

Hartsville Today

The first year of a small-town citizen-journalism site

A guide especially for small daily and non-daily newspapers

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A joint project in community news by the Hartsville Messenger and the University of South Carolina School of Journalism and Mass Communication with funding by J-Lab.

THE MESSENGER.

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Executive Summary

Journalism's future may well be in the hands of your readers already, in their cell phones, their iPods, their digital and video cameras.

We have become a world of content creators, and if you don't find a way to engage them in your product, they may well establish their own.

Most of the discussion has focused on larger metro papers, their loss of readership, and their struggles to counteract that with participatory-journalism initiatives. Or it has spotlighted the numerous independent citizen-journalism sites that have sprung up in the past few years, many of them to fill gaps in coverage by those larger papers.

Little has been written, however, about how such initiatives might be used by smaller daily and non-daily papers whose staffs are smaller and resources are leaner and that usually are closer to their communities than a metro daily can be. Yet there is no reason to think that as the world goes digital and mobile, they will be immune from the effects or retain a lock on the local news franchise.

This report details what we have learned during the first year of Hartsville Today, a citizen-journalism project funded under J-Lab's New Voices program and a joint project of the University of South Carolina School of Journalism and Mass Communications and the Hartsville Messenger.

It is designed to be a "cookbook" for the publisher of a small daily or non-daily newspaper who may consider starting a similar site. Many of the challenges are universal, but some are different for smaller newsrooms already burdened just to get out the paper.

The most important thing is to think like your users and readers, not like the publisher. They are likely use a site much differently than the typical journalist. Nothing substitutes for detailed planning and discussions in your community ahead of time – and then be prepared to make changes when you find out they are using it differently than you thought they might. Like water, people will find their own level. Remember, they are not journalists and probably don't want to

be, but they may have great interest in letting the world know about things you simply don't have time or staff to cover.

Make sure you have an events calendar they can put entries on, and make sure you have the ability to post photos. Photos drive sites like this.

And even once you've built it, they may not come. Recruiting is vital and never ending. Everyone in your newsroom should encourage people to visit, become members and post items. This may be difficult at first given the competitive nature of many journalists, but in any community there is far more than can get in the paper. At times, you will even learn of stories worthy of assigning staff to.

Speak to civic and community groups, Scout troops, neighborhood groups and churches. But don't stop there; basic shoe leather is still an effective recruiting tool. If you confine yourself to the "known suspects," you are likely to have a site that reflects the local establishment – often white and older – and risk not connecting with everyone in your community, especially the younger audience you need for the future.

Inside your newsroom, you will need to think about how this may change workflows; at the least someone will have to monitor the site, but this can be done easily with modern tools such as Bloglines. Your site should have a "report inappropriate content" button, but who will handle those e-mails?

But your staff may find benefits, too, especially if you don't have a Web site or your current one is difficult to update. We have become a 24/7 world. If you have to wait two or three days to publish stories about "breaking" events in your town, such as the Friday night football game, you are vulnerable. In the area of South Carolina called the Pee Dee, where Hartsville is, someone has registered the Web address "peedeesports.com." It doesn't take much imagination to see where that could lead.

And budget for training. It need not be extensive – just some basics on writing, on filing text to your site and on taking good photos and how to size and file them. You probably have several people at the local schools who could help you with that. Also figure on hiring some stringers, not just to help seed the site

with copy, but also to help training other potential contributors. The cost is minimal but the potential benefits great.

A lot of good, open-source content management systems are out there, and they are free, but not without cost. If you do not have an in-house technology person, you need to arrange for and budget for one's undivided attention for about a month to get the system set up and tweaked. Then figure on a couple of hours a week keeping it updated, especially because if you've done your homework, you've picked a content management system with a broad developer community that constantly is improving it.

Publisher Graham Osteen says expect to spend about \$10,000 the first year.

But don't expect the money to come rolling in from your cit-j site; no one is really clear on an economic model yet. What is clear is that to effectively sell the Internet, the old run-of-press mentality has to also accommodate the idea of selling on the margins – aggregating marginal revenue from more highly targeted content.

For instance, if you finally can file that Friday night football story live, why not sell that “channel.” And have your readers bolster that content by filing photos of friends they've “spotted” at the game.

The Web is about flexibility, about taking advantage of opportunities, of moving quickly. That means the IT person who helps you set up the site is now a vital ally in your quest to make money.

And now, too, are your readers.

If you have questions about this report:

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Of course, our thanks go to the Knight Foundation for the funding and to Jan Schaffer and the J-lab staff and advisers for selecting this project, providing guidance and always reminding us another quarterly update is due, which amazingly focuses one's thinking about what is working and what is not.

Finally, a special acknowledgement to all our fellow New Voices grantees. We have learned so much from you and your projects and the knowledge you have shared, and we wish you the best of success.

July 25, 2006

The Future of Journalism

This is the future of journalism, or at least the future journalism faces.

The moment was photographed by Richard Puffer, a contributor to Hartsville



Today, a “community storytelling” Web site created in cooperation with the Hartsville Messenger. He posted that photo and a few lines of information, the Associated Press noticed it and pursued details, and the next morning the story about a major fire that burned for hours at a Darlington County junkyard was news around the state.

“Ordinary” people armed with basic tools – the woman with her cell-phone camera – now easily can bypass established news organizations or, as in the case of the

Hartsville Today contributor, can spur them to action.

As Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis looked to journalism’s horizon in 2003, they saw “a rare moment in history where, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors, but, potentially, by the audience it serves.”¹

The massive shift in the audience to online news sources, especially among teenagers and young adults, has been well documented² as has the continued decline in readership among the nation’s largest daily newspapers. “A generation of readers is growing up with interactive media, who do not simply absorb information, instead they use it as the chance to understand, have their say and

¹ Bowman, S, and Willis, C. (2003). *We media: How audiences are shaping the future of news and information*. A report for the American Press Institute, p. 4. Accessed at www.hypergene.net/wemedia (May 20, 2005).

² Brown, M. (2006). *Abandoning the news*. In Connell, C., Ed. *Journalism’s crisis of confidence: A challenge for the next generation*. New York: Carnegie Corp.

take part,” observed a European researcher seeking digital solutions for newspapers of the future.³

Others say newspapers must embrace the audience as collaborators, and the founders of one “hyperlocal citizens’ media” project observe that the news consumer has gone from audience member to stakeholder.⁴

There clearly is urgency amid continuing loss in circulation and warnings that the shift has spread beyond the initial inroads of bloggers – and that if newspapers fail to act it will become a true threat. Yet there also remains a wariness of this new “citizen journalism,” “participatory media” or whatever it is being called now, a wariness reflected in the title of a recent article in one of the world’s leading newspaper trade publications: *Citizen J – a love-hate relationship*.⁵

Some of the criticism has been harsh, both at home and from abroad. “What worries me most is the process of self-destruction into which American journalism seems to be falling since the wave of grassroots or ‘citizen journalism,’” wrote one author of a popular European-based editors’ blog.⁶ “To treat an amateur as equally credible as a professional, to congratulate the wannabe with the title ‘journalist,’ is to only further erode the line between the raw and finished product,” a New York Times columnist and Columbia University journalism professor wrote.⁷

³ Ellers, M. (2005). *MINDS paves the way for cooperation between the news agency and the newspaper*, in The MINDS project, Ifra special report 6.33, Darmstadt, Germany: Ifra, p. 10.

⁴ Bowman and Willis, *We media*; Gliniewicz, L, et al. (2004). *Hyperlocal citizens’ media: Connecting communities, improving journalism, building democracy*. A report on the Go Skokie project by the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. Accessed at http://newmedia.medill.northwestern.edu/studentprojects/goskokie/HLCM_Medill.pdf (May 31, 2005).

⁵ Northrup, K. (January 2006). *Citizen J – a love-hate relationship*, newspaper techniques, pp. 36-37.

⁶ Pecquerie, B. (April 14, 2006). *Outside voices: Bertrand Pecquerie looks at American journalism from a European perspective*. Accessed at <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2006/04/13/publiceye/entry1498205.shtml> (April 24, 2006)

⁷ Freedman, S. (March 31, 2006). *Outside voices: Samuel Freedman on the difference between the amateur and the pro*. Accessed at <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2006/03/30/publiceye/entry1458655.shtml> (March 31, 2006).

The 2005 London bombings brought worldwide attention to the power of images taken by ordinary people on their cell phones or digital cameras and used by news media, as well as firsthand accounts posted on blogs and on mainstream media sites. But the paucity of such contributions during a second wave of attacks led one observer to pronounce “Citizen Journalism is dead.”⁸ Others have complained that such initiatives are “shallow and middle-class” and “group grope”⁹ or have warned against “online collectivism” and the “hive mind [which] is for the most part stupid and boring.”¹⁰

One observer has wondered whether the atomizing of content, of which citizen journalism could be considered a part, might have an unintended effect and actually doom community journalism.¹¹

The list of such sites keeps growing, however,¹² and a year after the London bombings, a writer surveying the state of citizen journalism writes, “[I]t is interesting that while the theory that citizens can be reporters is no longer in dispute, it is not clear that the mainstream media have developed a series of fantastic applications for this type of material.”¹³

To date, much of the discussion of citizen-created media has been framed as affecting large daily papers that have a greater potential to redeploy resources to respond to the changing environment. Many independent news sites have sprung

⁸ Maher, V. (August 8, 2005). *Citizen journalism is dead*. Accessed at <http://nml.ru.ac.za/menthol/?p=32> (August 8, 2005). Since moved to <http://nml.ru.ac.za/maher/?p=6>.

⁹Harber, A. (February 1, 2006). *Citizen journalism tends to be shallow and middle-class*. Accessed at <http://journalism.co.za/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=3549> (February 22, 2006). Mutter, A. (May 23, 2005) *Brooking no further babble*. Accessed at <http://newsosaur.blogspot.com/2005/05/brooking-no-further-babble.html> (June 4, 2005)

¹⁰ Lanier, J. (May 30, 2006). *Digital Maoism: The hazards of the new online collectivism*. Accessed at http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/lanier06/lanier06_index.html (June 7, 2006).

¹¹ Zielenziger, M. (March-April 2006). *Newspapers in retreat*. California magazine 117:2. Accessed at <http://alumni.berkeley.edu/calmag/200603/newspapers.asp> (March 14, 2006).

¹² As of July 19, 2006, 77 such sites, including Hartsville Today, were listed at Jonathan Dube’s Cyberjournalist.net: <http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/002226.php>

¹³ Bell, E. (July 8, 2006). *The media have yet to harness the power of citizen journalism*. Accessed at <http://media.guardian.co.uk/newmedia/comment/0,,1815708,00.html> (July 9, 2006).

up to fill gaps in coverage by larger print and broadcast media, but relatively little examination has been made of how these changes might affect small dailies and, especially, non-dailies. Yet there is no reason to think they are invulnerable despite community ties that usually run deeper than those of a major metro daily.¹⁴ In fact, as digital technologies become more prevalent everywhere, those smaller news organizations ultimately could be more vulnerable, as they have fewer resources to shift to alternative delivery methods that could counter any threats.

Bowman and Willis, in an update to their groundbreaking 2003 “We Media,” wrote two years later that “the greater threat to the longevity of established news media might not be a future that’s already arrived – it might be their inability to do anything about it. Bureaucratic inertia, hierarchical organization structure, and a legacy mentality have paralyzed many news organizations from developing a meaningful strategy in this dynamic information age.”¹⁵

Smaller papers are in many ways where their larger brethren were five years ago: The threat is in the wings, but there is time to respond. The smaller papers have the benefit of learning from almost a decade of others’ mistakes and successes and of an evolution in software that makes experimentation easier and less costly. Still, when and how to devote resources to such efforts remains a

¹⁴ It is understandable why publishers in smaller towns, especially in more rural areas, might downplay the “digital revolution.” The Pew Internet & American Life Project reported that in 2003, 52 percent of rural residents used the Internet, consistently about 10 points behind urban and suburban areas. Bell, P and Reddy, P. (February 17, 2004). *Rural areas and the Internet*. Accessed at http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/112/report_display.asp (July 21, 2006). However, technology has advanced, and rural residents have more options for Internet access. A more recent Pew study found that 84 percent of Internet users live in urban or suburban areas and 16 percent in rural areas, with the proportion of those who create content on blogs to be similar. Lenhart, A. and Fox, S. *Bloggers: A portrait of the Internet’s new storytellers*. Accessed at http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/186/report_display.asp (July 21, 2006). However, compare that with the proportion of the total population classified as rural, which is 20 percent. Rural Sociology Society (January 2006). *Issue brief 1: The changing face of rural America*. Accessed at <http://ruralsociology.org/briefs/brief1.pdf> (July 21, 2006). Given that, the digital revolution does not seem likely to be lagging that much.

