been the rapid expansion of the Patch.com network of local news sites owned by AOL.

Patch was started in 2008 by a group that included Tim Armstrong, a former Google executive. Armstrong joined AOL in early 2009, and the company acquired Patch that

June. Patch sites were located in 11 communities in New Jersey and Connecticut in late 2009 but grew to about 100 sites in nine states by August 2010 and approximately 800 sites across 20 states by early 2011.

These local news sites primarily cover affluent bedroom communities that surround large cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, and Washington, DC.

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The annual convention is the highlight of involvement for AEJMC members, and this newsletter previews CCJIG's plans including a full slate of programming (page 3) and research sessions (page 4). Also be sure to attend the **member meeting at 6:45 p.m. Thursday Aug. 11.**

Other convention facts to keep in mind:

### Key Dates

- "Early Bird" registration deadline: July 8
- Pre-conference sessions: Tues. Aug. 9
- Conference: Wed. Aug. 10 to Sat. Aug. 13.

### Convention Hotel:

- The Renaissance St. Louis Grand Hotel, 800 Washington Ave.

### Web site

- <http://www.aejmctlouis.org/home/>

## Online tools help educators teach selves, students

**By Sue Ellen Christian**  
CCJIG Teaching Chair

Teaching journalism in the 21st century is requiring more flexibility and innovation by educators. Instructors need to acquire and maintain skills in digi-

tal media as well as teaching the foundational elements of the craft. It's a busy time in the classroom.

Many digital tools are available to help educators in civic and citizen journalism and every other shade of journalism to

teach both the basic news writing and reporting and the multimedia skills needed by today's students. Many educators say they need training so they can teach students how to present

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## Teaching

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their work in video, audio, or slideshow format. Here are a few sites to help you acquire skills without leaving the glow of your home computer: (*Disclaimer: I have used some of these sites, but not all.*)

### (Mostly) Free Training

There is a wealth of free information available in a set of multimedia tutorials from the Knight Digital Media Center at Berkeley (<http://bit.ly/jMgS3D>). They feature live links and videos that demonstrate the how-tos. Tutorials include picking the right media for a story, Facebook for journalists, WordPress for writers and editing in Final Cut Pro. I especially love the Multimedia Storytelling tutorial.

Most college educators are likely familiar with the Poynter Institute's News University ([www.newsu.org](http://www.newsu.org)), but it's too good not to mention again. It offers a variety of webinars, self-directed courses and online group seminars. A sampling includes Short Narrative Bursts: Social Media Writing, and also Taking on Hyperlocal: Lessons Learned from a High-Profile Start-Up, both of which are webinars of 60-75 minutes. They cost about \$30 each. Another module of note for CCJIGers is The Community Journalism Series: Strategies for Managing Local Contributors, which is a 2- to 3-hour self-directed course that is free.

### Read All About It

Twittering Tips for Beginners (<http://nyti.ms/m7HfHp>) is a helpful *New York Times* article by David Pogue. Or, to just get



This is how this article was portrayed when it was converted to a Wordle word cloud.

started on Twitter, another NYT column, this one by Paul Boutin (<http://nyti.ms/m8kZuG>), will do the trick.

### Use What's Handy

Sometimes, educators have to work with what's available to teach multimedia because, let's face it, we all don't have stocks of up-to-date video cameras and SLR digital cameras and state-of-the-art editing software at our disposal. This article from *Online Journalism Review* (<http://bit.ly/jCsaYr>) gives tips on how to do a multimedia piece using a Flip camcorder (they are super easy to use and cost just \$100 to \$200 a unit, depending on features, though there is an obvious quality trade-off in terms of image clarity, sound and angles). Many of the tips also would apply to using the video recorder on a mobile phone.

### A Beat Reporting Tool

Delicious ([www.delicious.com](http://www.delicious.com)) is a social bookmarking service that lets you save your favorite sites as bookmarks online, share them with others, and see what others are bookmarking too. I'm told it can be a decent tool for students to use on beats, as it can help them track the popular online sites being saved in their

area of interest.

