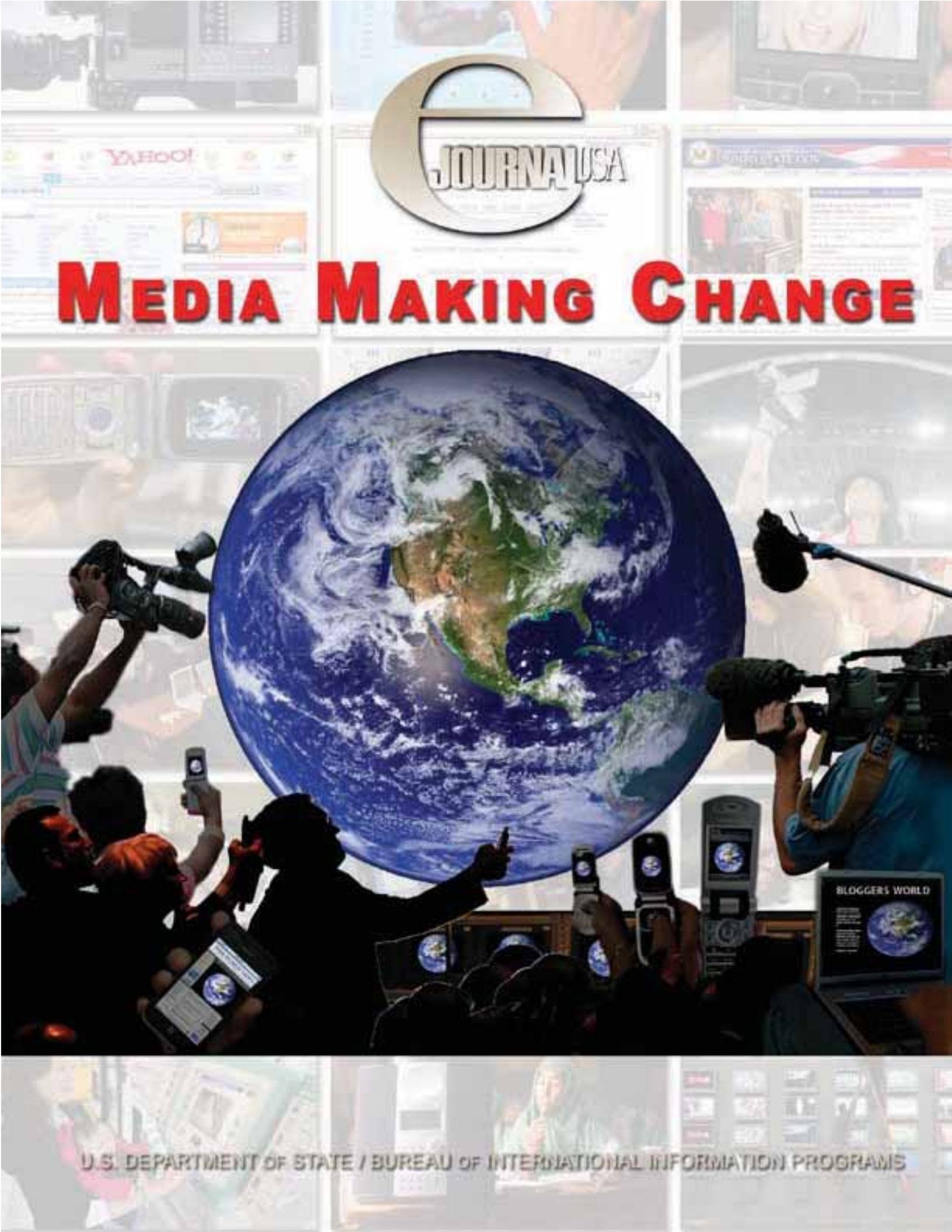
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MEDIA MAKING CHANGE
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One new journal is published monthly in English and is followed by versions in French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Selected editions also appear in Arabic, Chinese, and Persian. Each journal is catalogued by volume and number.

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About This Issue

One-sixth of the entire world's population uses the Internet regularly, according to the World Telecommunications Union, and 2.7 billion people are subscribers to mobile telephone services. Both of those numbers have rocketed in the few years since we entered a new millennium.

These technologies allow individuals to tap deep wells into the world's knowledge, and then to share it and disseminate it for social or political agendas of their own making. Knowledge is power, and on the pages that follow, our contributors describe many events in the world where citizens have used technologies and the power they convey to challenge the status quo, to unmask abuses, and to clamor for greater freedom.

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Bystanders use their cell phones to take photos of a media swarm during a stop on the U.S. presidential campaign trail.

"The technology — ubiquitous even in poor countries — not only enables a freer flow of information, but it also encourages citizens who previously felt powerless to take a role in bringing about changes in their societies," writes Patrick Butler of the International Center for Journalists in the first essay of this publication.

Challenged by these movements for change, governments can no longer safely resort to the old patterns. Repressive governments can no longer meet peaceful protestors with bludgeons and go unnoticed. Camera phones record the scene when the blows fall. Effusive bloggers will tell the world.

This is a story that *eJournal USA* began reporting in March 2006 with publication of *Media Emerging*, which examined how traditional media were remaking their products in a new information environment and how citizens were finding their skills with new technologies. Now the story is unfolding beyond the media itself into society at large.

Media organizations are among the best monitors of what's happening, and we have turned to them to tell these stories. The International Center for Journalists explains how new technologies bring new voices to the political arena. A veteran American journalist describes how U.S. politics take a different course with the involvement of online activists. Writers from the World Editors Forum and the World Association of Newspapers explain how citizens are changing news products and how professional newsrooms must respond.

Our contributors tell complex and varied stories, but one theme repeats itself on these pages: The end of the story is not yet written. How our world will change as a result of the social, political, and media forces now let loose remains a secret for the future to know.

The Editors

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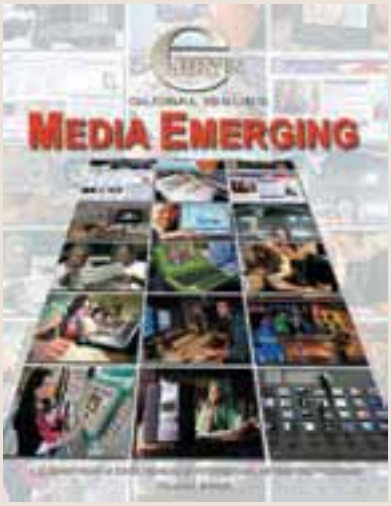

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New Technology, New Voices

Patrick Butler

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Following the posting on the Internet of a video of the assault of a Cairo minivan driver, Egyptian police officer Islam Nabih, center, was convicted in November 2007.

Blogging, online video, and rapid-fire text messaging are new media technologies that have become widely used and adapted in the last few years. Savvy users have applied these technologies in unexpected ways to achieve political goals. Governments are struggling to respond, some with repression, some with reforms.

Patrick Butler is vice president for programs at the International Center for Journalists, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization that "promotes quality journalism worldwide in the belief that independent, vigorous media are crucial in improving the human condition," according to its mission statement.

The videos are grainy and blurred, but clear enough to horrify. In one, a police officer repeatedly hits a suspect on the face as the man raises his hands in defense and then falls to the floor. In another, a woman in custody hangs upside down, her feet and hands tied to a rod as she cries and screams. In a third, police round up protesters on the street, beating them with sticks as they herd the men into a wagon.

The videos of police brutality in Egypt were never shown on any television station broadcasting from that country. Instead, they were posted by blogger Wael Abbas on his hugely popular MisrDigital Web site *[http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com/]*.

The videos had impact, even in a country like Egypt, where the only ones punished for abuses exposed by courageous journalism are often the journalists themselves. Because of postings of the cell-phone videos

by Abbas and other bloggers, two police officers were sentenced to three years in jail in November 2007 for torturing a Cairo minivan driver. Other officers await trial in other abuse cases.

Digital Reporting

Across the globe, journalists and non-journalists are using digital media tools like the Internet, short-message service (SMS) messaging, and small cell-phone video cameras to gather and disseminate information in ways that were impossible just a decade ago. The technology — ubiquitous even in poor countries — not only enables a freer flow of information, but it also encourages citizens who previously felt powerless to take a role in bringing about changes in their societies.

In many cases, like that of Abbas, the freer flow of information enabled by new technology is nudging governments to take action they otherwise might not have. While arrests of abusive police officers are a step in the right direction for Egypt, it remains to be seen whether Abbas and other bloggers can have a broader impact in pushing the Mubarak government to adopt more democratic practices. Like other countries that have seen citizen journalists boldly using new technology to reveal wrongdoing or organize protests, Egypt has cracked down, arresting journalists and bloggers who have disseminated information deemed to insult Islam or the government.

In the most recent case, the two officers were sentenced to jail over videos that showed them sodomizing the minivan driver with a pole after they arrested him for intervening in an argument between his cousin and police. Other officers recorded the abuse with their cell phones, intending to show the video to the man's friends as a form of further humiliation.

Abbas and other bloggers obtained the video and posted it along with many others, showing a systemic pattern of ugly abuse. The Egyptian Organization of Human Rights records about 400 cases of torture by police each year, about 20 percent of them prosecuted, according to the *Washington Post*.