¹⁵ Bowman, S. and Willis, C. (Winter 2005) *The future is here, but do news media companies see it?* Nieman Reports, 59:4. p. 6.

balancing act. As one researcher noted: “Newspapers who climb aboard too late are threatened with losing important ground, whereas those who latch onto new trends too soon risk wasting energy and resources, and may ultimately end up backing the wrong horse anyway.”¹⁶

For smaller papers with fewer resources to waste, finding that balance can be critical. The creation of Hartsville Today, a partnership between the twice-weekly Hartsville Messenger and the University of South Carolina School of Journalism and Mass Communications, and funded by the Knight Foundation through J-Lab, is an attempt to give smaller papers the insight they need to consider such ventures when it becomes necessary to also consider bringing in readers as journalistic collaborators.

Hartsville Today was
conceived in two dimensions,



first as a citizen-journalism project to bring the community closer to the newspaper, for in an area of about 20,000 people there will be things a newspaper staff of five will not be able to cover.¹⁷ Second, it is a way for the paper to begin to have a more continuous news presence by allowing staff members also to file stories out of cycle more easily than had they tried to update the newspaper’s Web site.

This report outlines the first year of HartsvilleToday.com, with a detailed analysis of the first five months of actual operation. It seeks to answer the practical questions and outline the hurdles – technological, operational and personal – that a small newspaper is likely to face as it considers setting up a citizen-journalism component to its newsgathering. Because these publishing tools also make it easier for the newspaper staff to update a Web presence,

¹⁶ Ellers, M. *MINDS paves the way*. p. 9.

¹⁷ Clyde Bentley, co-creator of *My Missourian* (<http://mymissourian.com>), writes: “In the public’s eye, newspapers are a world of ‘No.’ Our space constraints, high ‘quality’ standards, and often-inexplicable traditions create more reasons for not accepting material than John and Jane reader can imagine.” Bentley, C. (Winter 2005). *Reconnecting with the audience: What they say – not what we think – is what counts*. Nieman Reports 59:4, p. 26-28.

eventually most newsrooms will face these questions, if for no other reason than as your readers continue to find it easier to converse without you, the non-daily newspaper risks becoming an anachronism without some mechanism to stay current in a 24/7 world.

A contributor praising the Rocky Mountain News' Your Hub wrote:

I predict the end game of this social change is that the 'constant-reader' will soon become a 'constant-writer' and producer of most knowledge. ...

What is happening is that people who have never had the opportunity to write and see their comments published can do so without kissing an editor's behind or grovelling at the feet of a gatekeeper. It is raw, unvarnished, from the heart, out the gazoo, smoke blown up the skirt kind of stuff. And it comes so fast that there is hardly time to read a piece before another series of articles comes roaring down the pipeline.¹⁸

And as we say on the Web page explaining what Hartsville Today is:

"Citizen Journalism" is the idea that every one of us has great stories, observations and information, and that we become a richer community when everyone has the chance to be heard.

¹⁸ Miller, F. (June 15, 2006). *The significance of yourhub.com*. Accessed at <http://denver.yourhub.com/story/contented=95166> (July 7, 2006)

At a Glance

Web site: www.hvtd.com or www.hartsvilletoday.com

Went live: October 27, 2005

Since then: Visits have more than doubled in 2006, from 3,279 in January to 7,355 in June. We estimate that about 70 percent of those are real people, not search engines.

Contributors: Through March, when we stopped daily research tracking, we had 34 active contributors and 274 posts (stories, photos, event calendar items or replies to posts). Registrations equaled 120, including seven newspaper or project staff. We hope to revisit this in the second year as part of a broader study that will involve a survey of Hartsville residents.

We also hired two stringers for eight weeks each to cover events and recruit participants. Otherwise, we do not pay for contributions, although we are examining incentives.

Purpose: To allow Hartsville residents to share the stories, photos and information that the twice-weekly Messenger newspaper might not always be able to get to. Also to allow the newspaper to more easily file fresh and updated stories at times when it is not publishing and to allow it to forge closer ties to the community.

In addition, we are examining the opportunities and pitfalls of such ventures, and reporting them here, so that other small papers can learn from this.

Philosophy: We avoid “citizen journalism,” “participatory journalism” and the “j-word” in general. Several people, when we were recruiting contributors, worried they would have to be journalists. We have chosen to promote “community storytelling” and “community conversation.”

From our Question and Answer sheet: *I need special journalism training, right?* “You don’t need it to write a good letter to your friends or have a good conversation with your family, do you? So don’t worry about it. Just write. ... This is an electronic version of that refrigerator door on which you have all that important stuff. When you feel like hanging something on the fridge, tell us, too.”

Successes: People say they are looking at the site and some say they have made it their home page. The Messenger has filed numerous stories and photos off-cycle, primarily of sports, and has augmented coverage of the town’s annual bluegrass festival. It also has been able to use material from the site to augment print stories, most notably one on how to trim crape myrtles. The site has extended an ongoing “community conversation” program. A statewide story about a major fire began when the wire service saw a photo and caption on Hartsville Today.

Problems: The newsroom has not integrated Hartsville Today into its operations. Some staff members have used it enthusiastically, but filing can be sporadic. The sales staff has sold one ad and is trying to figure out how to sell the Web. The sales manager is afraid of “cannibalizing” newspaper sales. Parts of the site are not built out, including a “report inappropriate content” button, because managers have not decided who on the small staff will be responsible for monitoring.

The stringers report that many people like visiting the site but in a conservative Southern town are reluctant to contribute to it. The newspaper was unable to recruit minority stringers, and all but six of those registered are white.

Funding: Knight Foundation through J-lab’s New Voices initiative, also in-kind staff time and site hosting from the Messenger’s parent company, Osteen Publishing.

Why Hartsville?

Hartsville has about 7,500 people in the east central area of South Carolina known as the Pee Dee. Together with nearby areas, it has a population of about 20,000 and is rather diverse for a small Southern town. It is an educational



center with Coker College and the Governor's School for Science and Mathematics. It is home to a major corporation (Sonoco Products Co.) and has a small arts community, an annual bluegrass festival and a tradition of civic involvement among many of its residents. It has been an All-America city.

The town's core is in two census tracts: One, with slightly more than 2,700 people in 2000, was 77 percent white and had a median household income of \$39,668. The other, with slightly more than 3,000 people, was 97 percent African American, with a median household income of \$15,151. The town also has a small but growing Hispanic population.

The Hartsville Messenger, 112 years old when this project started, is just two years younger than Hartsville itself. The newspaper's owners and publishers have included A.L.M. Wiggins, undersecretary of the U.S. Treasury in 1947. In 1954, it was the first non-daily in South Carolina to have a Teletypesetter perforator and Linotype.¹⁹ In 1995, the Messenger became part of Osteen Publishing, which also publishes the daily Item in Sumter about 35 miles away.

Hartsville's diversity (although not so diverse as to be an anomaly among Southern towns), the newspaper's deep ties to the community and that it did not publish daily (as a result, for instance, it could not publish the results of the Friday night high school football game until the following Wednesday), and the enthusiasm of Graham Osteen, the publisher, to explore online options led to the decision to pursue J-lab funding. A large part of the paper's contribution was technical help through Osteen Publishing's subsidiary S.C. Net Solutions, a small

¹⁹ McNeely, P. *South Carolina Newspapers*. Accessed at <http://www.scpres.org/newshistory.htm> (July 1, 2006).

information-technology operation in Sumter that runs the company's Web sites and does some design work. That contribution was worth thousands of dollars, further enhancing the desirability of doing the project in Hartsville.

The newspaper has a Web site, but it generally is updated just to coincide with the print editions. As with many newspaper sites, the copy is posted almost identically as in the paper. The site is not dynamic and, according to staff, is not easy to update, although that is scheduled to change within a few months as the software is converted to an outside system also used by The Item. In initial interviews with the staff,



several said they thought few people went to the site and that it had taken a long time to get even to that level.²⁰ The newspaper made early efforts to connect with its community online through discussion forums on the Web site; however, postings were few and far between.²¹

Staff members perceive their main competition to be another non-daily newspaper in the county seat of Darlington, about 15 miles away, and the daily Morning News in Florence, about 20 miles away. Media General owns the Morning News along with a TV station and has made Florence one of its small-market tests for closer cooperation between print and broadcast.

The Hartsville Today project budget and timing did not allow for an extensive survey of the town before the site launched on October 27, 2005. However,

²⁰ According to the newspaper's statistics, however, the site has averaged from 25,000 to 30,000 visits per month. That figure includes search bots; as a rough rule of thumb we have used 70 percent of that figure to more closely approximate non-bot visits.

²¹ The forums started in February 2004 and as of July 2006 had 203 users and 136 posts.

interviews of approximately 35 people in stores and at other locations around town produced these impressions:²²

- Few people said they visited the newspaper's Web site. Several who said they visited sites such as Yahoo News, the Morning News in Florence and The State in Columbia were surprised the Messenger had a Web site.
- Many said they read the newspaper, but only because it was the hometown paper, and not because there was anything special about it. This "just there" attitude may be one of the worst for a newspaper because it signals that readers don't necessarily feel a deep stake in it. Such newspapers can be vulnerable to competition.
- Young people felt there was little to do in town and said the paper did not particularly speak to them. Some did say they read it.
- About half of the people said they knew of things that the paper could not cover but they wished it could have.

The Messenger staff members generally expressed support for the idea of citizen journalism. There was concern that it could hurt ad sales and circulation, but as one person noted, "Florence updates daily, and I still get the paper." The circulation director said a significant number of papers were mailed out of town each week, but he did not perceive Hartsville Today hurting that volume. Even though the Messenger already was online, people still wanted the paper, he said.

This idea of competition or complement will likely arise in your newsroom, too. But as the creators of Go Skokie in suburban Chicago have written: "We don't think [such] sites need to be – or should be – competition for traditional journalism. In fact, if community journalism is to survive and improve, traditional media outlets and journalists themselves should embrace them."²³

²² Although an attempt was made to keep the interviews diverse by age, sex and race, no sampling technique was used and the body of answers was only useful for gleaning an idea of any common themes. A random-sample designed survey is planned for the second year of the grant to determine usage of an attitudes toward Hartsville Today.

²³ Gliniewicz, L. et al. *Hyperlocal citizens' media*. p. 4.

From Go Skokie's experience as a free-standing site, they also concluded that "one of the most helpful things a hyperlocal site can have is an association with a print publication." It will help drive advertising and contributors to the site and "print ... has an image of trustworthiness, helping lend credibility to its online component."²⁴

Under the initial agreement with the Messenger:

- USC's team would research current best practices and common problems of such sites, coordinate site design and a logo, coordinate and do much of the initial recruitment work, arrange training by USC's Newsplex, serve as a resource for the Messenger staff and contributors, and perform a detailed analysis of the first months of the site's operations. The principal investigator would serve as a speaker at any groups the newspaper desired.
- The Messenger would provide site development and hosting through S.C. Net Solutions, hire two stringers for eight weeks each to be reimbursed, promote the site in various ways, arrange a training location, explore ways the site could be used to benefit the paper on breaking stories and those that happened off cycle, and evaluate the effects of introducing a citizen journalism site as part of the news operation. In addition, it would begin selling the site to advertisers.
- All parties would create this report as a guide for other small publishers to show the challenges and opportunities of such an experiment.