### I Got Cash

If you have a little money to spend, well, there are lots of cool gadgets out there to buy, but two reasonably-priced pieces of software (\$40 to \$70 each) that help you easily create slideshows on deadline for embedding in your site are <http://soundslides.com/> and <http://slideshowpro.net>.

### Fun Stuff

Make timelines with an online tool such as Timeglider. The basic version is free at <http://timeglider.com>. Wordle ([www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)) is a free online tool that creates a visual depiction of your text. The software generates a "word cloud" that gives greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. I have students use Wordle (there's a similar tool on Facebook) in a variety of ways, such as to help them see what they focused on in a story through their word choices. Or, they can word cloud a published story by a mainstream news organization and a story on the same news event by a niche or advocacy news outlet and compare the two clouds for story emphases.

Good luck, good teaching and good training!

## CHAIR'S REPORT

## Convention events reflect annual goals

**By Deborah Chung**  
CCJIG Chair

As we gear up for this year's AEJMC conference in St. Louis, we reflect on the goals that we have met in year 2010-2011.



We started this year by reassessing our increasingly growing mission and central role as various Web 2.0 technologies

enhance user activity and participation in society. Yet, growing out of conversations at last year's convention, we also acknowledged that there is still lack of clarity regarding definitions of citizen journalism and who is a citizen journalist, their activities, uses of interactive/participatory technologies, conceptual frameworks and motivations. We also continue to learn about collaborative projects with citizens and new media tools. This year's conference promises a range of panels and paper sessions that address these issues.

In terms of overall goals, the area of teaching has been identified as a continued concern over the years. So we made efforts to emphasize this area, particularly in our last two conference programs. However, this year

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## Panels represent balance of teaching, research, PF&R

**By Kirsten Johnson**  
CCJIG Vice Chair

This year's conference in St. Louis features an exciting slate of programming in teaching, research, and professional freedom and responsibility. The following sessions are co-sponsored by CCJIG with other interest groups and divisions.

### **Wednesday 3:15 p.m.**

#### **Going Public**

This panel will focus on how different journalism schools are teaching undergraduates to cover and serve local communities through citizen journalism and journalism-related service projects. (Magazine, CCJIG)

### **Wednesday 5:00 p.m.**

#### **Location, Location, Location: Using Location-based Services to Add Some Mobile to Your Journalism Course**

Use of location services in journalism has been on the rise recently, with the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* making inroads to attract readers with mobile applications such as Foursquare. At the same time other location services such as Yelp! have on their own generated significant content solely from users. This panel will explore how to fit location into the classroom curriculum. Best practices and specific assignments will be highlighted. (Mass Communication and Society, CCJIG)

### **Thursday 8:15 a.m.**

#### **Beyond the Box: Issues and Innovations in Researching Digital Content**

In exploring user participation and the works of citizen journalists, researchers commonly apply methods of content analysis, one of the most popular methods of inquiry in media research. Media scholars traditionally apply the method to analyze content in static forms such as newspapers, magazines, films, or video. The Internet has not only enabled new forms of publishing – leading to an explosion of user-generated content – but also has introduced new considerations for scholarly examinations of such content. This panel will examine methodological issues surrounding content analysis of online content. (CCJIG, Radio and Television Journalism)

### **Thursday 5:00 p.m.**

#### **News With a View**

For decades the concept of objectivity in journalism has been disputed. With the rise of new technologies that allow more individuals to claim they produce news, and the increasing reliance of mainstream journalism on manufactured spectacle, this panel will discuss how the increasing presence of subjectivity in news is affecting the news we receive. (Community Journalism, CCJIG)

### **Thursday 6:45 p.m.**

#### **Membership meeting**

Election of officers, a review and preview of the past year and coming one, along with networking and camaraderie.

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# Research to be presented in 3 sessions

## Wednesday, August 10, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Emerging Understandings of Civic and Citizen Journalism

Moderator and discussant: Deborah Chung, University of Kentucky.