Abbas has paid a price for bringing to greater attention videos showing police abuse, voter fraud, corruption, and harassment of women on the streets. He lost his job as a journalist and has been arrested and threatened, but he continues to blog in hopes that he can bring change to his country.

My organization, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), recently named Abbas one of the winners of our 2007 Knight International Journalism Award. He is the first blogger ever to receive it — but almost certainly not the last. The other winner, May Thingyan Hein, is an investigative reporter in Burma, another country where new media have played a crucial role in fomenting citizen activism and where it's still uncertain whether that activism will have a long-term impact.

In Burma, technology was instrumental in spreading the word about the August-September 2007 protests against the military regime, protests that captivated the world. Inside Burma, cell phones were used to pass information about where demonstrators would gather and how to avoid arrest. Outside Burma, photos and videos of the monk-led protests and the government's violent response, taken mostly with cell phones, were posted on the Internet, raising awareness that put political pressure on Burma's governing military regime. Such information could only come from "citizen journalists," as the Burmese government barred almost all outside journalists from entering the country.

In Burma, too, the government cracked down, simply shutting down the Internet as an attempt to conceal the embarrassing photos and videos that raced around the globe seconds after they were e-mailed to expatriate Burmese Web sites. Police on the streets confiscated cameras and cell phones. Such actions are possible in the short term for a country as tightly controlled and isolated as Burma, but whether the Burmese government can maintain the information shutdown over the long haul is another question. Technology used today by Burmese citizens did not exist during the last bloody crackdown against protesters in 1988, when more than 3,000 people died, largely out of view of the outside world.

Censorship in Cyberspace

In other countries like China and Iran — larger and more engaged with the outside world — regimes are having a more difficult time controlling how information is shared through new technology. In 2006 in China, Li Datong, editor of a supplement to the massive *China Youth Daily*, e-mailed to key people a memo blasting the paper's new policy of docking the pay of reporters who wrote anything that displeased Communist Party officials. Within minutes, the memo was posted on Web sites all over the country. Censors quickly ordered Web sites to remove the memo, but they couldn't move fast enough to stanch the spread of the story. Though Li himself was fired, the government had to rescind the policy of docking reporters' pay.

China is second only to the United States in the number of Internet users, and China's leaders are fighting a losing battle as they try to control what kind of information is accessible to Chinese people on the Web. China is the world's leading jailer of people for posting information deemed unacceptable on the Web, with 50 cyber-dissidents in prison, of at least 64 worldwide, according to Reporters Without Borders.

"More and more governments have realized that the Internet can play a key role in the fight for democracy and they are establishing new methods of censoring it," the organization said in its *Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2007*. "The governments of repressive countries are now targeting bloggers and online journalists as forcefully as journalists in the traditional media."

Like China, Iran is unable to fully control Web content, and Farsi is now among the top 10 languages for bloggers, with 70,000 to 100,000 active Iranian bloggers — many of them writing political pieces that mainstream Iranian media would never consider. Iranian bloggers change their Web addresses frequently and use "proxy sites" to get around government restrictions.

Blogs, podcasts, text messages, and video uploads are pushing the limits of free expression and causing real change in Iran, China, Burma, and Egypt, but so far none of these regimes has toppled as a result. They have in other countries.

Mobile Democracy

The most famous example is the Philippines, where text messaging helped muster citizens for mass protests that led to the 2001 downfall of then-President Joseph Estrada. He had narrowly escaped impeachment by the Senate, despite evidence that he controlled bank accounts containing $71 million worth of ill-gotten gains. Estrada thought he had survived until hundreds of thousands of people gathered to protest the Senate vote, spurred by text messages that said "Go 2 EDSA" (Avenue), "Wear black to

© AP Images/Hussein Malla

Lebanese demonstrators demand Syria's withdrawal during 2005 street rallies organized in part by text messaging over cell phones.

© AP Images/Gustavo Ferrari

Kuwaiti women celebrate their campaign for the right to vote in 2005. The 40-year campaign reached a successful conclusion as women turned to the latest communications technologies to mobilize supporters.

mourn the death of democracy," and "Expect there to be rumbles." When the Supreme Court resolved that "the people have spoken," Estrada finally agreed to step down.

Lebanon provides a similar, more recent example. There, 1 million citizens answered the text-message summons on their cell phones in 2005, gathering to demand that Syria end its military occupation of the country. As in the Philippines, citizens were immediately successful, with 14,000 Syrian troops leaving the country after a 29-year occupation. But the long-term success of citizen power remains uncertain; Syria continues to exert control over Lebanon through assassinations and bombings, and the country remains fragile.

Other examples of "mobile democracy" abound. Women in Kuwait used text messaging to organize rallies successfully demanding the right to vote and run for elections. Tech-savvy young South Koreans urged 800,000 people to vote in a last-minute SMS campaign, putting their candidate Roh Moo Hyun over the top by the thinnest of margins. Chinese have used SMS to mobilize labor strikes and anti-Japanese rallies.

All of these examples show the power of new technology in bringing people out into the streets in countries where they previously felt impotent. While the Internet has been an important mobilizing tool in the United States, cell phones and text messaging are much more important in developing countries where few people have access to the Web, but many more have mobile phones.

The United States is actually behind much of the world, even the developing world, in this regard. In Botswana recently, I told students that I was interested in talking to telecommunications companies about the possibility of delivering news stories via cell phones. One student pulled out his phone and asked, "Do you mean like this?" Top headlines from a local daily newspaper were scrolling across the phone's screen, a service that had long been available in his country. Africans with cell phones in remote areas that don't have access to printed newspapers are actually getting news from those newspapers on their cell phones.

Caveats and Concerns

So if cell phones are being used all over the developing world to deliver news to people who might not otherwise get it and to bring together people who now feel empowered to take action and bring about change in their countries — what's the down side?

For some, the worry is that "mobile democracy" is only a few letters removed from "mob democracy." It's admirable that people in the Philippines were able to rouse huge crowds through new technology to bring down a corrupt president, but what's to stop people from using the same technology to bring down a democratically elected government enacting policies that are unpopular in the short run but good for a country in the long run?

The same technology can also be used for more nefarious purposes than democratic change. In East Timor, marauding thugs used text messaging to organize riots and evade peacekeeping troops. Al-Qaida is renowned for using the most up-to-date technology as it works to push the world back into the eighth century.

Other concerns center on the new media tools that have brought to light abuses such as those in Egypt and Burma. How can we judge the veracity of information conveyed by someone who recorded it on a cell phone and sent it, perhaps anonymously, to a blogger in the West? How can we be sure that images have not been digitally manipulated? Can we trust information that originates from people who are activists for their causes rather than trained and impartial journalists?

Much of the world has never subscribed to the U.S. journalistic ideal of "objective" journalism, in which the viewpoint of the reporter or media cannot be ascertained

from the story. But as more and more information comes from sources that have a clear agenda, the concept of presenting full and balanced reporting further erodes.

London-based Burmese blogger Ko Htike said that he had about 10 contacts in Burma who sent him text, photos, and videos from Internet cafes. He trusted the veracity of the material they sent, but he also noted that the Burmese regime caught on to the trend, too, sending fake e-mails and text messages, spreading false information about military crackdowns.

Another site that publicized reports from Burmese citizen journalists was Mizzima News, run by exiles in New Delhi. Editor-in-chief Soe Myint received reports, images, and videos from more than 100 students, activists, and ordinary citizens, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. He said that he has spent years building a grassroots reporting system of reliable sources. "This is not the work of one day," he said. "We have been getting ready for this for the last nine years. People know our work and how to reach us."

Another danger of the trend is that citizens who are gathering information often put themselves at great risk to do so. In Burma, one of the first casualties of the unrest was a Japanese photographer who was recording the protests.

Professional journalists often receive training for working in dangerous situations (though not often enough) and can count on the support of an employer if they are injured, kidnapped, or arrested; citizen journalists do not receive training and get no support from a news organization. Do the media that carry their work — and actually solicit it with invitations on their Web sites — bear responsibility when those people are killed, injured, or arrested? Does the public?

Online video

• *Blogging for Freedom*

Award-winning journalist and blogger Wael Abbas of Egypt appeared on Al-Jazeera in September 2007, interviewed by host Riz Khan.

http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/1207/ijge/ijge1207.htm

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Building Credibility

In Egypt, ICFJ award winner Wael Abbas has faced numerous threats and a government "smear campaign" against him. Government officials have said he has a "criminal past," that he is a homosexual, and that he has converted to Christianity. "They were trying to discredit me and make me lose my audience," he said in an interview with ICFJ's International Journalists Network Web site *[www.ijnet.org]*.

Abbas won the 2007 Knight International Journalism Award in part because of his commitment to basing his blog on solid, factual reporting, not strictly in unsupported opinion. By giving Egyptians a firsthand view of what's happening in his country using new technology, he believes he is making a difference in a way that neither journalists nor general citizens ever could before now.

"I focused on images and video footage so that no one can discredit my work," he said, adding that he also writes in colloquial Arabic to attract younger audiences who find traditional media's reporting in classical Arabic "boring."

Stephen Franklin of the *Chicago Tribune* is one of ICFJ's recent Knight International Journalism Fellows, working to train journalists in Egypt. He nominated Abbas for the award. Despite his "mainstream media" background, Franklin found he could make the most difference by working with Abbas and other bloggers, who had greater freedom and were in many ways having greater impact on their society than newspapers, radio, and television. Franklin created a guide for bloggers, "Ten Steps to Citizen Journalism Online," that includes such issues as content, marketing, and safety for bloggers. (It is available on the IJNet site *www.ijnet.org*.)