²⁴ Gliniewicz, L. et al. p. 28

Site Creation

“If traditional news operations are standardized in their format and delivery systems, no such formulas as yet have evolved in the open content, citizen media movement.”²⁵



Well-formed news sites do not just happen; they take detailed planning and forethought about objectives and the steps needed to reach those objectives. Those tasks are compounded in a citizen-journalism site where not only are you asking the public to come view your site, but also to interact with it to produce material. Not only must you consider navigation as a reader/user, you must also consider navigation and ease of use for the content creator.

The details are myriad, from color scheme to a decision about whether those posting will be allowed to use aliases, from who will be in charge of monitoring the site to how its usage will be measured. What links, if any, to outside sites will there be? Will it be part of the newspaper or a separate site – and if the latter, what will you call it?

These discussions and decisions took almost four months, as we decided point by point what we hoped to accomplish and how to go about that. Among the issues that had to be considered:

- **Separate or integrated:** We decided on a separate site, but closely linked to the Messenger, because:
 - The Messenger Web site software was difficult to update. This site would be built on easier to use open source software.
 - The paper already used bulletin board software on its site to create forums. Because we wanted this site to concentrate on

²⁵ Witt, L. (June 5, 2006) *Constructing a framework to enable an open source reinvention of journalism*. First Monday 11:6. Accessed at http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_6/witt/index.html (July 5, 2006).

people sharing news and information, not just gripes and opinions, we did not want to confound the two.

- We did not want to be so much in the umbra of “journalism” that potential contributors would be scared away.
- We wanted the community to feel this was “their” site, not just the paper’s. But we did want the shared credibility of the paper.

- **Name:** We came down to *Our Hartsville* or *Hartsville Today*. Graham Osteen liked Hartsville Today, partly based on the success of another South Carolina citizen-journalism site, Bluffton Today, but also because of the immediacy aspect and “the daily compact.” We registered both www.hartsvilletoday.com and www.hvtd.com. If you can register a shorter, easier-to-remember initialism, do so. It makes for easier and more effective promotional materials. We hope to use

Our Hartsville for a community wiki that would be linked to Hartsville Today and allow organizations and civic groups to have a profile and history page that they could control and edit, as well as general civic information pages. So far, we have been unable to find a wiki module to work satisfactorily with the underlying content management system, and other options

Wiki: A Web site configured to allow a community of contributors to write entries and then to adjust or update them by editing. All edited versions are tracked so that inappropriate changes can be removed and an earlier version restored. It is an exercise in collaborative and collective wisdom.

that allow a single login through Hartsville Today have been too expensive. Getting the wiki running is a second-year objective.

- **Logo:** We wanted something, as Osteen put it, “edgy but fun” and held a competition among USC students for the best design. This is an excellent resource if you have a college, university or community college in your area with a visual communications or arts program. Expect to spend some money for this (we paid \$50 to the winner).

While you may have a designer in house, it may need a fresh eye away from the newspaper.

- **Site structure:** Our original idea was to have a photo mosaic accompanied by stories (like Web site 10x10²⁶) based on our Newsplex experience with mobile weblogging at the Wireless Election Connection,²⁷ or a city map allowing users to rollover with a mouse and show active stories from different neighborhoods.²⁸ After examining the technical options, we decided neither was feasible.
 - **Moblogging:** Using a commercial provider poses issues of control and cost, and no software could be found that adequately integrated with the Messenger's existing Web platforms.²⁹
 - **Mapping:** While such graphics-driven news presentations increasingly are being used, the programming was too extensive, plus there were issues of asking users to have to provide all the location information.

Instead we adopted a fairly common, open source content management system, Drupal (more details are in the technical section of this report). Drupal³⁰ has numerous customization modules and an active development community. It also has blogging capabilities and forums. Because we wanted to minimize confusion of “blogs vs. posts,” we have not activated the blog function, instead using the forums as news “channels.”

²⁶ www.tenbyten.org

²⁷ <http://wec.textamerica.com>. Mobile weblogging allows a user to send in a picture and text from a mobile phone instead of having to use a computer.

²⁸ A good example of this is the “teardowns” map at www.westportnow.com.

²⁹ This may change, however. One researcher is working on an open-source program, InTheField, that would allow someone to file from a mobile device to any Web site equipped with the software. See Glaser, M. (July 18, 2006). *Stanford fellow envisions every cell phone as citizen media outlet*. Accessed at http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2006/07/digging_deeperstanford_fellow.html (July 19, 2006).

³⁰ www.drupal.org

If you are considering a site, your work is just beginning. You have to stop thinking like a newspaper person and start thinking like your users. Your structure is unlikely to be 1-A, National/International, Metro, Sports, Lifestyle, Business. Your users don't organize their lives that way. We came up with these categories we hoped would provide structure and encourage contributions:

- Arts, entertainment, reviews
- Business
- Education
- Faith
- Governing and Safety
- Health
- Hobbies & Clubs
- Home & Gardening
- Neighbors
- Pets
- Sports (college/high school)
- Sports (rec leagues)

It's important to monitor how your visitors are using these categories; you will have to make adjustments. Contributors are not journalists, so don't expect them to think like one or to categorize things exactly as you would in putting out a newspaper. The Go Skokie creators noted that until people begin using a site, it's impossible to really tell what they will do with it.³¹ For instance, we discovered that in the heartland of NASCAR, we really did not have a place for



³¹ Gliniewicz, L. *Hyperlocal citizens' media*. p. 35.

those stories. We are now considering creation of a professional sports channel or just a racing channel. We also realized we probably need a food and recipes area.

But this is the beauty of the Web. You can be flexible and responsive, and you need to be. “If news is a community talking to itself, our next step as journalists is to listen to the audience,” wrote Go Skokie’s creators.³²

In addition, you must make provision for photos – and if possible video and maybe audio. The Internet is all about multimedia; we do not have capacity for video or audio, but photos clearly drive traffic to the site (the week after we turned on photos, traffic jumped sharply; see the more detailed analysis later in this report).

This then leads to another set of major decisions:

- Who in the news organization will monitor the site?
- Will the site be edited?
- Will people be allowed to post anonymously or with an alias, or must they use their real names?

We tackled the last question first, discussing at length the pros and cons of letting people post with pseudonyms (anonymous posting was never seriously considered). It is another balancing act: Requiring people to use their real names will stifle some from participating. Allowing pseudonyms raises questions of authenticity and credibility. In the end, Osteen decided the need to encourage participation in the experimental project was important, and so pseudonyms were allowed.

Almost two-thirds of registrants are using pseudonyms, and so far we have not had problems, although at least one person at every civic organization we have spoken at has questioned the wisdom of that. The issue remains under review, but the practicality is that if you start by allowing pseudonyms, it will be difficult, short of kicking people off and requiring them to start over, to convert those registrations.

³² Gliniewicz, L. et al. *Hyperlocal citizens’ media*. p. 33.

The site also is unedited. This was a decision based on federal law that reduces liability for Internet sites that do not edit postings other than to remove patently offensive material.³³ This is a calculated risk, but given the size of the Messenger’s staff – a size not unusual for many smaller papers – it was one Osteen felt had to be taken.³⁴ Some sites with university affiliations have used student editors, but Columbia is 50 miles away and many of our students are not familiar with the area. If you do edit, the general guide has been to edit “for readability and civility, not for A.P. style and newspaper tradition.”³⁵

Managing Editor Jim Faile says the staff still is not sure how to work monitoring and posting into the newsroom workflow. (See his notes after this section.) Some shifts in technical staff and other projects at S.C. Net Solutions also have intervened so that some parts of the site remain unfinished, such as a

“report inappropriate content” button. For now, the USC team monitors the postings and has not had to alert the Messenger staff to any problems (although

RSS: A way of producing short summaries of items posted. Also known as “news feeds,” they are often designated by an orange RSS, XML or Web Feed button.



A reader “subscribes” by copying the link represented by the orange button to a newsreader, either on the Web or on the person’s computer. Many newer browsers also allow you to just click on the button to subscribe. Then headlines and summaries or full text are automatically updated in the browser or newsreader when a new item is posted.

³³ While Sec. 230 of the Communications Decency Act has been widely held to limit or remove liability in such cases, the California Supreme Court is considering *Barrett v. Rosenberg*, in which a lower-level appeals court said the law does not apply when a poster knows or should have known that a communication may be defamatory. See Burke, T. (Spring 2006). *Statute offers immunity for newspaper websites*. California Publisher 94:1. Accessed at <http://www.cnpa.com/CalPub/spring06/burke.htm> July 22, 2006). Other experts suggest publishers with citizen-journalism sites should purchase an insurance rider, if necessary. Outing, S. (June 27, 2005). *To edit or not to edit?* Accessed at http://www.Editorandpublisher.com/eandp/stopthepresses_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000967445 (June 28, 2005).

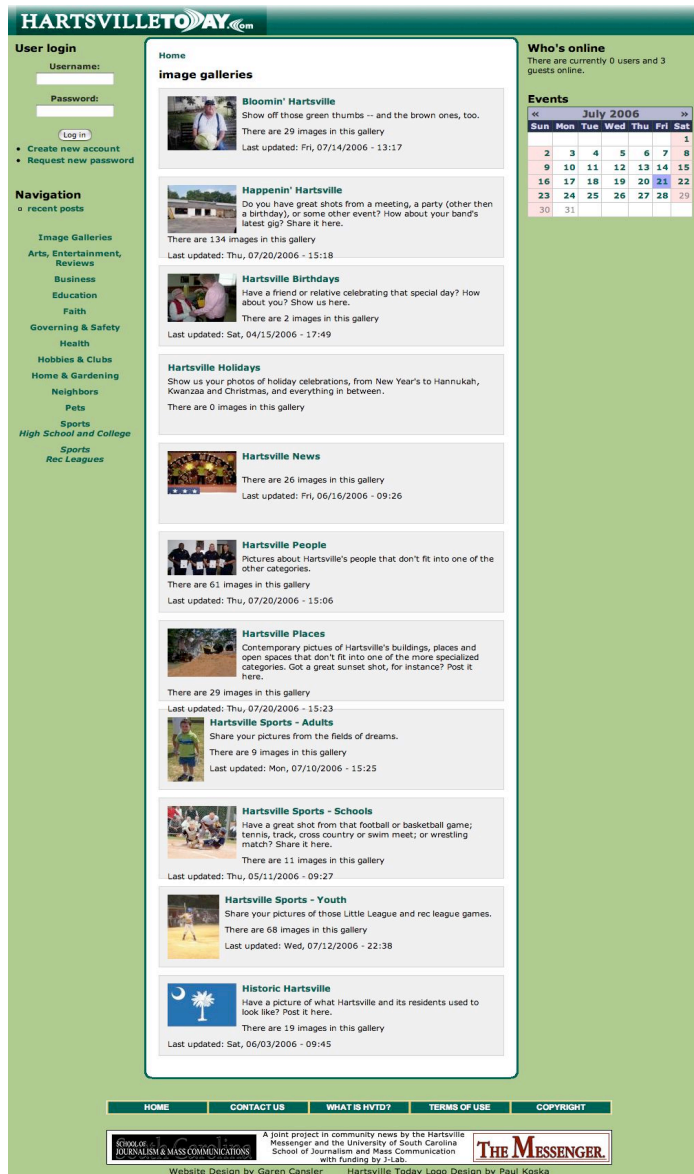
³⁴ As Dan Gillmor writes in the forward to Bowman and Willis’ *We Media*: “Some of the journalism from the edges will make us all distinctly uncomfortable, raising new questions of trust and veracity. We’ll need, collectively, to develop new standards of trust and verification; of course, the lawyers will make some of those new rules.” p. vi.

³⁵ Bentley, C. *Reconnecting with the audience*.

some have appeared on the newspaper's forums). Faile also has a Bloglines account to monitor postings via RSS feeds.

Some other things to consider:

- Make sure your software allows RSS, or "news feeds," for each category



Hartsville Today's image galleries.

photo modules are not as easy as we'd like, and we are looking at alternatives.