Papers and presenters:

- “No Experience Necessary: The Perceived Credibility of Citizen Journalism,” Sara Netzley & Mark Hemmer, Bradley University
- “News Innovation and the Negotiation of Participation,” Seth Lewis, University of Minnesota\*
- “Exploring Contexts in Citizen Journalism: A Conceptual Framework,” Nakho Kim, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- “Not Paid to Play: A Case Study of Online Community Participants and the Effects of Non-Monetary Motivation

Upon Public Journalism,” Robert Gutsche, Jr.; Rauf Arif; The University of Iowa.

\*Top faculty-authored paper

## Thursday, August 11

1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

(Scholar to Scholar session)

Papers and presenters:

- “The Refrigerator as a Megaphone: Addressing the Motivations of Citizen Photojournalists,” Tara Buehner, University of Oklahoma
- “Interactions of News Frames and Incivility in the Political Blogosphere: Examining News Credibility and Political Trust,” Porismita Borah, Maryville University.

Discussant: Burton St. John III, Old Dominion University.

## Friday, Aug. 12

3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Citizen Journalism and New Technologies

Moderator and discussant: Nikhil Moro, University of North Texas.

Papers and presenters:

- “Case of the UT Shooter: Citizens working around, with, and for traditional news media,” Avery Holton, University of Texas-Austin \*
- “Exposing the Digital News Photo Hound: A Study on the Normative Structure and Routines of Citizen Photojournalists,” Tara Buehner and Julie Jones, University of Oklahoma
- “#Forward! Twitter as Citizen Journalism in the Wisconsin Labor Protests,” Aaron Veenstra, Narayanan Iyer, Namrata Bansal, Mohammad Hossain, Jiwoo Park, Jiachun Hong; Southern Illinois University-Carbondale.

\*Top student-authored paper

## Programs

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### Friday 8:15 a.m.

#### The Role of Citizen Journalists, Bloggers and Digital Media in the Political Campaign

This panel will discuss the use of different forms of digital media for political purposes and explore their effects on a range of important political variables. It also will address how citizen journalists and bloggers contribute to democracy and influence campaigns, and how they reconcile the notions of journalistic neutrality and ethical standards for all candidates with the passion and authenticity that readers

often expect from citizen journalists and bloggers. (CCJIG, Communication Technology)

### Friday 12:15 p.m.

#### Community News Sites: What Works (J-Lab Luncheon) —

More than 7,000 placeblogs have launched around the country. Thousands more hyperlocal community news sites are now covering town and school board meetings that have never been covered before – not even in the heyday of American journalism. Building on the new J-Lab report: *New Voices: What Works*, this session will examine what is working in terms of content and sustainability. (Council of Affiliates, CCJIG, COMJIG)

## MEMBER NOTES

- **Kirsten A. Johnson**, CCJIG’s vice chair for programming, was tenured and promoted to associate professor in the Department of Communications at Elizabethtown College.

- **Burton St. John III**, research chair for CCJIG this year, received tenure at Old Dominion University and was promoted to associate professor.

- **Seungahn Nah**, an assistant professor at the University of Kentucky, received the 2010-2011 UK Provost’s Outstanding

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## Reflecting on PF&R values offers new perspective

**By Anne Golden Worsham**  
**CCJIG PF&R Chair**

Individuals serving as AEJMC officers tend to engage in a period of reflection as the AEJMC conference nears and they realize that their year of service is ending.

As I have been reflecting on my past year as the Professional Freedom and Responsibility (PF&R) chair, I realized that my efforts have been focused on exploring the ideals that lie at the heart of the PF&R areas. This helped me understand the possibilities of an elevated vision with respect to those values.

The PF&R areas encompass the values of free expression; ethics; media accountability; racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness; and public service.

So, for example, when we look at the value of racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness, the minimal standard (as articulated by the AEJMC) is that we treat all people fairly in the workplace and at AEJMC conferences.

However, a quick check of the word “inclusive” in the Roget’s Thesaurus reveals that the

words “all-embracing” are listed next to the entry. This means that not only should we treat people equally, but if we want to set our vision even higher, we could actively welcome and mentally embrace everyone, even those from a different race, gender or culture than our own.