Abbas believes that he and other bloggers — as well as traditional journalists who have dared to report on similar kinds of issues — have helped convince Egyptians that they can be active participants in bringing about change in society.

"Whenever injustice happens they come forward and talk," he said, "unlike in the past when people were too afraid to speak up." ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

From Citizen Journalism to User-Generated Content

Bertrand Pecquerie and Larry Kilman

As Internet users contribute increasing amounts of content to the information universe, professional journalists must be increasingly vigilant to ensure veracity and accuracy.

Bertrand Pecquerie is director of the Paris-based World Editors Forum. Larry Kilman is director of communications for the affiliated World Association of Newspapers. Editors and publishers from more than 100 countries belong to these professional organizations.

© AP Images/Stefan Rousseau

An inferno at the Buncefield oil depot in Hertfordshire, England, marked the beginning of a new era in media's adoption of user-generated content.

A media revolution occurred on July 7, 2005, though not many realized it at the time.

That was the day when terrorist bombings struck the London Underground. Citizens on the scene flooded newspapers and broadcasters with pictures, recordings, and reports of what had happened. Many media outlets were quick to use the consumer-generated content.

But perhaps an even greater watershed occurred on December 11, 2005, when the Buncefield oil depot explosion in the United Kingdom prompted an unprecedented response from citizen journalists who sent thousands of e-mails, photographs, and video clips of the disaster to news Web sites long before professional journalists reached the scene of the early morning blast about 43 kilometers from London.

The BBC, for example, received more than 6,500 e-mails with videos and photographic coverage of the explosion and the oil fires, compared with 1,000 in the aftermath of the London train bombings. The first pictures and video footage came in minutes after the explosion.

The head of BBC News Interactive, Pete Clifton, had this to say to the news Web site MediaGuardian about the impact of the citizen-produced content: "The range of material we received from our readers was absolutely extraordinary. Videos, still pictures, and e-mails poured in from the moment the blast happened, and it played a central part in the way we reported the unfolding events."

On the day of the explosion, half a million users logged on to the BBC Web site to view the pictures and videos. Citizen media had become a permanent and essential part of the mix.

Democratizing the Media

Today, rare is the media outlet that is not in the process of expanding the two-way street that digital media have created between news outlets and their users. The multitude of new electronic distribution channels has put

everybody just a keyboard away from producing news content themselves — true in the developed world and growing in the developing world as well.

Or, as citizen journalism pioneer Dan Gillmor puts it, "in a world of ubiquitous media tools, which is almost here, someone will be on the spot every time."

Year by year, the growth of digital media has democratized the publication of words and pictures of all kinds, once the monopoly of the printed press and the broadcasters. Consider:

• During a rampage by an armed student at Virginia Tech University in the United States, major broadcasters, including CNN, frequently opened the airwaves directly to student blogs and other eye-witness accounts, producing an immediacy in coverage impossible through other sources.

• More and more bloggers are invited to sit in media-reserved seats at a variety of news events. About 10 percent of people on the media list for New York Fashion Week this year were bloggers.

• The developer of the *Big Brother* reality TV series, Endemol, has started producing daily, user-generated, TV news shows in the Netherlands. Citizen reporters submit news videos that are compiled into a news report on IK OP TV (Me on TV).

• In Pune, India, the Sakaal Group of newspapers has created a weekly "citizen supplement" that is entirely written by readers. "People want positive news and positive things to read about," says sub-editor Deendayal Vaidya. "They are already mired in their own lives and crises. They want to be inspired." Nearly a thousand readers, the majority of whom were never published before, have written for the supplement.

• The influential French daily *Le Monde* is providing blogs to its subscribers. Among other things, the paper encourages readers to keep electronic journals on their travels, the best of which can be accessed through the travel pages of the newspaper Web site.

• In Chile, the national tabloid *Las Ultimas Noticias* (the Latest News) saw a 30 percent growth in circulation after its editors began checking which stories were most read on their Web site and then used the information, in part, to determine what stories appeared in print. Although this isn't user-generated content, it shows how users are increasingly influencing media's editorial choices of content.

The notion of "citizen journalism" was first proposed in Dan Gillmor's book in 2003, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism By the People, For the People*, with this now well-known assertion: "News is no longer a lecture, it's a conversation." Gillmor's argument, similar to the philosophy of online encyclopedia Wikipedia, was that "collective knowledge and wisdom greatly exceeds any one person's grasp of almost any subject."

During this period, start-up grassroots projects were gaining momentum and credibility. It was said that if newspapers ignored them, they risked alienating some of their established — and a large part of their future — readership.

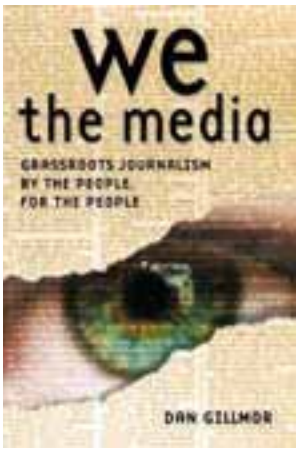
© AP Images/Mary Altaffer

A memorial service was held at Virginia Tech University in April 2007 after the campus was terrorized by a gunman's rampage through campus buildings. Text messaging was a key form of communication during uncertain hours before the attacks ended. National and online media also relied upon user-generated content in covering the tragedy in which 32 students, faculty, and staff were killed.

Whom Do You Trust?

Nowadays though, the appellation "citizen journalism" is increasingly disappearing, to be replaced by the more comprehensive notion of user-generated content. There is no more reference to "journalism," a specialized profession with a unique set of rules and ethics, different from those of bloggers, who are no longer competing journalists but complementary content producers.

The wording "user-generated" also casts off the notion of citizenry and civic engagement. Content can be produced by consumers, readers,



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Gillmor wrote, "News is no longer a lecture, it's a conversation."

and commentators alike, but professional editors are needed to turn the content into "journalism."

The resulting magnitude of sources presents a challenge dating from the dawn of journalism: deciding which source is trustworthy. According to the Saturday editor of *The Times* of London, George Brock, "The most important question the consumer of news and opinion will ask herself or himself is the question they have always asked: Do I trust this source? Some [sources] will pass that test; some will fail. Open societies that want to stay open should keep setting that test." The emergence of user-generated content, a true cultural revolution, brings both opportunities and also considerable dangers that require society's vigilance.

On the plus side, citizens now have much greater control over how and when they receive information. They can react to it and participate in it if they choose.

The news business is becoming more of a dialogue between the providers and receivers of information, rather than an imposition of opinions and perspectives by an elite caste.

On the negative side, the Internet has opened up extraordinary new possibilities for the widespread and sometimes dangerous manipulation of information, which is difficult, if not impossible, to stem.

This phenomenon will increasingly place a heavy responsibility on professional journalists to maintain high standards of fact-checking, honesty, and objectivity. Editors are already spending enormous amounts of time verifying and authenticating user-generated pictures and text, and this will only become a more time-consuming part of their jobs. Blog posts and comments require careful and regular scrutiny.

If bloggers may not be bound to strict ethical codes, at the level of "professional blogs," there is a good deal of community-induced regulation. The Huffington Post scandal involving American actor George Clooney in March 2006 illustrated the vigorous checks and balances of the blogging community. When Ariana Huffington's crew posted an article based on a mishmash of Clooney's television interviews and passed them off as his writings, the actor did not hide his disapproval. Although site founder and author Arianna Huffington originally downplayed the affair, she was ultimately obliged to apologize, due to the overwhelming disdain arising from the blogosphere.

The very fundamentals of our democratic societies and the credibility of established media will be lost if we are unable to distinguish between true and false information.

The responsibility of news businesses is thus considerable. For the moment, there remains a significant preference of the majority of readers to access their information through traditional print products, with 1.6 billion readers of daily newspapers worldwide. Public opinion polls consistently show that news consumers are more likely to trust well-known and established news brands and to treat blogs and citizen-generated materials with more skepticism.

For example, a study of news consumers by the French free newspaper *20 minutes* found that two-thirds of respondents consider news published in online participatory outlets "can't be considered as news" and they doubt the "veracity of their (the outlets') news."

It is essential to increase the media literacy of journalists, in particular, and citizens, in general, to help them assess the value and truthfulness of the information they receive.

At the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and World Editors Forum (WEF), we strive to keep our industry apprised of these developments and how they will affect our businesses and society at large.

We periodically run campaigns to remind the public about the fundamental issue at stake when we talk about media freedom. One of the campaign slogans, "Freedom of the Press is Freedom of the Citizen," was never more true than it is today.

The WAN and WEF represent publishers and editors in more than 100 countries, working for 18,000 publications, including thousands of Internet news and information sites and blogs — editorsweblog.org, sfnblog.org, trends-in-newsrooms.org — that are now an integral part of the news business.

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Every Citizen as a Reporter

© AP Images/Lee Jin-man

OhmyNews editor and founder Oh Yeon-ho at work in his Seoul office.

Launched in 2000, the South Korea-based OhmyNews site is considered one of the earliest pioneers in citizen journalism.