- Have a place on the home page that shows updated pictures as well as stories. We have not been able to perfect this module yet to the point where it will only cycle recent posts, so we are just rotating through all

you create. It will allow you to more easily monitor the site and your users to concentrate on the categories that interest them the most.

- Think pictures. Again, create categories thinking as a user; you will get some of it wrong, but adjust. Among ours are Bloomin' Hartsville, Happenin' Hartsville, Hartsville People, Hartsville Places, Historic Hartsville and sports categories for youth, adults and schools. Your picture-filing software should be easy to use. The Drupal

the photos on the site. The disadvantage is that as the number of photos grows, we risk getting increasingly older ones. The entire photo-filing situation will be a priority in our second year.

- For timeliness, we display five of the most recent posts in a box in the top center of the page. Sometimes, this means dated material can be there for a day or two. It's going to happen – it has been noted at other sites such as Go Skokie³⁶ and My Missourian – but it is a tradeoff.
- What links, if any, will you have off the site? We link to Yahoo News, Yahoo Finance, Fox News, CNN, Wikipedia and Osteen Publishing's The (Sumter) Item. We are actively looking for Hartsville-area bloggers to also link to. Our philosophy is not to fear sending visitors off the site; instead we feel that if we make it easy for them to get to key links, they will be more likely to start with us.
- Make sure you have a weather "bug" (we use one from Underground Weather) and a good time/date logo.
- Make sure you have an events calendar module so that people can easily post what is happening around town. You will discover things you might not have known about otherwise. This also can be a staff time saver – now putting together those print listings becomes more a cut-and-paste job than one of having to keyboard them.
- Make sure your terms of use and help pages are written in simple English, not technical or legal boilerplate. Resist the lawyers. If you want contributors, you need to make it as easy as possible. And be prepared to take only a nonexclusive right to contributors' content. Expect that a staff member will need at least a week's time to produce these pages, especially the help pages (which also need to include a

³⁶ Go Skokie's creators note the problem of "clicks vs. clutter." "We believe that if something is not linked from the front page, it may never be seen," but this can lead to confusing link clutter. Gliniewicz, L. et al. *Hyperlocal citizens' media*, p. 17. We have tried a middle approach with Hartsville Today, with timely elements on the front, but "channels" that invite the visitor to come inside.

short page explaining what your site is all about; that sounds obvious, but it isn't always done).

- Produce a “favicon,” the little branding bug you see in the URL line of your browser when you land on a lot of Web pages. You’ll need an “icon editor” or a photo program that can output a 16x16-pixel icon file with the *.ico extension. But it looks much classier. Your IT person will know what directory to put this file in on your server so that everyone sees it.



Once you have settled on a design and all the elements, turn it over to a designer to produce clean, Photoshop-based components. Don't try to mess around building a page from native HTML. It will look clunky, and most content management systems now allow you to customize the look. Again, check your local college, university or community college for expertise. A USC visual communications graduate student did the design in a week once we gave her the elements we wanted included and a general idea of the layout. Remember, think about the design of your inside pages, too. At least get them color coordinated.

Notes from Managing Editor Jim Faile

Overall, our newsroom's experience with the Hartsville Today Web site has been a good one, and I'm pleased with it.

But it took some getting used to, and we're still getting used to it in some respects. I think our biggest challenge as a newsroom staff has been getting into a mind-set to post stories and photos regularly.

We still tend to think in the "newspaper first" mindset, and sometimes Hartsville Today becomes almost an afterthought. That's going to take some effort and conditioning to get over, and I'm probably the worst offender in that regard.

To begin with, my greatest concern was how much the project would add to our workload. But in fact, it has added very little. The biggest demand on my time so far has been reminding my staff to post items — and writing this essay.

There were initial concerns about the possibility of inappropriate material getting posted to the site. We had some experience with that before with our own newspaper web site. I also had concerns about potentially libelous material that might wind up on the site. Fortunately, after eight months, none of that has become an issue.

We have been able to use some items posted by readers and stringers in the newspaper. Items have also been useful as tips for stories.

I guess one issue that our staff still has not fully resolved is whether we want to break live hard news stories on the site or break them first in the newspaper. Personally, as someone who's been in this profession for 22 years, I tend to favor the newspaper. But I can also see posting enough of a breaking story to try to entice people who may see it there to buy a paper.

We were all intrigued by the project. I think we all saw it as a way to get people more involved with the newspaper and covering their neighborhoods and organizations.

We all particularly liked the aspect of being able to get stories and photos posted that would not otherwise make it into the paper for whatever reason. And readers seem to appreciate that as well.

Stringers and readers can get to events like a birthday party or anniversary party or church picnic that our staff just doesn't have the time to cover or that we don't have space for in the newspaper.

Early in the project, we tried posting scores and game briefs from Friday night football games. We dropped the ball on that but have since had some good stories and photos from other sports events.

I think our biggest challenge as a newsroom staff remains getting everyone — including me — used to posting items on a regular basis. Some of our staff are quicker to post items than others. And I guess that's one of those things you just have to do until it becomes second nature.

Looking ahead

In the beginning stages, a project like this is intimidating, especially if you're like me and not that well versed in the technology. And I believe that has been a factor in the reluctance of some of our staff to make use of the site. Others have jumped right in on it and don't have to be prompted to post. We have people who can post stories with no problem but who still don't know how to post photos.

Proper training in the use of the site is important in that respect. And for some people, one training session is probably not going to be enough. Some people may need to be walked through the process a couple of times to become more comfortable and confident in using the site. I tend to be one of those. But once they learn it to the point they are confident with it, they'll use it.



Thoughts for small newspapers considering a participatory journalism site

Doug Fisher, University of South Carolina

Sweat the details: You put tremendous time into setting up your press (or getting that printing contract ironed out). Do the same with your online community site.

- Decide what you want the site to do
 - File more traditional "stories?"
 - More personal commentary, like blogs?
 - More social networking?
 - Feedback?
 - Photos, video audio? In other words, level of interactivity.
 - Aggregation of other local or national news? Links to other sites?
 - Give more deadline presence and avoid writing Friday stories the next Wednesday?
 - Broader participation by minority communities?
- Think like a user, not like a publisher
 - How would you go about finding information/stories you wanted?
 - The "syntax" is unlikely to be the traditional 1-A, Metro, Sports, Lifestyle
 - More granularity – but you can have too much, too.
 - Help files, terms of service
 - Natural language.
 - Non-journalism orientation (we purposely chose "community storytelling").
 - **What name** projects what you want but also is not Big-J "journalism"?
 - **How to report, and who will monitor** for inappropriate content? What will you do if it appears?
- Budget for a developer who knows PHP and SQL:
 - Go open source. Make sure developer evaluates content management systems based on your desires and presents pros and cons to you clearly and simply.
 - Hire someone with design skills who also knows how to "Photoshop" a Web design. Make sure design is modular so developer can update without designer.

Prepare to put long hours into recruitment: Forget "if we build it, they will come."

- Try to assess your area's computer skills beforehand. Why do it if no one can use it?
- Promote, promote, promote to every church, Scout troop, civic organization, neighborhood group.
- Think about small payments. Maybe \$15 monthly gift certificate to best post.
 - Ask your developer to look into ratings modules.
- Promote some more. Banners, house ads, fliers. Keep it simple.
- Expect to double your efforts in minority communities.
- Remember Pareto's Principle: 20 percent will do 80 percent of the work. That's OK.

Assess your staff's attitudes

- Do not assume your staff knows what's been happening in online journalism.
- Do not assume computer skills or knowledge not there.
- Show benefits (how RSS, for instance, can help not only in monitoring the site for tips, but in finding story ideas or seeing what the competition is doing).
- Assuage egos: "We don't own the news anymore" – Richard Sambrook, BBC.

How are you going to sell it and evaluate it?

- Staff – and maybe you – need to think of how to skim marginal revenues, not ROP.
- Specialized "channels" (see Decide what you want the site to do).
- Beware of just counting "page views" and "hits." Many are crawlers/spiders.

Recruitment and Training

If you build it, they won't necessarily come



Newsplex Director Randy Covington leads a session during Hartsville Today training in March. (Photo by Duane Childers)

During the first five months of detailed tracking, 113 people registered at Hartsville Today, in addition to seven people from the newspaper and project staff. Thirty-four of those people posted at least once, with a total of 274 posts. (When newspaper and project staff is eliminated, 27 people made 198 posts.)

Recruitment for a participatory journalism site is never ending, at least for the first couple of years, and is a newsroom-wide, even company-wide responsibility for a small paper.

Those who have reported on their efforts on similar sites are clear: Do not expect that just because you create a site and say it is open for people to participate that they will come.³⁷ Mary Lou Fulton, vice president of audience development at the Bakersfield Californian and the executive in charge of that

³⁷ Presentations by Fulton, M.L., and Bentley, C. *Interactive journalism summit: When consumers become creators*. Presented by J-lab, the Institute for Interactive Journalism, at the Association for Education and Mass Communication conference, San Antonio, Texas, 2005. Accessed at <http://www.j-lab.org/aejmc05marylou.html> and <http://www.j-lab.org/aejmc05clyde.html> (October 4, 2005). See also Gliniewicz, L. et al. *Hyperlocal citizens' media*. p. 3.

paper's pioneering NorthwestVoice.com Web site and community newspaper, says:

“You've got to know your community. You can't just put a link up there and say, 'OK, we're open for the participation business,' because no one understands what that means. ...

“You need to keep it simple, make it fast and easy, and minimize the number of rules that you have.”

NorthwestVoice recruited some columnists to provide early content, and editors are on the phone every day recruiting, she said.

We used multiple approaches. First, using the newspaper's established contacts, the project staff at USC (a graduate student and the principal researcher) began calling civic, religious and educational leaders. Using a snowball method of asking people to recommend others, we compiled an e-mail list. Several rounds of calls were made (see the box below with details from graduate assistant Nick Tompkins on how to structure a recruiting effort.) Be prepared, however, for the difficulty of explaining what you are up to, especially if your site is not yet online: “participatory journalism,” while a hot topic on the coasts and in some major cities, is not necessarily on the lips of those elsewhere.

We tried to emphasize what the site could do for them:

- Churches: an easy way to reach parishioners. We suggested, and still hope to see, some ministers posting full texts of their sermons for shut-ins. Stringer Jana Longfellow reports, however, there still seems to be a reluctance. In some cases, churches have their own Web sites, but like the newspaper's, they are not as easy to update as the cut-and-paste mechanics of Hartsville Today.
- Civic groups: For the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, we noted that filing stories could be a good way to complete merit badge or advancement requirements. For groups like the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club, it's a good way to keep the community up to date on events and when teams compete out of town. For Head Start, we noted it would be a good

way to communicate with the community while also giving parents another way to get information.

- Recreation leagues: The perfect place to put game shots and results that often can't get in the paper, especially for games played on days the paper is not publishing.
- Businesses: One of our regular contributors has been the Burry Bookstore, which posts a weekly best-seller list. Without turning the Business channel into free advertising, we still pointed out there are many times businesses still have a story to tell, such as expanded hours, store opening and closing, charity efforts, etc.
- Education: Coker College Professor Richard Puffer has been a major supporter of this project. We have spoken to his classes and his students have reported on Coker sports and other activities. The Governor's School for Science and Math has a new executive director who wants more town-gown interaction and has hired a person whose job will include promoting the use of Hartsville Today among students and faculty. We are trying to get the high school's media class involved.