An elevated vision concerning the involvement of all types of people in our interest group might include the desire to send out the message that, even before an individual from a different race, gender or culture walks into our meeting room, he or she will be walking into an environment of warmth and acceptance.

With this feeling in mind, my column in the Summer 2010 newsletter asked the CCJIG officers to share their feelings about civic journalism and also requested that they share some very human details about themselves. The PF&R column in the Winter/Spring 2011 edition of the CCJIG newsletter highlighted the slower pace and heightened interaction that can be found at AEJMC regional colloquia. It was hoped that these columns would help others be-

come involved in the interest group and feel welcome at our meetings.

But this is true about more than just inclusiveness. As I was brainstorming about possible PF&R panels for the August convention, I realized that there were also ways to elevate other PF&R values to a higher plane.

The speakers at the PF&R political campaign panel in August will discuss how citizen journalists and bloggers contribute to democracy and influence political campaigns. This discussion will reflect the PF&R values of free expression, ethics, and media criticism and accountability.

However, on a deeper level, the panelists will also discuss the varying viewpoints relating to the clash between the neutrality of professional journalists and the passion and authenticity found in citizen journalism. This discussion of these paradigmatic differences goes beyond the basics of free expression, ethics, and media criticism as it recognizes the differing (and yet equally commendable) human values that lay at the foundation of conflicting paradigms.

## Member notes

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Teaching Award, which is the most prestigious and highly competitive teaching award at the university. He teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses regarding political communication and sociology of journalism, community, and de-

mocracy. He is director of the Kentucky Citizen Media Project that has launched its first citizen journalism site, The Lexington Commons ([www.kylexingtoncommons.org](http://www.kylexingtoncommons.org)) in Lexington, KY.

■ **Kirsten A. Johnson** and **Tamara L. Gillis** were named Page Legacy Scholars for the 2011/2012 academic year. Their project titled “Markers of credi-

bility and mainstream media representatives: Developing a social media credibility inventory” was approved for funding through the Arthur W. Page Center. The \$3,500 grant will be used to create a tool that can be used by public relations practitioners to create social media and blogs that integrate important credibility markers into the design and content.

## Patch

From page 1

Each site has an editor, who is provided with equipment – a computer, cell phone and digital camera – but no office; instead, editors work from home or from community locations such as coffee shops.

More recently, Patch has moved aggressively to augment the paid professional editors with a citizen journalism component of volunteer writers and local bloggers contributing to the sites. Each site lists all of its contributors, which can run to several dozen on some sites, and a section of the home page highlights local bloggers.

But independent online community journalists have been critical of Patch, notably the idea that an outside corporate entity can ever have the true community connection that they see as the heart of local journalism. In an interview with *LA Weekly*, Timothy Rutt, who runs the hyperlocal site [altdenablog.com](http://altdenablog.com), compared Patch to “Walmart moving in and driving out the mom-and-pop businesses.”

Now, Rutt and operators of some other independent sites are joining forces in a network seeking to counter the influence of Patch. The coalition, which calls itself Authentically Local, announced its formation in mid-May 2011 with 30 founding members. By the end of May it had grown to nearly 50. The list includes names that are familiar to many CCJIG members from having representatives of the sites on CCJIG convention panels – including BaristaNet,



Oakland Local, West Seattle Blog, Twin Cities Daily Planet and iBrattleboro.

In a news release announcing the coalition’s formation, the members said they “have joined forces to launch an ‘Authentically Local’ branding campaign to emphasize the importance of supporting home-grown media, stores and places.”

“Local journalism doesn’t scale and it doesn’t need to scale. It needs to emerge from people deeply engaged in their local community, determined to make a difference and provide a vital service,” Lance Knobel, a co-founder of [Berkeleyside.com](http://Berkeleyside.com), said in the news release.

While the Authentically Local group’s concerns are understandable, it’s not entirely clear why an *a priori* conclusion that “local doesn’t scale” is warranted. Operators of the Authentically Local sites are in the same situation as – and essentially fighting the same fight as – local retailers and dining establishments against national big box stores and restaurant

chains. They make that analogy themselves on the AL website.