Professional journalist Oh Yeon-ho started the site as an experiment in online, participatory media with more than 700 citizen reporters working with him. OhmyNews reached its seventh anniversary in February 2007 with a full-time staff of 65 and more than 60,000 citizen reporters working from 100 other nations.

The success and expansion of OhmyNews started gaining attention from media watchers worldwide in 2002 when South Korea's online community became actively involved in the presidential election and helped influence the outcome.

The global profile of the site and its founder reached a peak in October 2007 when the prestigious Missouri School of Journalism in the United States awarded Oh Yeon-ho its Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism "in recognition of his pioneering work in engaging citizens as journalists for democracy." The prize has more than a 70-year history, and its recipients include top authors and print and broadcast journalists.

"Today I receive this medal, but the honor does not belong to me," Oh said as he accepted the award at a ceremony in Columbia, Missouri. "It belongs to our 60,000 citizen reporters and to our staff reporters who have joyfully joined this new world of citizen journalism."

Finding success and recognition as an upstart media with unconventional methods is an achievement in itself, but Oh told the Columbia audience he has higher aspirations for what citizen journalism might accomplish. "The goal is not more information; the goal is a happier, more fulfilling life," Oh said, according to OhmyNews coverage of the event. ■

Charlene Porter

OhmyNews Code of Ethics

Reporters for OhmyNews are expected to adhere to the following code of ethics:

1. The citizen reporter must work in the spirit that "all citizens are reporters" and plainly identify himself as a citizen reporter while covering stories.
2. The citizen reporter does not spread false information. He does not write articles based on groundless assumptions or predictions.
3. The citizen reporter does not use abusive, vulgar, or otherwise offensive language constituting a personal attack.
4. The citizen reporter does not damage the reputation of others by composing articles that infringe on personal privacy.
5. The citizen reporter uses legitimate methods to gather information, and clearly informs his sources of the intention to cover a story.
6. The citizen reporter does not use his position for unjust gain, or otherwise seek personal profit.
7. The citizen reporter does not exaggerate or distort facts on behalf of himself or any organization to which he belongs.
8. The citizen reporter apologizes fully and promptly for coverage that is wrong or otherwise inappropriate.

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Governments, Companies Impede Free Internet Expression

Erica Razook

© AP Images/Mizzima News

Buddhist monks were at the forefront of protests against Burma's military government in September 2007. Though the government filters citizens' access to the Internet, blogs and online media sent images of the protests and human rights abuses to the world.

Diversified media and improved information technologies expose people to a broader range of ideas. Some governments want to control ideas, however, and attempt to deny their citizens access to them. Amnesty International, a global human rights organization, is working to counter the actions of those repressive governments.

Erica Razook is a legal fellow in the business and human rights program of Amnesty International USA, headquartered in New York City.

A very simple exercise illustrates the broad reach of Internet censorship. Search "Tiananmen Square" on *www.google.cn*. (the Google self-censoring Chinese Web site) and then perform the same search on *www.google.com* (the main, U.S.-based version).

The results are strikingly different. On google.cn, results unanimously describe the geographical location of the square, and they are shockingly devoid of any mention of the 1989 massacre of students, an event that is described in the top results of the google.com search. Google is not alone. Microsoft, Yahoo!, Baidu, and other Internet companies operating in China, whether U.S.- or

© AP Images/Beijing Public Security Bureau, HO

The Beijing Public Security Bureau released this image of cartoon figures in 2007 as it launched an Internet monitoring effort. The animated "virtual police" were set to pop up on a user's browser and walk, bike, or drive across the screen warning citizens to stay away from illegal Internet content.

Chinese-based, are heavily filtering search results at the behest of the Chinese government.

In a time when so much of our knowledge comes to us through the Internet and new media, such blatant whiting-out of historic events, and of current information from news services, democratic governments, educators, and human rights organizations, demonstrates a widespread assault on freedom of speech and expression. More troubling than seeing governments repress free speech is recognizing that companies, often U.S. companies, are helping them do it.

Reports from China

Amnesty International first reported on the issue of repression of freedom of expression and information on the Internet in November 2002. In the report *State Control of the Internet in China*, Amnesty cited several U.S. companies — Cisco Systems, Microsoft, Nortel Networks, Websense, and Sun Microsystems — that had reportedly provided technology used to censor and control the use of the Internet in China. Following the publication of the report, several companies dismissed allegations that they may be contributing to human rights violations in China. Cisco Systems denied that the company tailors its products for the Chinese market, saying that "if the government of China wants to monitor the Internet, that's their business. We are basically politically neutral." Microsoft said it "focused on delivering the best technology to people throughout the world," but that it "cannot control the way it may ultimately be used."

Responses like these provided an early glimpse of the maddening semantic maneuverings that have come to define how American technology companies respond when challenged on their complicity with repressive governments. Several companies have fully embraced the requests of governments to directly and actively provide services to surveil e-mail and blogs and to censor and filter Web content and search results. Though their human rights rhetoric has become more nuanced, companies nonetheless continue to go along with the abusive practices of governments that exploit technology to repress free expression.

In July 2006, Amnesty published further research on the role of U.S. Internet companies in the report *Undermining of Freedom of Expression in China*, which focused on Yahoo!'s, Microsoft's, and Google's cooperation with the Chinese government's filtering of search engines and e-mail and censoring of Web and blog content.

The report described how Microsoft, for example, filters search engine results, producing only what is sanctioned by the Chinese government. Additionally, Microsoft has refused users of MSN Spaces, a blog service, the ability to write and title their blogs on certain topics deemed unacceptable by the Chinese government, such as "Falun Gong," "Tibet independence," and "June 4" (the date of the Tiananmen Square massacre). Chinese journalist and blogger Zhao Jing (also known as Michael Anti), an active critic of censorship in China, posted his blog on MSN Spaces. Zhao's blog was shut down by Microsoft in December 2005, apparently following a request from Chinese authorities.

In another move to crack down on free speech, the Chinese government sentenced journalist Shi Tao to 10 years in prison for sending an e-mail through his Yahoo! e-mail account to a U.S.-based, pro-democracy Web site. The e-mail contained information the Chinese Central Propaganda Department had reported to the newspaper

where Shi worked. Shi Tao's prosecution and sentencing was made possible after Yahoo! provided personal account holder information to the Chinese government. While Yahoo! has claimed, and testified before the U.S. Congress, that it knew nothing "about the nature of the investigation" into Shi Tao, released documentation of the request indicated otherwise.

Yahoo! officials appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2007 to respond to a charge that the company knew it was complying with an unjust request for Shi Tao's information. Representative Tom Lantos, the chairman of the panel, further alleged that Yahoo! lied to Congress when it said it did not know the nature of the request. After members of the committee from both political parties were firm in their critical questioning and condemnation of Yahoo!'s compliance with requests of the Beijing State Security Bureau and its unwillingness to compensate the victims' families, Lantos called the firm's chief executive officer and general counsel moral "pygmies" and their performance "appallingly disappointing."

Ten days after the hearing, Yahoo! settled a lawsuit with the family of Shi Tao and another jailed Chinese journalist. The journalists sought to prove that Yahoo!'s Hong Kong-based subsidiary was responsible for their jailing. The company denied responsibility but agreed to pay the plaintiffs an undisclosed amount. (See following sidebar, "The Dilemma of the Information Industry.")

In between Congress's initial inquiry in February 2006 and the most recent November 2007 hearing, Yahoo!, Microsoft, Google, and other Internet and telecommunications companies joined an initiative with human rights organizations, including Amnesty, to develop voluntary industry standards on free expression and privacy. But in apparent contradiction of this initiative, Yahoo! (along with Microsoft and some Chinese companies) signed yet another self-disciplinary pledge in China that further impinges on users' ability to express political dissent over the Internet.

The nongovernmental press advocacy organization Reporters Without Borders made public the details of the agreement in which the companies agree to register and maintain the real names of bloggers and monitor and delete "illegal" content. (Both Yahoo! and Microsoft have said they will not implement "real-name blogging," but given their history of complying with Chinese requests for content removal and e-mail account holders' personal information, their signatures on this pledge are not encouraging.) More troubling, Yahoo! could not assure Congress that what happened to Shi Tao would never happen again.

Restrictions Elsewhere

China, though, is certainly not the only country cracking down on free speech over or through the use of the Internet. In Vietnam, where recent laws have

Hoang Dinh Nam/AFP/Getty Images

A Vietnamese People's Army solder surfs the Internet during an information technology exhibition in Hanoi.

restricted free expression on the Internet, Nguyen Vu Binh, is serving a seven-year sentence after publishing criticism, partly on the Internet, about corruption and violations of human rights. Truong Quoc Huy was arrested at an Internet café in Ho Chi Minh City; his whereabouts are unknown and no public charges have been brought against him.

Burma's military government is reported to be waging a campaign of fear against its own people, detaining thousands of monks and civilians in deplorable and filthy conditions, subjecting them to beatings and terrifying them and their families — even young children

© AP Images/EyePress

Google corporate executives unveiled the company's Chinese-language brand name in 2006.

in countries including Burma, China, Vietnam, Tunisia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

Irrepressible.info encourages people to publish content "fragments" that would otherwise be censored by governments and cooperating companies. It asks people to take its pledge to call on governments to stop the unwarranted restriction of freedom of expression on the Internet and on companies to stop helping them do it. It serves as a repository for news of online censorship.

and people who were merely bystanders to the peaceful protests in September.