Messenger Publisher Graham Osteen editorialized about the project several times, encouraging participation. "One example that I've been using to illustrate this project involves thinking back to the 'old days,' when community newspapers

May 25, 2005

New Messenger project seeking brave pioneers

The national New Voices community journalism project that *The Messenger* is involved with will require help from you, area citizens and readers of this newspaper.

baseball game, to who had important house guests who stopped into town while traveling from New York to Florida," he wrote. "This was fairly common up until the 1960s, and it gave the local newspaper a more personal community feel. I believe that a project like ours is a good way to recapture some of that type of community reporting, both online and in print, and to get more information into

across the country commonly used 'community correspondents' to report on all sorts of things, from who won the church raffle, a cow at the county fair or a little league

the paper and onto the web site than we are capable of producing with our own small staff.”³⁸

We also invited the community to an opening-night gathering with snacks and drinks at the newspaper office on October 27, and about 25 people attended, many of whom became contributors. (Interestingly, several of the questions were about whether the site would be edited and expressed concerns that inappropriate material could not only hurt individuals but hurt the paper as well. We took this as an encouraging sign of some sense of community ownership in the project.)

No one method is the silver bullet. In Skokie, for instance, project organizers set up booths at festivals and handed out fliers encouraging contributions after a meeting about a teacher’s firing. My Missouriian staff set up a table with computers during an Earth Day event and encouraged people to write about the event and take photos and be instantly published.

In Hartsville, we also used the old shoe leather approach, as several times a project member walked the streets distributing fliers to restaurants, businesses, the YMCA, Head Start, the local museum, the Chamber of Commerce – any place people gathered.

We bought two yellow-and-black banners (one of which can be seen in the photo at the beginning of this section) to hang at events in town. One of them also hung in the window of the Messenger’s temporary downtown storefront office through much of the spring while its regular offices were being renovated.



³⁸ May 25, 2005.

We also had business cards printed that listed the site address on one side and on the other gave examples of things that would make good postings. The stringers and staff distributed these.

Ultimately, you are trying to find your town's or neighborhood's information "mavens." The term was popularized by Macolm Gladwell in his book *The Tipping Point* and was elaborated on by Alan L. Nelson, founder of The Command Post Web site in a 2004 speech to the Associated Press Managing Editors. He called it "The Law of the Few":

"Mavens are information geeks ... they live on information, love to surface new information, and love to share that information with others. These are the people who are always bringing you new restaurant recommendations, new books to read, new products to use.

Mavens and connectors have always been out there ... the only problem was that their ability to connect and spread the message was primarily contained to those people with whom they lived or worked.

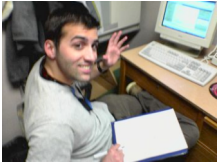
"The Internet, and weblogs in particular, have 'lit up' the otherwise latent power of mavens and connected them in a very real way."³⁹

Finding the information mavens does not mean just the establishment voices so often quoted in news columns. In that regard, we still have much work to do. This project has highlighted that the Messenger's ties to Hartsville's minority community may not be as strong as they could be. It was unable to recruit a minority stringer, and minority participation in the site is extremely low. We will redouble our efforts in this area in the second year.

³⁹ Nelson, A.L. (October 17, 2004). *Full text of my speech to AP Managing Editors*. Accessed at <http://www.command-post.org/desk/archives/016029.html> (July 14, 2006). Command Post, created in March 2003, gained attention as one of the first group citizen-journalism Web logs. It has gone into hiatus as search, tagging and similar services now make it easier to find postings on a topic around the Web. Nelson's other laws: "The Law of the Flow": Information has become a flow, a commodity, not a stock that can be controlled; "The Law of the Fast" (derived from Thomas Friedman): No longer does large eat small, now fast eats slow; "The Law of the Many": Technology now makes editorial checking of your work possible by dozens or thousands of people, sometimes called "swarming accuracy."

Thoughts on recruiting

Nick Tompkins, graduate student



Along with the yellow pages, most every city and town has some organization that puts out a local directory of key groups and resources, or has one online. I used the Hartsville Chamber of Commerce's Web site to generate a list of nonprofit organizations and clubs that might benefit from telling their stories on Hartsville Today.

A survey of students in a Coker College mass communications class also helped to sculpt the initial plan for Hartsville Today and generate a number of potential contributors.

Some of the other areas we explored and are still pursuing:

- Newspaper staffs at the local high school have the potential to become great sources of information and invaluable contributors. Work with the adviser to make filing stories part of the curriculum.
- Boy Scouts have to earn communications badges, and what better way to do this than to report on upcoming events their troops will host?

- Restaurants with different daily specials can find it useful to post them on the Web as opposed to faxing them to every business in the area that requests one, as can venues that host entertainment regularly.

Much of our initial recruitment was by phone, a necessity of being 50 miles away in Columbia. Avoid using e-mail until you have made the initial contact by phone or in person; a solicitation to participate can look too much like spam.

One of the best ways to build a potential contributor list is to ask people to name those from whom they get much of their information – not “the news” kind, but what’s happening in the neighborhood. If we had been referred by another contact, I told the person I was calling who had referred them, took a few moments to explain what Hartsville Today was about, provided them with the URL and asked them if they thought this might be something they or an organization to which they belong might be interested.

Occasionally, I would get an immediate enthusiastic response, but most of the time they wanted a chance to examine the site and form their own

conclusions. Be sure to reiterate that your site is free.

It helps to outline the main points before beginning, and as you go along keep records of people's questions – and the answers. It will help as you design the site.

We kept the contact information in an Excel spreadsheet to generate files that could be imported into an e-mail address book. Because pseudonyms were allowed, we initially had difficulty matching some “handles” with names in the database. I called each prospect in our database, and even if they already were registered, I told them of developments and new features, as we were constantly updating the site. I tried to give them another reason to visit Hartsville Today and see the improvements and virtual conversation that had begun.

Businesses including some civic organizations that operate more as businesses, can pose a special problem in getting to the right person. Even if you can only get to a receptionist, secretary, or subordinate, pitch them the idea as though they are whom you were trying to reach all along; especially with smaller businesses and groups, a surprising number are the people who ultimately update and maintain an organization's involvement on the Web.

Some people may think they have no reason to use your site right now, but make another round of calls when features are added. For example, adding our event calendar enticed some people to become contributors.

Some useful training Web sites

www.j-learning.org: J-lab's very detailed and helpful tutorials on the technical details of setting up a citizen-journalism site.

www.eff.org/bloggers/lg: The Electronic Frontier Foundation's legal guide for bloggers.

<http://stringers.media.mit.edu/journalism.htm>: Journalism tutorials from MIT's Media Lab in simple outline form.

<http://journalism.berkeley.edu/multimedia/>: If you want to get deeper into multimedia, this site from UC Berkeley has lots of good things about video, audio and putting it all together.

<http://www2.newszap.com/ini/>: Independent Newspapers has some good, brief thoughts on the inverted pyramid, writing, taking photos and such. Scroll down to items 4-6.

Training

From others who have created such sites and from our own experience, it is clear you probably cannot provide too much training for those whom you want to come to the site and post stories and photos. Despite the research that keeps telling us how individual content creation is increasing, for many people, the Internet still is largely about visiting Web pages and e-mail.⁴⁰

It starts with your site's help pages. We have revised ours twice and are in a third revision as aspects of filing pictures have changed or as community feedback has pointed out weaknesses. People say they still find the process a bit confusing, and we suspect this is holding back some from posting. Use plenty of images and simple language. Don't expect people to know what a "hyperlink" or a "URL" is, for instance – explain and show. (The basic Drupal interface, unfortunately, does not include a rich-text editor that would make some formatting items as simple as highlight and click. The writer still must put in some simple code. This is a major drawback. Some editor modules are available, but all have some bugs at this point.)

When we see someone having trouble (perhaps a post is in the wrong area, or a calendar item spreads over too many days), a member of the USC project team will e-mail the person with suggestions and offer further help by e-mail or phone. Without the extra project staff, this could be a burden on a small paper.

The bottom line: You will need to budget (either time for staff or money for an outside person) for someone to write your help pages and then to rewrite them, and maybe tweak them again if your content management system upgrades and some things change slightly.

⁴⁰ The Pew Internet & American Life Project found, for instance, that Internet users age 18-28 are significantly more likely than those older to create content on the Internet, such as posting to blogs. But e-mail still remains the most popular application, used by 90 percent of those online. Fox, S. and Madden, M. (December 2005). *Data memo: Generations online*. Accessed at http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/170/report_display.asp (July 21, 2006).

As part of our grant, we provided training in Hartsville through Newsplex,⁴¹ the experimental, interactive news center created by the University of South Carolina journalism school and IFRA, the European-based newspaper trade group. Newsplex has trained scores of journalists around the world in new-media techniques.

The March 18 Hartsville training focused on three areas: Basic writing and linking, photos and video. (Although we do not have video-upload capabilities, we



Van Kornegay discusses elements of a good photo. (Photo by Duane Childers)

knew that video was the latest thing and so we offered that as an enticement to get people to come.) We also provided a brief survey of what people were doing with similar projects in other areas.

The sessions were announced with a story in the newspaper, postings on Hartsville Today and e-mail. We had space for 30 people – 15 each in one of two half-day sessions – 22 signed up and 19 showed up. Newsplex outfitted a room at Coker College with wireless computers and software, primarily programs already available with Windows or Mac (such as Windows Movie Maker or iMovie), as well as some freeware. Those who attended also received a CD with those programs,

some others that might be useful, and an explanation sheet.⁴²

⁴¹ www.newsplex.org

⁴² A sample: For Windows – Audacity and iTunes (for MP3 conversion), Gadwin Print Screen, Firefox, Photo Filter and Irfanview (photo editing programs), and Total Commander (file management). For Mac – Audacity, Firefox, WireTap (capturing streaming audio), Print Window (for printing lists of files and folders), Net News Wire Lite (RSS Reader), and Graphic Converter (file format conversions and some editing capabilities).

Other sites have done more extensive training,⁴³ but we specifically made ours “training lite” based on earlier misgivings from interested people about doing “journalism.” Plus, we had concerns about where “citizen” ends and “journalist” begins when the training becomes more extensive (we also felt our turnout would be very light if we went beyond a half-day).

All those attending started by creating a Hartsville Today account, if they did not have one. They also practiced posting stories and photos. (We supplied the photos, and the posts were deleted at the end of the session.)

We also asked participants to fill out a questionnaire at the end. We received 14 full responses and two partial ones. The sessions were well-received and accomplished what we had hoped:

- All four modules were rated higher than 4 on a five-point scale, and three rated higher than 4.5.
- Participants expressed increased interest in contributing to the site after taking the training. Of 14 reporting on this part of the assessment, nine said they had not contributed stories or photos to Hartsville Today but probably would, while five said they had contributed but likely would increase their contributions. (The other options not chosen: Have not contributed and will not, have contributed and likely will keep the same pace, have contributed but am not likely to in the future.)
- 12 said they “definitely” would tell others about Hartsville Today, 3 likely would and 1 possibly would.
- 13 said they definitely would encourage others to post and 3 said they likely would.

One training session, however, clearly is not enough. We did not have time to show people the mechanical basics of digital cameras, for instance, although we did show them how to resize a photo for upload. We know we have missed some

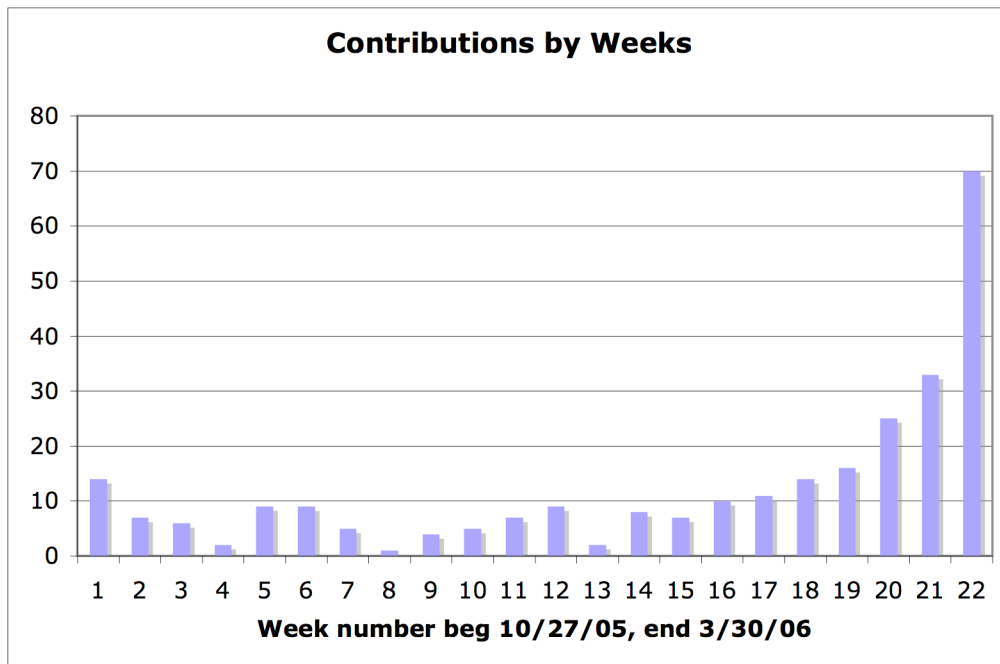
⁴³ See <http://madisoncommons.org/>, another J-lab funded project.

postings because the photos were simply too big and Drupal rejected them (its photo module does not have an effective resizing option).