But is it necessarily and automatically the case that out-of-town ownership degrades the quality of the journalism?

For decades before online hyperlocal news coverage emerged, out-of-town ownership of small local newspapers was not the exception but the rule. And while many of those chain papers were poor to mediocre, some were pretty good – while some of the small locally owned ones were true rags. In other words, ownership had no general correlation with quality. In a similar vein, there seems to be little fundamental difference between small local newspapers being owned by large corporations (e.g. Gannett, which owned dozens of such papers but was not the only corporation that did so) and a local news website being owned by a large corporation (i.e. Patch/AOL).

Patch encourages editors to share information about themselves on their sites, and a quick review of a few sites revealed that many editors had local roots, as either natives or at least longtime residents of the communities they cover. Many have worked for local weeklies or dailies in their coverage area before joining Patch. If these individual journalists are capable and sensitive to their communities they will find good, local stories to cover. And if the editors are conscientious about soliciting and curating the work of citizen journalists in their area, local flavor and connections will emerge.

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## Chung

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we aimed for a more balanced program covering all three areas of teaching, research and PF&R about equally.

We paid renewed attention to research this year with two refereed research paper sessions and a refereed scholar-to-scholar session scheduled in St. Louis. One of our panels set for this year's conference also focuses on the increasing presence of subjectivity in news through user-produced stories. In relation to this topic, two CCJIG officers are authoring a book that provides insights into how the field of journalism can adjust its understanding and practices of objectivity beyond its limiting frames. Many CCJIG members are contributing chapters to this volume.

CCJIG also participated in the midwinter conference at the University of Oklahoma. Addi-

tionally, in order to attract more focused papers aligning with our group's mission, we underscored the importance of explicitly stating the connection with issues of civic or citizen journalism in our call for paper submissions for the conference.

In the area of teaching, in addition to two scheduled panel sessions in the conference, CCJIG members shared stories over the year regarding how they are using Web 2.0 tools in the classroom. For example, Twitter is a popular tool these days, and our members shared stories regarding how this tool can be used effectively among students for information sharing and connectivity. These stories were circulated in our interest group newsletter.

We also continue to sponsor the J-Lab luncheon, which is largely PF&R. This year's luncheon – which will be co-sponsored with some of our usual collaborators, the Community Journalism Interest Group and the Council

of Affiliates – will focus on community news sites.

This year's other programming efforts also represent multiple collaborative sessions with other divisions and interest groups. We continue to partner with Radio-Television Journalism and Communication Technology.

We have also forged new partnerships with the Magazine and Mass Communication and Society divisions. As the roles of our interest group expand and the activities we study become more central to a thriving, democratic society, we are able to branch out and develop new partnerships, and we believe this positive trend will continue.

While there are some goals that were not met this year, we are confident that with support from members we can continue to carry out our critical mission and contribute to the active participation and engagement of citizens, which is the foundation of a democratic society.

## Patch

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Patch is still an experiment, and one trend that has developed with ventures into online local coverage by large legacy media organizations is that such experiments have a short leash and their owners are quick to cut them loose if the economics don't work out as hoped. Loudon Extra, TBD, and sites launched by *The New York Times* that were later taken over by AL member Barista.net stand as evidence of that.

But the interesting and im-

portant thing about the emergence of Patch and other legacy media forays into this arena is how they indicate that hyperlocal and citizen journalism are no longer some exotic oddity.

Instead, citizen journalism is becoming a routine part of the landscape of news coverage, a development documented by J-Lab in its *New Media Makers* (2009) and *New Voices* (2010) reports and encouraged by its Networked Journalism project.

The more routine and more expected such coverage becomes, the more it will contribute to the emerging news ecosystem, no

matter who owns the site where it is published.

◆  
*Background information in this story about Patch came from published reports in sources such as Columbia Journalism Review, Newsweek, LA Weekly and The New York Times. The author has completed a comparative content analysis of Patch sites and independent hyperlocal ones (though not specifically the Authentically Local ones); the results of that research will be presented at the Thursday Scholar-to-Scholar session at the St. Louis convention.*