The Burmese repression of political protestors has occurred not only on the streets, but on the Internet as well. For years, the country has engaged in extensive filtering. The height of its censorship efforts, though, may have happened on September 29, 2007, when after eyewitness accounts, photos, and video of raging human rights abuses were beginning to be broadcast to the world through blogs and other online media, the Burmese military junta shut down Internet access altogether and reportedly terminated the majority of cell-phone services.

The political protests and government response in August through October 2007 in Burma demonstrate the power of the Internet to promote both democracy and human rights, as well as to serve the desire of repressive regimes to limit their citizens' ability to communicate with the world.

It is this dichotomy that has given rise to irrepressible.info *[http://irrepressible.info/]*, a Web-based campaign to harness Internet technology to end censorship. The Web is an unparalleled tool of free expression, despite growing efforts to control and censor it and to persecute and imprison people who criticize their governments online and call for democracy, a free press, and human rights protections. Developed by Amnesty International and supported by the U.K.-based *Observer* and the OpenNet Initiative, irrepressible.org has reported on Internet repression across the globe,

In November 2006 Amnesty presented the signatures of 50,000 people who had taken the irrepressible pledge to the chairman of the U.N. Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Thousands continue to take the pledge, and Amnesty will continue to work towards the realization and protection of free expression online through international frameworks such as the IGF and by supporting domestic legislative efforts to assure that U.S. companies are not part of the unjustifiable denial of open, peaceful speech and expression of ideas over the Internet.

Supporters of free Internet expression look forward to the day that governments and companies will make this article and its concerns obsolete. I urge the reader to try the search experiment in the first paragraph sometime in the future. I hope you find that the described discrepancy of results no longer exists and that everyone has an unobstructed view of the world. The degree to which this article has become antiquated and irrepressible.info irrelevant will be the measure of our collective achievement. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

The Dilemma of the Information Industry

High-technology companies are walking one of the thinnest lines in global commerce as they attempt to do business in closed or repressive societies.

They deal in information and communications products that can give the user access to a wealth of knowledge accumulated and disseminated from literally millions of sources.

But in order to conduct that business in the global marketplace, they must first come to terms with some governments that don't want their citizens to have access to knowledge and ideas that may threaten the controls of that government.

© AP Images/Ng Han Guan

Chinese men surf the Internet with an advertisement for the Yahoo! Web site in the background.

That's the problem Yahoo! executives described as members of the U.S. Congress assailed the company's business practices at a public hearing held in early November 2007.

Yahoo! co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Jerry Yang expressed the dilemma this way: "I also know that governments around the world have imprisoned people for simply speaking their minds online. That runs counter to all my personal and professional beliefs."

A week later, Yahoo! agreed to pay an undisclosed amount to settle a lawsuit claiming that the company bore some responsibility for the imprisonment of Chinese journalists for their activity on the Internet.

Shi Tao and Wang Xianoning, both serving 10-year sentences, were jailed after Yahoo! complied with a Chinese government order and supplied information that the government used to link the journalists to dissident activities on the Internet. This action is what drew the outrage of some U.S. lawmakers and nongovernmental organizations.

With the lawsuit settlement, Yahoo! will provide financial support to the families of the imprisoned and will create a humanitarian relief fund to support other political dissidents and their families.

"After meeting with the families, it was clear to me what we had to do to make this right for them, for Yahoo!, and for the future," Yang said in a statement quoted in news reports. "Yahoo! was founded on the idea that the free exchange of information can fundamentally change how people lead their lives, conduct their business, and interact with their governments. We are committed to making sure our actions match our values around the world."

Yang expanded on the company's effort in this regard at the congressional hearing, describing Yahoo!'s involvement in a human rights dialogue among industry representatives, academics, investors, and human rights and other nongovernmental organizations.

"This diverse group has made a public commitment to creating a set of global principles and operating procedures on freedom of expression and privacy to guide company behavior when faced with laws, regulations, and policies that interfere with human rights," according to Yang's congressional testimony.

The Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT), a Washington-based nongovernmental organization, is facilitating the development of that code of conduct. A CDT spokesperson says it is hoped that this set of principles will be completed in the first few months of 2008. ■

Charlene Porter

Journalism Rises and Stumbles in the Republic of Georgia

Karl Idsvoog

© AP Images/George Abdaladze

Georgian citizens face down water cannon fire from security forces in the capital of Tbilisi.

If real-world politics read like the fairy tales, then the downfall of a repressive government and the institution of democracy would bring a liberated press, an empowered citizenry, and a population better equipped with information to make national decisions. But ours is not a fairy-tale world.

In the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, a peaceful revolution brought the demise of a repressive and corrupt government in 2003. In the ensuing years, the Caucasus nation has made only halting progress toward its happily-ever-after ending. Immediately after what became known as the Rose Revolution, the newly empowered government initiated reforms and began outreach to the West, but was riven by internal disputes. In the weeks before this publication went to press, the government faced street protests and allegations of an alliance with Russia. The president responded by declaring a state of emergency. That order forced a shutdown of all private news organizations, which lasted for weeks and was met with international condemnation.

The Georgian media have not enjoyed the liberation experienced by colleagues in other nations where political reforms have been achieved, and the reasons for that are not well understood. Freedom of the Press 2007*, issued by the nonprofit advocacy group Freedom House, offered this assessment of the media climate:*

> The Georgian constitution and the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression guarantee freedom of expression, but throughout 2006, the government increasingly restricted press freedom. The restrictions rarely took the form of direct pressure, although there were reports of harassment and physical abuse of journalists by government officials. … media owners and managers continue to exert pressure on journalists in an effort to maintain amicable ties with the authorities. As a result, journalists frequently practice self-censorship.

American television journalist and professor Karl Idsvoog made repeated trips to Georgia from 2002 to 2006 to train students in broadcast journalism at the Caucasus School of Journalism. Idsvoog, a professor at the Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communications in Ohio, has maintained contact with Georgian journalists, who describe to him their disappointment at how the Rose Revolution has affected their profession.

In 2001, the Republic of Georgia was a tough place to be a journalist.

There was one news operation that didn't wince, that didn't back off, that stood up like no other news operation in the post-Soviet world. It was Rustavi 2 television.

In 2001, tough reporting brought tough reaction. Rustavi 2 anchorman, 26-year-old Giorgi Sanaya, was murdered. Many believe it was in retaliation for his reporting. Sanaya questioned the policies and practices of President Eduard Shevernadze, but he was hardly alone in challenging the Tblisi government.

Akaki Gogichaishvili, anchor and originator of the station's investigative news program *60 Minutes*, claimed his father had been fired from his state job in retaliation for reporting that Akaki had done. The investigative anchorman said every member of his staff had been threatened. Reporters said they would pick up the phone only to hear a voice say, "You will be dead tomorrow," or "We are going to rape your parents."

In 2001, threatening reporters wasn't enough. Rustavi 2's news director and lead anchor Nick Tabatadze got a call threatening the entire station. According to Tabatadze, Georgia's interior minister threatened to send military troops to ransack the station. Tabatadze responded by reporting the threat on the evening news. The following week, the government fired back. This time, the security ministry sent agents who demanded the station's financial records. Again, Tabatadze responded by reporting what was happening; only this time, he did it live. He ordered his photographers to roll cameras. Within minutes, Rustavi 2 was broadcasting the government's incursion into the newsroom to every television set in Georgia. To show their support for Rustavi 2, citizens flocked to the station and held an all-night vigil; the next day they marched on Parliament.

It was a dangerous but invigorating time to be a journalist in Georgia.

Then came the Rose Revolution. Shevernadze stepped down. Pro-democracy leader Mikhail Saakashvili stepped in. Working journalists in Georgia say the media did not share in the benefits of the Rose Revolution.

Following the Party Line

Two stations, Channel 9, which had tried diligently to do straight news reporting, and Iberia, closed. Management changed at Rustavi and so too did its approach to reporting.

Natia Abramia has since left the country, but she spent eight years reporting in Georgia and was at Rustavi 2 both before and after the revolution. Despite the threatening atmosphere of the Shevernadze era, Abramia recalls considerable media freedom at that time. "It was not professional and responsible, but it was free."

Post-Rose Revolution, Abramia says everyone started talking about "self-censorship." Rustavi 2, the station that once boldly challenged government officials to explain their actions, now telephoned officials to ask for advice on what to say. "I personally saw how journalists read their stories to governmental officials over the phone," says Abramia. She says reporters who did not take the official line had "problems."

A professionally educated journalist, who did not want to be identified because he needs his job at Rustavi 2, describes reporters' working environment in a single word: "degrading."

The editorial process he describes

© The New York Times/Redux/Justyna Mielnikiewicz

Emotions run high during Tbilisi street clashes between anti-government protestors and security forces in November 2007.

sounds like something straight from Soviet times. "We are not allowed to criticize the president, the minister of economy, the minister of defense, or the minister of internal affairs. Only 'good' topics are covered about these governmental structures."

Another veteran producer, editor, and videographer, who has left the newsroom but maintains contacts with reporters at all Tbilisi television stations, says sadly, "It should not be the way it is now." For business reasons, he too asked not to be identified. Asked to compare the state of journalism in Georgia now compared to before the Rose Revolution, he simply says, "It is worse."