Since the training, we have bought three digital cameras to be lent to community members who wish to post something on Hartsville Today.

We would have liked to have had subsequent training sessions as people discovered the site. We will do some others in the second year. Hiring the stringers also allowed them to do some instruction for people.

Keep it simple, short, focused and effective. Do not expect to turn your contributors into journalists; just help them learn to use your site so that they do not feel intimidated.



By the time of training in week 21, posts were beginning to surge, we think because the photo posting became fully operational in week 18. However, we did see new names making posts after the training session. Posts surged in week 22, the week of Hartsville's Renofest bluegrass festival, when the Messenger staff and others filed numerous photos to the site.

Bottom Line: Budget for training. Work with skilled faculty at local schools who can cover simple Web posting and photo editing. Plan several sessions.

Staff Filing



Messenger reporter Will Isgett files a story and photo on Hartsville Today about a local beauty pageant. In addition to letting local residents share their stories, Hartsville Today allows the twice-weekly Messenger to file stories off cycle, giving it a greater presence in what has become a 24/7 world. (Photo by Duane Childers)

Messenger staff members frequently have filed to Hartsville Today on news and sports events off cycle. In some cases, they also have filed brief stories in advance of publication, especially election results and high school sports.

The staff also has found Hartsville Today to be a good showcase for photos far beyond what could be printed in the newspaper. During the first five months, for instance, Messenger staff filed 65 of the 274 items. As of this writing, staff contributions have reached 119.

Friday night high school football is a ritual in small Southern towns, but until Hartsville Today, the Messenger was not able to print the story until the following Wednesday (the story was sent to the Item, a co-owned paper in Sumter, but the Messenger's own Web site was too difficult to update). That changed the first weekend Hartsville Today went live. The Messenger is now looking at turning that into a salable feature for this fall.

Register & Share Your Stories

Our Hartsville Encyclopedia

Hartsville Messenger

Discussion Groups

Helpful tips on writing, photos

inks:
The (Sumter) Item

Keeping you in touch with your community...

HARTSVILLE TODAY.com

Latest Posts

Hartsville defeats Sumter: by Eddie Newman

Hartsville versus Sumter High tonight: by Graham Osteen

40+ Singles Club now forming in Hartsville.: by Liz Taylor

Welcome to Hartsville Today: by Graham Osteen

Ab class at YMCA is a healthy challenge: by rance

Stringers

If you start a participatory journalism site, you will be faced with a puzzle: If there is no content, why will people come back a second time? But if they sense that others are doing the work, why should they?

Most sites have started with some type of seed content: Northwest Voice and thecolumbiarecord.com, for instance, recruited some people initially to serve as columnists or bloggers. The Northwestern University students who created Go Skokie produced “a mix of original content and linked to existing content relevant to Skokie, such as electronic newsletters and online versions of local newspaper stories.”

However, they also spotlight the inherent problem in this strategy – it can make a participatory journalism site appear too much like a standard news site. “News sites do not evoke a sense of interactivity and discussion. We wanted to avoid the passive model in which people merely digest whatever the media gives them.”⁴⁴

As noted above, we had the benefit of some early staff content from The Messenger (not just football, but also an upcoming election) to bring people to the site, and two or three people from the community excited about and committed to the idea. The most prolific of those was Richard Puffer, a communications professor at Coker College and a leader of the existing “community conversations.” Puffer contributed 79 posts, many with photos, of the 274 tracked in the first five months. He also tirelessly promoted the site around the community and later became one of our stringers. Try to find people like this in your community, and consider yourself blessed if you can.

As seen in the previous section, our contributions began to pick up after 15 weeks, much of that, we believe, because we finally were able to get a stable

⁴⁴ Gliniewicz et al. *Hyperlocal citizens' media*. p. 19. While some limited seed content might work in the “stories” sections, however, the Go Skokie team, relating the experience at the Fredericksburg (Va.) Free Lance-Star’s “Fredtalk,” notes that in discussion forums, “It rarely works for the staff to try to generate discussion; the users can see right through it. Staff posts are often ‘thread killers.’” p. 12.

photo area online. However, part of our original strategy acknowledged that we were unlikely to sustain growth in contributions or visits unless we were able to get into the community face-to-face and not only cover things for Hartsville Today but show people the benefits to that coverage and how to do it themselves. As a result, we budgeted for two stringers at \$50 per week for eight weeks each.

This follows the lead of Lawrence.com, which, for instance, extensively uses interns to create multimedia content for its site, especially its intense coverage of local youth sports.⁴⁵ More recently, the Fort Myers (Fla.) News-Press has taken turned reporters into mobile journalists, or “mojos,” in the neighborhoods.⁴⁶

The mojos go beyond merely reporting hyperlocal news to actively recruit and help train other contributors. The philosophy is expressed by Kate Marymount, Fort Myers’ executive editor: “1. Deep, useful ultra-local neighborhood Web sites can be lively gathering places of people online. 2. We must have the help of residents to build these sites, but they won't know how to contribute unless we help them.”

We consider our stringers – Puffer and Jana Longfellow – to have been a great success. They provided coverage of a soup kitchen, numerous church and civic events, concerts and the like. They posted numerous photos,⁴⁷ and one of Longfellow’s projects, a “where or what is it” using mystery photos of items and locations that people in town pass daily is being developed into a possible cross-media contest by the newspaper.

⁴⁵ O’Brien, T. (June 26, 2005). *The newspaper of the future*. The New York Times. Accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/26/business/yourmoney/26kansas.html> (July 21, 2006). See <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/sports/game/> for the intensive coverage.

⁴⁶ Marymount, K. (February 2006). *How they did it: Fort Myers’ ‘mojo’ journalists seek out news at the neighborhood level, identify community contributors*. Gannett News Watch. Accessed at <http://www.gannett.com/go/newswatch/2006/february/nw0210-2.htm> (July 21, 2006).

⁴⁷ We originally planned to equip them with mobile phone cameras, but when our plans for a mobile weblog fell through, we bought three digital cameras that are available to lend to anyone in the community who wants to post to Hartsville Today. As part of their work, the stringers showed people around the community how to use the cameras.

Both stringers reported high interest from community members in Hartsville



Today, and Longfellow says that after she highlighted the Darlington County Animal Shelter, the Soup Kitchen Mission and the Hartsville Interfaith Food Bank, all three places noticed more donations and, in the case of the animal shelter, more

adoptions. “On subsequent visits to the animal shelter, I have been stopped by workers thanking me for the piece, telling me of folks that mentioned the article to them when they arrived,” Longfellow said.

“In fact, this weekend I was stopped by a perfect stranger at the supermarket and asked, ‘How big has your puppy grown?’ It is certainly a pleasure for a non-native Hartsvillian to be recognized from the thumbnail photo on HVTD and for a piece that I was proud of.”

But while we have seen some additional contributors, the results have been uneven. Longfellow, for instance, expressed some frustration at her attempts to get churches to post: “It is not a shut door, however, just lots of call backs and miscommunication on what the website is a few folks thought I was selling ads for the Messenger.”

Puffer noted the interest, but reluctance, as well: “My conclusion is that not everyone wants to be on record as a community storyteller even when the opportunity is there.” (His complete assessment follows this section.) This duplicates what others have experienced.⁴⁸ But, again, you are striving to find those relatively few information “mavens” in your community who will post regularly. Others will post infrequently, but taken together will provide significant content. If you can get from 1 percent to 3 percent of your community actively contributing, the site should be viable.

Paying for content: Aside from the stringers, we have not paid for content and as yet do not plan to. However, it is an issue you will have to confront at

⁴⁸ “We found that getting people to visit goskokie.com once was relatively easy. However, it was a challenge to get them to contribute content themselves.” Gliniewicz, L. *Hyperlocal citizens’ media*. p. 23.

some point. One of the most well-known participatory journalism sites, South Korea's Oh My News,⁴⁹ pays a few dollars for stories that make its front pages augmented, in some cases, with a tip jar. But OhMyNews is a nationwide site, and a tip jar probably is not likely to generate much cash for contributors to a small-town or neighborhood site.

We think much of the gratification and motivation for contributing to newspaper-affiliated sites comes from the ability to help shape and enlarge the paper's coverage and, as in the case of Fort Myers' mojos, the ability to point out problems or to raise questions about local life, be it noting a traffic jam or wondering about a new development, and get further information from the paper. That is similar to what happened with the Darlington County fire story discussed at the beginning of this report.

Still, a little recognition can keep the posts coming, and so you may want to explore a system of small rewards. You could budget for these, or perhaps trade out with your advertisers for small gift certificates (perhaps \$10, such as at restaurants) that could be given monthly (even at two per month, that is just \$240 per year).

However, that means you will have to find a way to make those decisions. Will your staff do it? If so, how will they track and rate the posts? Increasingly, sites are using software that allows visitors to rate a posting. Those ratings can also be used to produce a listing of "most popular" items for display on the Web page. Others measure clicks on story links (some newspaper sites are using those measures to help plan their daily coverage). Discussion of such technology is beyond the scope of this report; although Drupal does have some ratings modules, we have not had time to examine them closely. But we mention the issue because

⁴⁹ www.ohmynews.com. English version: <http://english.ohmynews.com>

it is another of those details you will have to think about in setting up a hyperlocal news site.⁵⁰

Bottom Line: Stringers can be a big success for nominal money. Budget one or two people at 10-15 hours a week. Create an agreement that makes clear they are not employees, but also sets out the general guidelines that not only will they cover stories of their choosing, but they are to help others learn how to post. (See our agreement in the appendix.) Train them. And make sure you approach minority communities in your area to recruit stringers. The Messenger was unable to do this, highlighting that its connection to Hartsville's minority community might need improvement. These stringers should not be journalists; the object is break down any intimidation barrier against posting.



***Thoughts by Richard Puffer
Stringer for Hartsville Today***

(Puffer is executive director of the Byerly Foundation, a civic-improvement group, and a professor at Coker College)

Prior to becoming a “stringer” with Hartsville Today, I was a major cheerleader for this medium.

Whenever I was at civic club meetings in my role as foundation executive director, I would talk about the difference this Web-journalism tool might make in our community. When we had foundation events, I would start or conclude by displaying the address and talking about how the site could be used.

Always, people involved in the meetings were impressed such a site was available in Hartsville, but there remained reluctance by some people to sign up. My conclusion is that not everyone wants to be on record as a community storyteller even when the opportunity is there.

That the opportunity is available, however, makes people feel good about their community's having such a service. Once, during a wedding reception, a person I know said

⁵⁰ For a more complete discussion of some of the issues, see Outing, S. (November 2005). *It's almost time to pay up for citizen journalism*. Accessed at http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=91256 (July 21, 2006)

she was enjoying my write-ups on Hartsville Today. I thanked her and then urged her to join us in sharing ideas and thoughts. She said she might but really she just enjoyed reading about things going on and was not sure she wanted to put her thoughts for all to see.

Sometimes it makes me think back to the griots who maintained the stories, legends and cultures of pre-literate groups. While most of the people in the tribal or family units enjoyed hearing the stories, they were most often content with letting the storytellers do their work.