Natia Abramia agrees, saying, "Local journalists find it increasingly dangerous to investigate, question, or criticize the government."

Trying to Make a Difference

Journalist Nino Zuriashvili and editor-videographer Alex Kvatashide used to produce some of Rustavi 2's most thorough investigative reports. But Zuriashvili now describes the station that used to take such an aggressive journalistic stance as "nothing but a voice of the government."

And she doesn't think Georgia will be well served by television company MZE, which was purchased by the brother of the minister of foreign affairs. Frustrated at the decline in serious journalism since the Rose Revolution, in January 2007 with funding from the European Commission, Zuriashvili and Kvatashidze started their own investigative production company, Monitor Studio. Finding solid stories was not a problem, but finding someone willing to broadcast them has been.

Zuriashvili and Kvatashidze got a tip that two innocent Georgians were imprisoned, tortured, and convicted based on fabricated evidence planted by government security agents at the direction of a top Georgian government official.

The reporting team wasn't alone in confirming the facts; so did the government's ombudsman, the public defender of Georgia.

Sozar Subari called a press conference to announce his findings. It was the typical press conference set up. All the microphones of all the stations were there. "Surprisingly," says Alex Kvatashidze, that night on the evening newscasts, "there was nothing." The TV news failed to report the negative findings even though they came from a government source.

Zuriashvili and Kvatashidze held a special viewing of their investigation, inviting embassy officials, heads of nongovernmental organizations, journalists, and news managers from every major news outlet in Tbilisi, Georgia's capital and home to its major media companies. The reporting team offered its completed investigation to any news organization that wanted it, free of charge. No station in Tbilisi would broadcast the report.

Even when broadcasters don't want to report, the technology now makes it nearly impossible for governments and corporations to control communication. Rustavi 2 may have, as its critics say, become the voice of the government. But technology is allowing journalists to do what journalists have always done: report stories of substance and significance to the people.

And it's that combination of technology and journalistic perseverance that keeps Kvatashidze optimistic. "We (and others like us) are still trying to get the message to the public," he says, adding with certainty, "Journalism is not dead in Georgia."

Monitor Studio's investigation into the false imprisonment of two Georgians is available at *http://tinyurl.com/2rpo3g*. ■

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Online video

• *Raid on Rustavi 2*

TV journalist Karl Idsvoog was in Georgia in 2001 on a day when television proved its power to influence people and rattle a government.

http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/1207/ijge/ijge1207.htm

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The New Media and U.S. Politics

Thomas B. Edsall

© Matt Campbell/epa/Corbis

A cameraman works in front of a huge video screen over the stage for the CNN/YouTube Republican presidential primary debate held in St. Petersburg, Florida, in November 2007. The debate was the second of two utilizing the format with questions posed by citizens via video clips uploaded to YouTube.com. The Democratic presidential hopefuls participated in the CNN/YouTube debate in July.

New technologies and their savviest users are leaving their stamp on many U.S. election campaigns — exposing candidate gaffes, boosting fundraising, and reshaping the news cycle.

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The World Wide Web and the accompanying explosion in "new media" have forced an upheaval in U.S. politics in at least four areas, creating 1) innovative ways to reach voters; 2) a radically changed news system; 3) an unprecedented flood of small donors; and 4) newly empowered interest groups on the left and the right.

At the most visible level, several presidential candidates kicked off their official campaigns in 2007 by announcing their intention to run on the Internet, a radical departure from the tradition of making such declarations before local crowds, usually in contenders' hometowns.

Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton, for example, used a Web video to announce the formation of her presidential exploratory committee — a major news event — using footage of herself sitting on a couch in her living room in Chappaqua, New York.

"Let's talk. Let's chat. Let's start a dialogue about your ideas and mine," Clinton told viewers. "And while I can't visit everyone's living room, I can try. And with a little help from modern technology, I'll be holding live online video chats this week, starting Monday. So let the conversation begin."

The advantages for the candidate are substantial. Unlike a public event, with the press asking questions, a Web announcement is completely under the control of the campaign; it can be filmed over and over again until it is flawless, at the same time conveying a sense of intimacy and spontaneity.

© AP Images/Ron Edmonds

Democrat James Webb announces his victory in the race for a U.S. Senate seat in 2006, holding up the combat boots worn by his son, a Marine serving in Iraq. Webb's victory came after his incumbent Republican opponent George Allen made a campaign gaffe that was caught on videotape and widely seen.

One presidential candidate who has benefited in a big way from the new Web technology is Republican Representative Ron Paul of Texas. While a long shot at best in his bid for the 2008 Republican nomination for president, Paul's libertarian principles have won him a large following on the Web, where he is highly popular at such sites as My Space and YouTube.

For Paul, the Web has paid off handsomely, helping him to raise $5.3 million in the third quarter of 2007, almost as much as the far better known Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, who collected $5.7 million.

Pitfalls and Possibilities

Many of the other technological advances that underpin the new media are not so advantageous to campaigns. Indeed, they have created a whole new set of potential pitfalls.

Whenever they appear in any public venue, candidates are now subject to constant observation by the staff and supporters of their opponents, equipped with small, easy-to-use digital cameras and tape recorders.

In 2006, Senator George Allen, Republican of Virginia, who was heavily favored to win reelection, ultimately lost to Democrat James Webb. Allen's campaign was irreparably damaged after Allen ridiculed a Webb staffer filming him: "This fellow here, over here with the yellow shirt, macaca, or whatever his name is. He's with my opponent. He's following us around everywhere…. Let's give a welcome to macaca, here. Welcome to America and the real world of Virginia." In some European cultures, "macaca" is a derogatory word used to describe African immigrants.

The so-called macaca footage became a major campaign event, viewed hundreds of thousands of times on YouTube, the publicly accessible video Web site, and played repeatedly on local and national television.

Three other unprecedented uses of the new media have already affected the 2008 presidential election. In one, an aide to the campaign of Senator Barack Obama, Democrat of Illinois — working unofficially — took an Apple Computer ad that likened the dominant role of Microsoft to the dictatorial government described in George Orwell's novel *1984* and converted that ad into one portraying Hillary Clinton as an all-powerful dictator.

The Obama campaign disassociated itself from the ad and the aide resigned, but the pseudo-commercial was viewed close to 1 million times on YouTube, much to Hillary Clinton's discomfort.

Obama, in turn, was embarrassed by an independently made video, posted on YouTube, known as "Obama Girl." In it, actress-model Amber Lee Ettinger lip-synched a song, "I Got a Crush ... on Obama," as she danced seductively.

The video did far less damage to the Obama campaign than a secretly taped film sequence — also put up on YouTube — of Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards getting made up before a television appearance. To the music and lyrics of a song from the musical *West Side Story*, Edwards is shown repeatedly combing and fluffing his hair. The lyrics to the song used

© AP Images/Jim Cole

Representative Ron Paul meets voters in the state of New Hampshire in his pursuit of the Republican Party's nomination for president.

as back-ground music are "I feel pretty, oh so pretty, oh so pretty and witty tonight … ."

The broad Internet distribution of such film footage was not technologically feasible in 2004.

Lower-Profile Effects

At the same time, there have been a series of more subtle and less visible developments stemming from the expansion of new media capabilities. These include:

• The Internet has become the vehicle for the mobilization of the antiwar left as an influential Democratic interest group that all candidates and congressional leaders now must treat with respect and special deference.

Such Web sites as OpenLeft, Atrios, and DailyKos, along with a host of bloggers who file reports to these and other sites, make up a constituency that Democratic candidates seek not to offend. Instead, many of the candidates and their top staffers hold regular conference calls with the left blogosphere community and seek as favorable coverage as possible.

• Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean's success in 2004 in raising large sums of money from small donors through Web-based credit-card links has now been replicated by all the major 2008 Democratic candidates and, to a lesser but still significant extent, by the Republican candidates. One consequence has been to vastly enlarge the number of small donors and to lower the average size of contributions. For Barack Obama, particularly, this trend has made a long-shot candidacy viable by a relative newcomer to national politics.

For Democrats, and Democratic Party committees, the surge in small Web-based donors contributed significantly to the leveling of the financial playing field in 2004 and even more gains in the current (2007-2008) cycle. For the first time in at least three decades, Democrats this year generally are maintaining a substantial financial advantage over the Republicans, the party that traditionally has been able to tap deeper financial resources for campaign funding.

• Web-based political sites are coming of age and, in many respects, becoming as or more important than newspapers. Politico, the Huffington Post, Salon, Slate, the National Review Online, and the Wall Street Journal Online have, in just a few years, become key players in the coverage of elections and of policy making.

The Huffington Post, as an example — where I am currently participating in the development of political coverage — in many respects replicates the full range of content that printed newspapers offer, with a national and foreign news "front page," as well as a political page, a media page, and entertainment and living sections. An advantage of online media entities is the new technological capacity to seamlessly hyperlink to literally thousands of other news sources, ranging from the online versions of "old media" resources — such as the *New York Times [www.nytimes.com]*, the *Washington Post [www.washingtonpost.com]*, the *Los Angeles Times [www.latimes.com]*, and so forth — as well as to large numbers of conservative and progressive "blogrolls" that, in turn, connect viewers to politically varied sites, such

managers of Web sites are on constant lookout for new developments, and a major political event at 2 p.m. has, by the time of the evening television news, already produced multiple rounds of Internet reaction and criticism from competitors and analysts.

• The emergence of left, right, and neutral Web sites has created an instant sounding board for widespread reaction to the shifting fortunes of political campaigns. At presidential debates, for example, campaign staffers are constantly searching for comments posted on the Internet praising the performance of their candidate and criticizing that of others. Those comments, in turn, are immediately e-mailed out as news releases to both mainstream, or old, media online or to new media journalists and other commentators covering the debate.

The speed of change in the current political environment, resulting from ground-breaking communications and information technologies, is, if past trends are a guide, going to accelerate, suggesting that the 2008 campaign innovations are a modest precursor to radical transformation in 2012 and 2016. ■

Top News Sites

The chart outlines the numbers of unique visitors to Web sites devoted to coverage of news and public events, as calculated by Nielsen Online, a service of the Nielsen Company, known as one of the world's leading companies in audience measurement. The chart reflects data from October 2007, the latest available at press time. This data is from Nielsen's syndicated panel-based service, NetView.

Brand or Channel	Unique Audience (in thousands)	Time Per Person/Month (hh:mm:ss)
All Current Events & Global News	95,701	1:24:02
Yahoo! News	33,171	0:25:38
CNN Digital Network	30,218	0:36:27
MSNBC Digital Network	29,841	0:26:18
AOL News	20,672	0:30:19
NYTimes.com	17,502	0:34:53
Gannett Newspapers	13,560	0:23:59
Tribune Newspapers	13,031	0:12:15
WorldNow	11,851	0:10:57
Google News	11,114	0:11:12
ABCNEWS Digital Network	10,847	0:07:34
Fox News Digital Network	9,480	0:41:05
USATODAY.com	9,469	0:16:13
CBS News Digital Network	9,394	0:08:48
McClatchy Newspaper Network	9,300	0:08:48
washingtonpost.com	8,681	0:17:22
MediaNews Group Newspapers	7,723	0:10:52
Hearst Newspapers Digital	7,418	0:14:24
Advance Internet	6,713	0:15:08
Topix	6,425	0:04:11
IB Websites	6,298	0:15:22

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as RealClearPolitics, TalkingPointsMemo, Instapundit, Taegan Goddard's PoliticalWire, and the Drudge Report.

• In 2000, campaigns dealt with a consistent news cycle geared to television news shows aired at 6 to 7 p.m. and newspaper deadlines between 9 and 11 p.m. Now,

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New Media Versus Old Media

David Vaina

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Joe Kraus of JotSpot.com poses with a Web shot of his company's site in a 2005 photograph. JotSpot developed a collaborative form of software, known as a wiki, that allows users to freely create and edit Web content. Google acquired JotSpot in 2006.

New technologies lead to new media platforms and styles. As new forms gain a greater audience share, the debate grows more intense about whether practitioners of the new media honor the time-honored professional standards that separate journalism from the gossip sheets.

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In the 1970s, Zhou Enlai, China's prime minister, was asked what he considered to be most significant about the 1789 French Revolution. He reportedly remained silent for a minute but then answered, "It's too soon to tell." The same might be said as one assesses the impact of what is being called the citizen media revolution on political discourse in the United States.

There are justifiable concerns about potentially negative ramifications as we transition from an era of traditional, gatekeeping journalism to one shaped, at least in part, by a decentralized blogosphere where citizens now turn to nonprofessionals for information on the White House, Congress, the war in Iraq, and other foreign policy issues.

Advocates of this new form of journalism counter that news sources outside the realm of the dominant media landscape will, in time, enrich, not degrade, the public discourse.

It may well be that both things are true to some degree. Measuring that balance may take decades, not years, and its impact on democracy in the United States will only be known when the metamorphosis is complete.

The New Kid on the Block

Much of the distress about the rise of citizen journalism (e.g., blogs, wikis, YouTube) centers around the idea

that information is less accurate because it may not have been authenticated the way reporting has traditionally been verified by editors at newspapers and television networks. Let's consider the scandal that dogged 2004 Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry because of his alleged involvement with a young female intern.

Matt Drudge, characterized as "America's most influential journalist" earlier this year by *New York* magazine, reported that Senator John Kerry, at the height of the 2004 presidential primaries, may have been involved with a much younger woman (not named by Drudge) and that this relationship threatened to end his hopes of defeating George Bush later that fall.

There is no evidence that Drudge had interviewed either the young woman or someone from the Kerry campaign to confirm the allegation before he published his story on the Drudge Report, the sixth most popular news site in the United States the week ending September 22, 2004, according to data from Hitwise.

The Web site Technorati is a recognized authority on blog traffic and user-generated content across the Web. Site managers report that they are tracking almost 113 million blogs and more than 250 million pieces of tagged social media. Technorati counts 1.6 million news blog posts per day *[www.Technorati.com]*.

Both Kerry and the young woman denied any such relationship, and, ultimately, no evidence ever materialized that confirmed the affair. Mainstream news organizations largely declined to run the story, believing the evidence was "exceedingly thin."

Kerry, of course, went on to win his party's nomination, but did this story contribute to the cynicism Americans show regarding their elected officials? As David Frum, a former Bush speechwriter who blogged on John Kerry's affair on the *National Review*'s Web site, said in *New York* magazine, Internet reporting can convert myth to reality in an incredibly short amount of time: "I read about [the allegation] in the paper, I heard it, gossiped about [it], but I didn't do anything like reporting. I joked about it on the Internet in a way I would at dinner. Then I learned the Net is like print, not like dinner."

While traditionalists worry about journalism without verification, it may be that new media enthusiasts consider their craft as something altogether different from what's practiced at the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, two bastions of U.S. mainstream media. According to research from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, just a third (34 percent) of bloggers see blogging as a form of journalism; nearly two-thirds (65 percent) do not. Just 56 percent said they spent extra time trying to verify facts that they include in their posts either "sometimes" or "often."

New media are also criticized for the practice of anonymous blogging. The same Pew survey showed that 55 percent of bloggers write their online postings under a pseudonym. The concern is that bloggers may be more likely to publish a false rumor because it is harder to trace a mistake back to its source if no proper name can be linked to a blog posting.

What's more, one may worry if this apparent lack of accountability could inspire bloggers not only to offer apocryphal information but also to contribute to a juvenile and nasty tone on blogs' message boards. If so, will only the most devoted political junkies be able to tolerate this milieu, turning off and tuning out even more of the electorate?

How Much Do Blogs Matter?

Whether citizen journalists have seriously wounded American politics over the last several years has been a matter of substantial debate in political and journalistic

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Cartoonist Matt Wuerker works on a drawing for the *Politico*, a political publication that issues both print and online versions.

circles. But economic and survey data suggest citizen media's reach may not be as long as some contend.

Let's first look at online political advertising. During the 2006 elections, an estimated $40 million was spent on advertising over the Web, up 38 percent from the $29 million spent in the 2004 elections. It is a substantial amount but still accounts for only 1 percent of total political ad dollars spent on all media platforms in 2006; and blogs are just a subset of that 1 percent.

Second, while the percentage of those who identify the Internet as their primary news source has grown to 26 percent, a strong majority of the American public is still getting their news from television. According to a July 2007 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press survey, two-thirds of Americans say they prefer television. Again, blogs and other forms of citizen media are just one component of online news, where the biggest audience numbers are generated largely by sites owned and operated by the richest media companies, such as Time Warner's CNN.com, Yahoo News, AOL News, and Gannett's USA Today.com. Reportage on these sites is overwhelmingly traditional in nature, suggesting most Americans, when they go online, are still consuming news that adheres to time-honored principles of fairness and accuracy.

Still other signs suggest that Americans remain hesitant to abandon the type of journalism practiced in old media, even if they are leaving old media platforms like newspapers en masse. A different survey from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that 68 percent prefer getting news from sources without a particular point of view, while just 23 percent want news that confirms their points of view.

The trend toward opinionated journalism is not limited to online media. On cable television, some of the biggest draws are from personalities like Bill O'Reilley and Keith Olbermann, who offer highly politicized solutions to the country's problems. In October 2007, Marvin Kitman, writing in the *Nation*, the leading liberal magazine in the United States, declared that the "objective, 'that's-the-way-it-is' style they use at all the network evening news shows is so old, so over" and urged the networks to hire their own version of the left-leaning Olbermann. Such a shift would represent a radical departure from network television's historical commitment to neutrality as once expressed by the late Richard Salant, president of CBS News in the 1960s and 1970s: "Our reporters do not cover stories from *their* point of view. They are presenting them from *nobody's* point of view."

The amount of resources invested in news-gathering is another issue affecting the changing journalistic climate in the United States. Due to substantial job cuts at newspapers, far fewer news reporters are available to cover events than at the beginning of this decade. Data from the American Society of Newspaper Editors show roughly 3,000 fewer full-time newsroom staff people than the industry's recent peak of 56,400 in 2000. For many, this has led to fears that newspapers' role as a watchdog on government and big business may be rapidly weakening.