What I really enjoy about this channel is that it provides the opportunity for those who might take advantage of this new access to actually get involved without the normal barriers inherent in traditional media structure. As I talked about the new channel of communication, one common response was “I did not know that was available. How come we have not heard about this before?”

It will take more than news columns to get this type of vehicle to become a major information source within the community. House ads will help but it will also take other nontraditional forms of communication and maybe even a few more “stringers” to try reaching those who are not yet reached.

- People really do appreciate the concept of citizen storytelling and citizen journalism as a rich addition to their communication mix.
- Many feel inadequate to the task of contributing for all the normal fears of putting yourself in words in front of people.
- Specific examples of how this tool can be used can make the connection to how it will help them in their endeavors. More mini-workshops, more display visuals in the newspaper showing specific story treatments, maybe even a contest or two to promote the existence of this tool will, I believe, help the tipping point come to be for this new-type journalism.

Who is Hartsville Today?

Ultimately, of course, Hartsville Today is simply its contributors. For five months, the University of South Carolina research team tracked and coded every posting made to the site. In addition, when people registered they were asked to provide some demographic and geographic information to give us a more complete picture of who was joining the site and what was being posted.

The result is a detailed look at a citizen journalism site, its contributors and the type of material posted.

We also developed a way of typing posts for content analysis that we hope will be of use to other researchers. (The full codebook is in the appendix.)

Although people were allowed to use pseudonyms on their posts, to register they had to provide a full name, year of birth, ethnicity and gender. We also requested, but did not require, an address and telephone number. For the address, we gave the option of noting a nearby intersection instead of an exact street address. We had to balance the desire for useful descriptive information with privacy concerns that could discourage people from registering. We did not ask for income or educational information; early potential contributors with whom we spoke indicated that sort of question could discourage them from registering. However, given the segregated nature of the town's geography (see earlier discussion in *About Hartsville*), physical location is likely to provide an approximation of socioeconomic status in many cases.

Most of those who filled out the form provided usable information.⁵¹

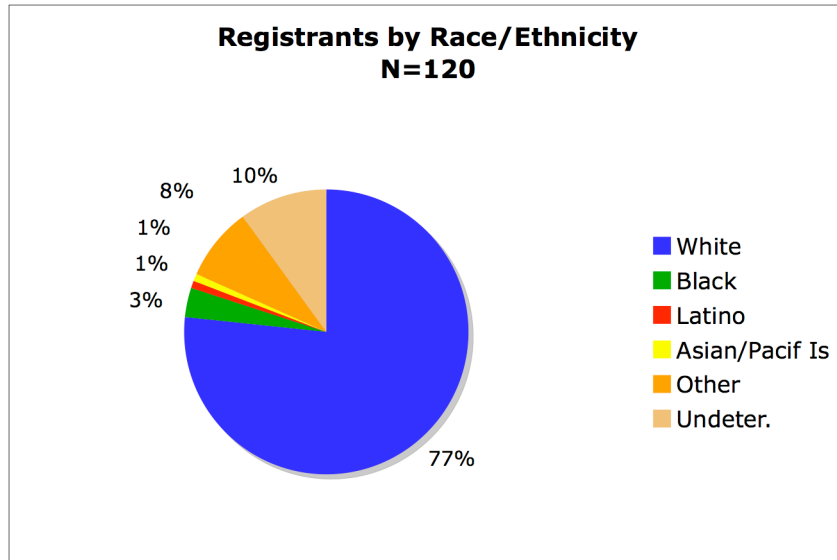
Our registrants are overly white and live in the more prosperous census tracts, but they are evenly split between male and female.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the 120 people registered on the site through March 30, 2006, (including seven from the project staff and newspaper) are

⁵¹ Seven people registered before the interface became fully operational. Five of those were project or newspaper staff for which data could be determined. No data could be gathered on the remaining two, which is why, for instance, there is a small percentage marked “undetermined” on gender, which otherwise was a mandatory category.

predominantly white. Out of 98 people who provided usable ethnicity information (as opposed to “other” or “undetermined,”) 92 (93.9%) were white, while 4 (4.1%) were Black/African-American. One person each listed Latino/Hispanic or Asian/Pacific Islander.

Figure 1



Note: The graph shows racial/ethnic breakdown across all registrants, not just those whose information was usable. The Census Bureau does not consider Latino/Hispanic as a racial category, but we asked registrants to pick one among these choices. The American Indian category had no value and is not shown.

This compares with the overall population that is 66% white and about 32% Black/African-American in all the census tracts studied (Hartsville proper is 56% white and 42.5% Black/African-American).⁵²

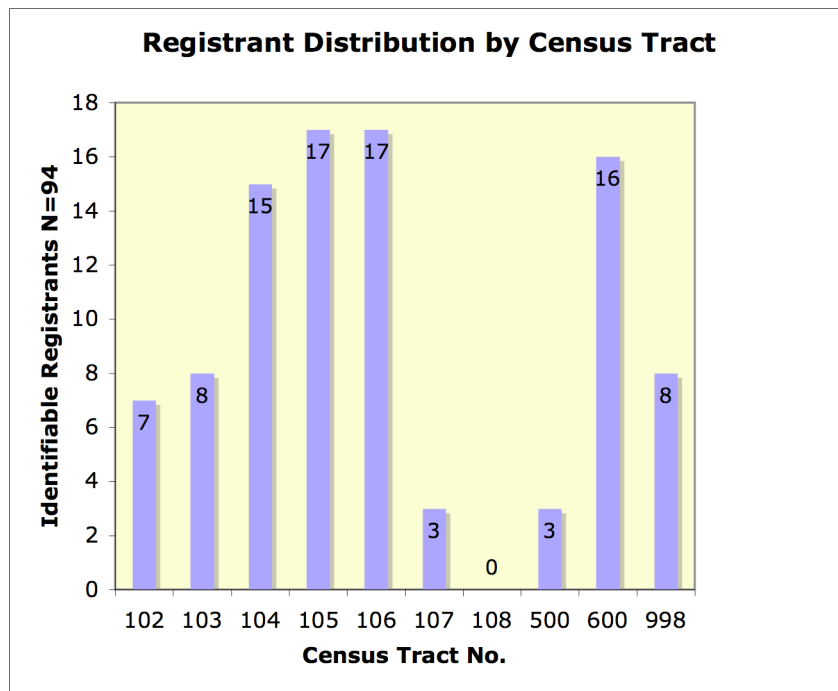
This disparity is reinforced when registrant locations are plotted by census tract, as shown in Figure 2. Census tracts 105 and 107 are the core of Hartsville and virtual mirror images of each other. Tract 105, the north side of the town, is overwhelmingly white (77% of 2,743 people) with a median household income of \$39,668.⁵³ Tract 107, the south side, is overwhelmingly Black/African-American (97% of 3,0598 people) with a median household income of \$15,151.

⁵² 2000 Census.

⁵³ Household income is as of 1999.

The other major census tracts are 104, a more affluent area west of town with a predominantly white population (N=5,686, 86% white, 13% Black/African-American, median HH income \$46,372) and 106, east of town with a mixed population (N=4,858, 53% white, 45% Black/African-American, median HH income \$25,000). However, both of those areas extend well beyond the city limits. Tract 103, which covers a largely unincorporated area often called North Hartsville, also is largely white and has pockets of affluence (N=5,198, 74% white, 23% Black/African-American, median HH income \$41,520).

Figure 2



104-107: core census tracts (104-west, 106-east, 105/107 central with 107 predominantly black). 102-103: north. 108: large, sparsely populated area south of Bobo Newsome Highway and U.S. 15 bypass. 500: out of state. 600: elsewhere in South Carolina. 998: addresses in Hartsville, but cannot be pinpointed. N-94 out of 120. The remainder are no address or non-locatable address.

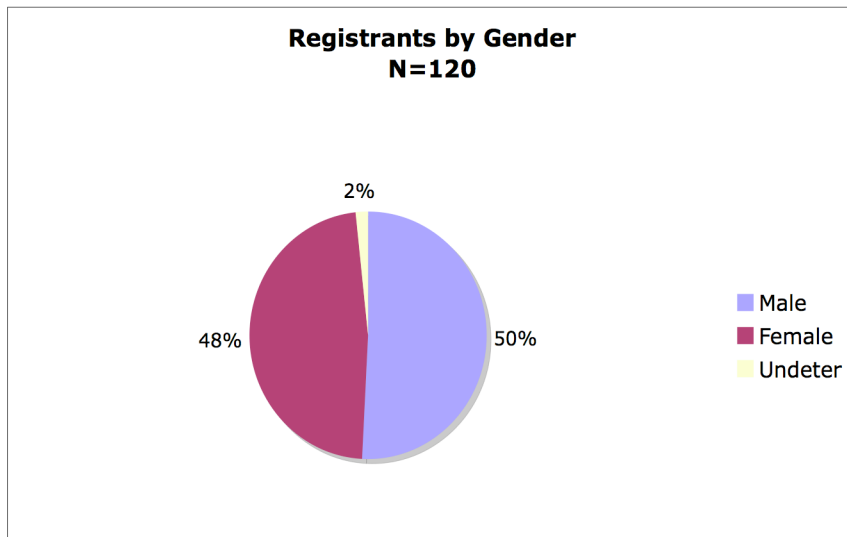
Several recruiting attempts among groups and individuals in the town’s predominantly black census tract have yielded few registrations. As previously noted, the newspaper, through its contacts, was unable to find a minority stringer. The impression garnered by the project staff and the stringers in talking to members of this community is that the newspaper’s ties are not as strong as

hoped in this area; however, without a properly constructed and administered survey, it is not possible to confirm that or whether the lack of participation might also be related to lack of computers and online access.⁵⁴ We remain concerned and will redouble efforts in this area during the second year.

(Of some interest is the number of registrants from elsewhere in South Carolina, although no promotion was targeted to them. This indicates some people may be using the site as a tie to their hometown. As noted earlier, the newspaper circulation director says a substantial number of newspapers are mailed out of town.)

The distribution of registered users is nearly evenly split between male and female, as shown in Figure 3, but that indicates a slight predominance of adoption by males, since census data shows the census tracts studied at 53% female and 47% male.

Figure 3

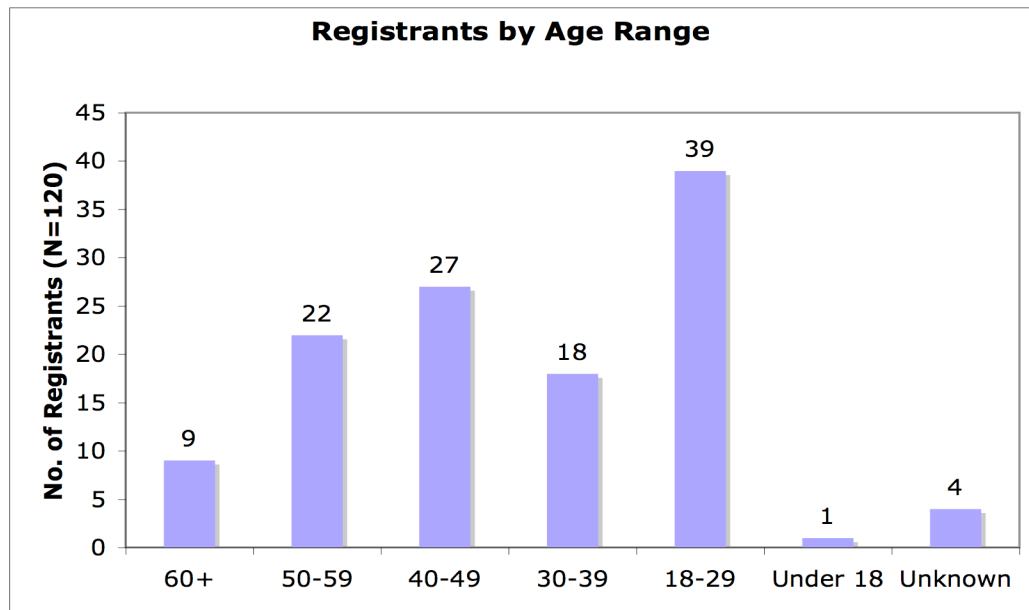


⁵⁴ As an indicator this might be the case, there were no owner-occupied housing units in tract 105 that were without telephone service in 1999, while 13.5% of the renter-occupied units lacked service. The corresponding percentages in 107 were 7.8% of owner-occupied units without phone service and 20.3% of renter-occupied units.