It appears that at least some bloggers understand this apparent void, and a few may be trying to fill the gap. As David Glenn recently pointed out in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, the original reporting done by blogger Joshua Micah Marshall and his staff has uncovered major political scandals, including the White House's firing of U.S. attorneys and a questionable land deal involving Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski. Other bloggers, like those at the Huffington Post *[www.huffingtonpost.com]* and Pajamas Media *[www.pajamasmedia.com]*, are also doing their own original reporting, suggesting there may be more convergence than divergence between the old and new media.

Conclusion

The debate surrounding the effect of citizen journalism on democracy may be stuck in a "What if…" mode for now. The notion that blogs are damaging our civic infrastructure is generally anecdotal and theoretical.

But the world of media is changing unquestionably. Power is shifting from the people who produce the news — be they journalists or bloggers — to the people who consume it. Citizens have far more choices, and they are fragmenting across the spectrum of those choices. The net effect is not really the emergence of a better or worse civic discourse but a different one. The trend that seems clearest, for the moment, is that as the audience splinters, the sources of news will become more oriented around niche or specific subject areas and points of view. The question, at least for now, is how we reassemble in a central public square. ■

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The Global Internet Freedom Task Force

Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky said in December 2006, "An Internet that is accessible and can be freely used can expose corruption, encourage transparency, and foster participation in the political process. It can also advance education, health, and economic development. The Internet is, in short, a crucial means of empowerment."

Dobriansky made the statement in an update of the Global Internet Freedom Task Force, a reporting mechanism within the State Department established by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice the previous February. She described the department's three-pronged strategy to pursue online freedoms by:

- Monitoring Internet freedom, reporting the findings in the State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, and detailing the means and mechanisms by which governments attempt to restrict online activity.
- Responding to Internet repression with a greater push for freedom on the world stage and in multilateral organizations. The State Department took a step in this direction in January 2007 by hosting a conference on combating Internet censorship around the globe. Over 120 representatives of corporations, socially responsible investment firms, NGOs, foreign embassies, and congressional offices participated.
- Expanding access to the Internet with greater technical and financial support for increasing availability of sophisticated international communication technologies in the developing world.

The United States supports many assistance programs to promote expanded Internet access and the availability of information and communication technologies in developing countries. Since 2004, the U.S. government has invested more than $250 million in building information technology infrastructure in the developing world. ■

Going Local — Really Local

Screen shots of some hyperlocal Web sites around the United States.

New media technology allows ordinary people in neighborhoods and small villages to create online information that is beneath the radar of traditional media like newspapers, TV, and radio. This micro-level approach to local happenings also enables citizens to organize around local issues. Thus a grassroots foundation for political participation develops.

The late Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Tip O'Neill said, "All politics is local." Nowadays in the United States the seedbeds for budding politicians of all stripes are called citizen media sites, hyperlocal sites, placeblogs – online spots where residents of small communities write, photograph, and video themselves and the issues that concern them.

A 2007 survey of citizen media sites called them "intensely local," providing the type of hometown, neighborhood news and views that larger press outlets don't consider "news" or don't have the staff resources to cover. The sites' founders urge neighbors, friends, and associates to provide content that might resemble news, such as accounts of local events or issues, or that might be quite personal, like musings on the local scene, reviews of local services or businesses, or advice on crafts or local gardening techniques.

"They depend for their vitality on citizens sharing their thoughts, observations and experiences," according to the survey conducted by the Institute for Interactive Journalism (J-Lab) at the University of Maryland. "Subjectivity prevails."

Objectivity – not allowing one's personal opinion to influence the reporting – has been a core ethic for American journalists for decades. But citizen media sites owe their existence to people who care about their communities and want to make them better. Their contributors often have no interest in cloaking their personal feelings behind a standard of objectivity.

The sites are as different as the towns and neighborhoods from which they arise. Online discussions might leap from announcement of a local school reunion, to local controversies, to vacation planning advice, to presidential politics.

"Citizen Media: Fad or the Future of News," the study by the institute also known as J-Lab, reports that these hyperlocal sites really began to explode on the Web scene in 2005, but many experience a long, slow start-up

period before community members really join in and start contributing a steady stream of content.

In 2003, two Web designers in the Vermont town of Brattleboro founded ibrattelboro.com. After six months producing most of the content with his partner, cofounder Christopher Grotke says the site gained a following of active community contributors. "For years now it's been the citizens who are doing the writing and the 'journalism,'" he said.

Generally speaking, the sites have a devoted readership, but it is frequently small, and their futures may not last far beyond the energies of a core group of founders and volunteers, the J-Lab study found. How the sites sustain themselves is about as diverse as their content. The J-Lab itself has provided some micro-grants to get sites started, in keeping with its purpose to help news organizations and citizens use innovative technologies to promote discussion of public policy issues. Other citizen media sites are completely funded by their founders; others manage to pick up local advertising revenue.

"I think you're going to see four or five [hyperlocal] sites per city in a few years and none will be permanent," said Paul Bass, the founder of NewHavenIndependent.org, in his response to the J-Lab survey. "We'll never be big operations. I think what will be long-term is the phenomenon" of citizen journalism. ■

Charlene Porter

Shaking up the Neighborhood

Almost 200 hyperlocal citizen media sites responded to the J-Lab survey, offering the following responses regarding their effectiveness in influencing their communities:

82 percent provide opportunities for dialogue
61 percent maintain oversight of local government
39 percent help the community solve problems
27 percent increase voter turnout
17 percent increase the number of candidates running for office

Internet Resources

The Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/home/

CyberJournalist
Journalists working primarily online are the target audience for this news and research site.
http://www.cyberjournalist.net/

International Center for Journalists
News, training, and the interactive "10 Steps to Citizen Journalism Online," including such issues as content, marketing, and safety for bloggers.
www.ijnet.org

Media Alliance
A nonprofit training and resource center for media workers, community organizations, and political activists.
http://www.media-alliance.org/

Media Bloggers Association
This association is "dedicated to promoting, protecting and educating its members; supporting the development of 'blogging' and 'citizen journalism' as a distinct form of media; and helping to extend the power of the press, with all the rights and responsibilities that entails, to every citizen."
http://www.mediabloggers.org/node

The Media Center at the American Press Institute
The site provides reports on topics such as media strategies and mobile phones, links to news stories, a blog, videos, and related resources.
http://mediacenter.org

MediaShift
http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2007/04/digging_deeperhyperlocal_citiz.html

O'Reilly Digital Media: Article Archives
This collection of articles about audio, video, and photography technology trends includes a mix of highly technical pieces and beginning articles such as "What Is Podcasting" and "What Is Vlogging." From O'Reilly Media, publishers of books on computers and technology; articles are written by O'Reilly book authors and other industry experts.
http://digitalmedia.oreilly.com/articles.csp

PressThink
http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/

ReadWriteWeb
This blog focuses onWeb technology news, reviews, and analysis.
http://www.readwriteweb.com/

Technorati: Popular Blogs
This site tracks trends in the Webosphere.
http://www.technorati.com/pop/blogs/

Mobile Technology

Living with Technology: Tomorrow's Cell Phone Tech
http://www.cnet.com/2001-13387_1-0.html?tag=cnetfd.lwt

Smart Mobs
A blog about using mobile communication for collective action.
http://www.smartmobs.com/

Traditional Resources for Journalists

The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania
Research, lectures, and conferences about the intersection of media, communication, and public policy.
http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org

Media Bistro
For freelancer writers, offering jobs, training, and community.
http://www.mediabistro.com/

New American Media
Sponsored through a collaboration of hundreds of ethnic news organizations, this Web site features ethnic news and links to dozens of ethnic media sites such as Singtao Daily, Nichi Bei Times, La Prensa, Vietnam Daily, and Irish Herald.
http://www.newamericamedia.org

Pew Internet & American Life Project
This nonprofit, nongovernmental research organization studies the impact of the Internet on individuals and families and on civic and political life.
http://www.pewinternet.org/

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press
This independent opinion research group studies attitudes toward the press, politics, and public policy issues.
http://people-press.org/

Project for Excellence in Journalism
http://www.journalism.org/

World Association of Newspapers
http://www.wan-press.org/

World Editors Forum
http://www.wan-press.org/wef/articles.php?id=2

Nongovernmental Organizations and Internet Freedom

Amnesty International: Freedom of Expression Campaign
http://irrepressible.info/

Association for Progressive Communications: Internet Rights Charter
http://rights.apc.org/charter.shtml

Electronic Freedom Foundation
http://www.eff.org/issues/international

Human Rights Watch: Press Freedom Issues
http://hrw.org/doc/?t=press_freedom

OpenNet Initiative (ONI)
ONI is dedicated to identifying and documenting Internet filtering and surveillance and to stimulating public dialogue about such practices.
http://opennet.net/

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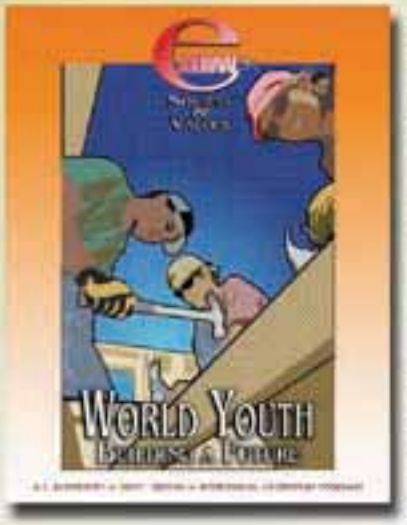
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