Those 18-29 are the largest group of Hartsville Today's registrants, but a significant number are older than 40.⁵⁵

Studies tell us the Internet is the province of the young, especially in content creation,⁵⁶ but the young are not so dominant on Hartsville Today.

Figure 4



The larger group of 18- to 29-year-olds (32.5%) likely is the result of recruiting through Richard Puffer's Coker College class. That group's presence on Hartsville Today is significantly greater than its overall proportion in the population;⁵⁷ however, that is an imperfect measure because the census counts do not include the influx of college students. We need to examine our recruitment methods to see whether we are effectively reaching a younger audience elsewhere in Hartsville. At 48%, those 40 and above are slightly underrepresented relative to the overall population, however, the deficit is in the 60+ range. Those 40-49

⁵⁵ Again, for privacy concerns, we did not ask for a specific birth date, only for birth year, but a reasonably accurate set of age bands can be constructed from that.

⁵⁶ Fox, S. and Madden, M. *Data memo: Generations online*. See also Lenhart, A. and Fox, S. (July 2006). *Bloggers: A portrait of the internet's new storytellers*. Accessed at http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/186/report_display.asp (July 21, 2006).

⁵⁷ From all census tracts under study: 18-29, 20.7%; 30-39, 18.8%; 40-49, 20.5%; 50-59, 17.3%; 60+, 22.7%.

(22.5%) and 50-59 (18.3%) are present at slightly greater proportions than the population.

When isolated to only those who actually posted, Hartsville today becomes much more heavily male, white and older.

As shown in Figures 5 and 6, while gender may be balanced among registrants, those who actually posted during the first five months were more likely to be male, and blacks remained a sliver of those represented.

Figure 5

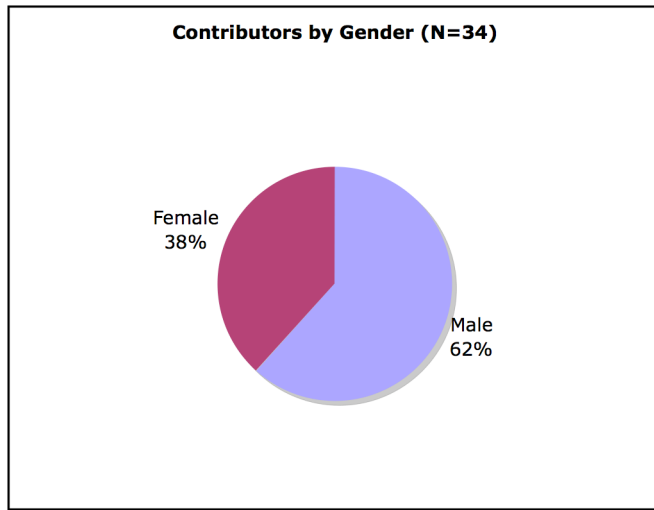
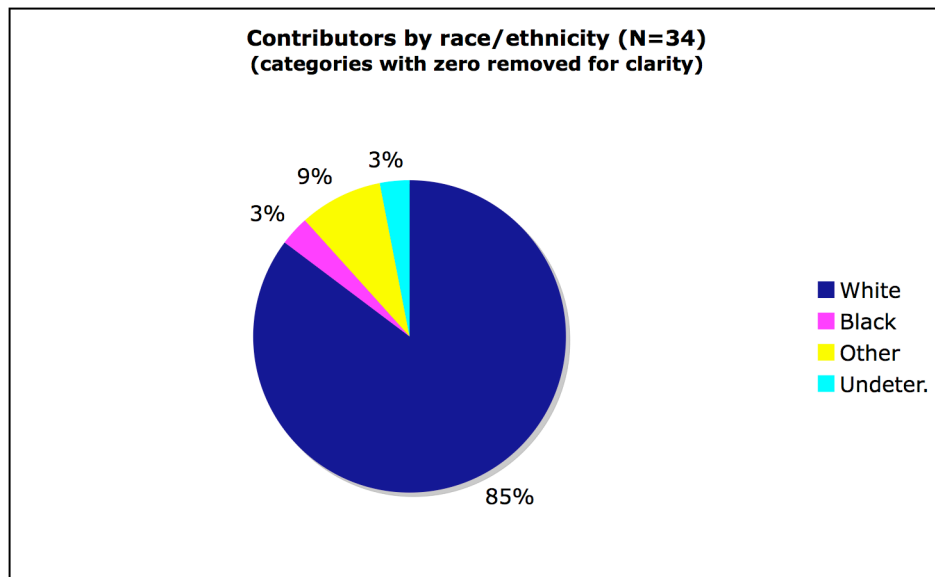
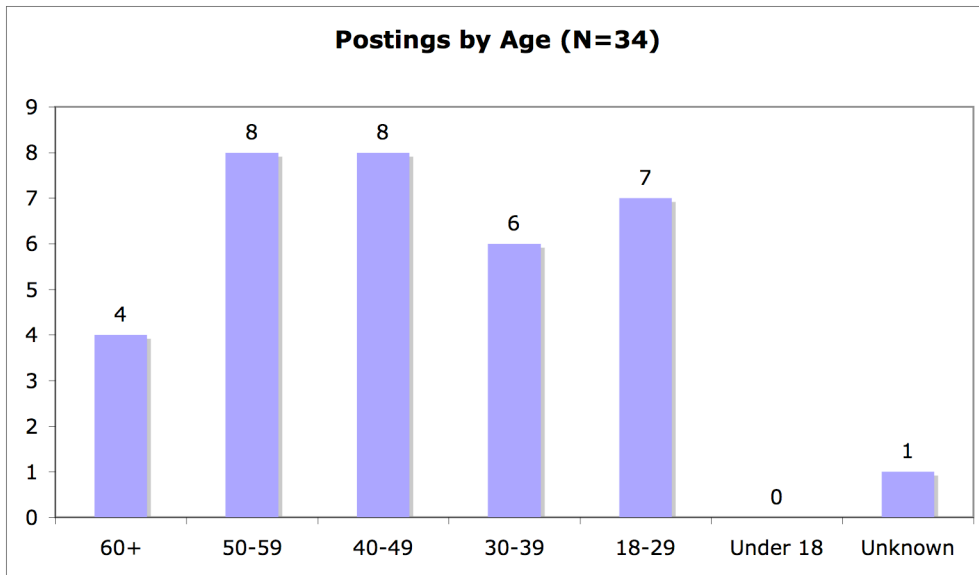


Figure 6



But postings plotted by age show a significant shift, with the 18-29, 30-39 and 40-49 age groups closely tracking their proportions in the area's population. The 50-59 age group becomes even more prevalent (23.5% of postings vs. 17.3% of population). The 60+ group also improves (7.5% of registrants, 11.7% of postings) although it still lags its overall proportion in the population (22.7%). It could be postulated that these age groups are more likely to be long-term residents, making them more invested in the community and more motivated. They generally are freed from child-raising and similar concerns, giving them potentially more time to write.

Figure 7



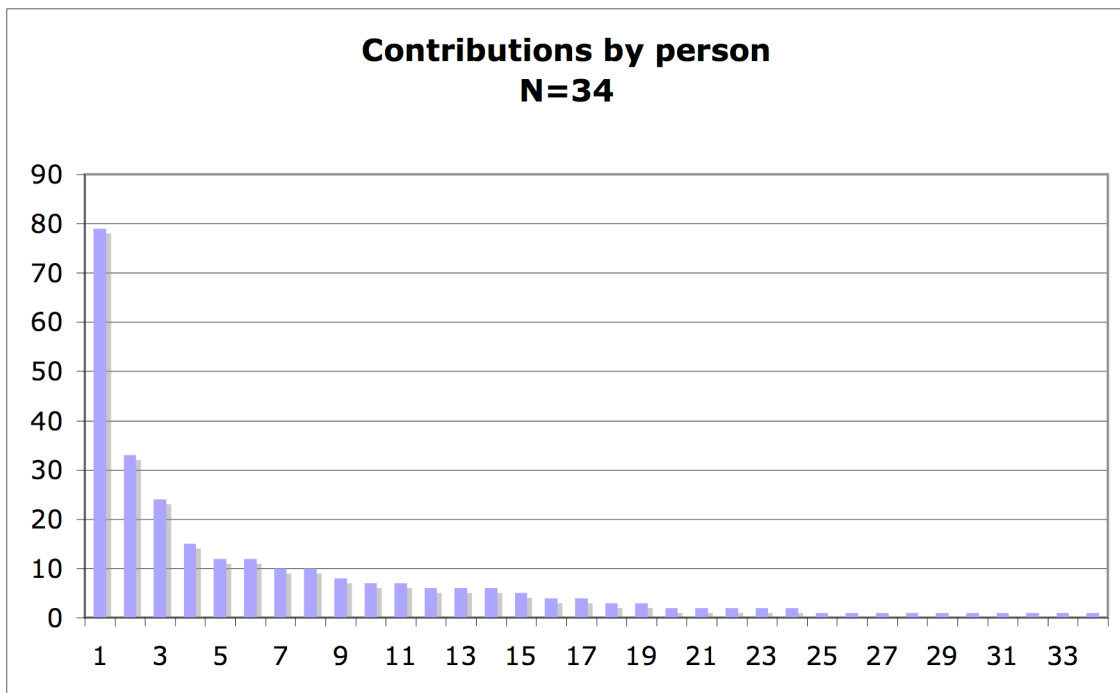
The differences between registrants and those posting, however, outline a general challenge for anyone beginning a participatory journalism project: It is not enough just to recruit participants; you need to help them become active contributors. This might be especially important if you hope to use a participatory journalism site to extend your reach among younger age groups. For Hartsville Today, this will be a focus in the second year.

The relative distribution by census tract did not significantly change when limited to those posting.

Contributions per person follow an almost perfect power curve.

When the number of each person's contributions is plotted, what results in Figure 7 is an almost perfect power, or Zipf, curve.⁵⁸ This is a common occurrence on the Internet, with a few very popular pages or blogs – or in this case, a few people doing most of the posting.

Figure 8



Not surprisingly, Richard Puffer is No. 1 in that graph. Power curves should not be worrisome as much as they should be a challenge for us to challenge others registered at the site to do more.

No day of the week stands out for heavy posting.

Friday had the most postings at 61, but that likely was influenced by the Friday night opening of the Renofest bluegrass festival during the final week of tracking when numerous photos were posted. Mondays had 54 posts and

⁵⁸ Nielsen, J. (April 1997). *Zipf curves and website popularity*. Accessed at <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/zipf.html> (July 10, 2006).

Wednesdays had 46. But even Sunday had 18 posts, which shows that when people have something to say, they are willing to get online and do it.

Participatory journalism sites that want to keep their posting traffic up might have to consider some incentives for the weekends, however, such as a small reward for the best weekend post or photo.

Timeliness was not an issue, as many items were filed in a timely manner. There also was a wide mix of story types.⁵⁹

Because these are not journalists, we did not hold them to the same kind of deadline standard. A story or photo was considered timely if it was posted within 48 hours of an event, and a reply within 48 hours of the original post. Otherwise it was classified as delayed. Items not tied to a specific event were labeled “evergreen,” but replies to all posts still were judged with the 48-hour standard.

Table 1

Timeliness (N=274) (% is pct. of row)	Timely	Delayed	Evergreen	Undeter.	Total
Newspaper/ project team	45 (59.2%)	3 (3.9%)	19 (25.0%)	9 (11.8%)	76
Community members	81 (40.9%)	49 (24.7%)	55 (27.8%)	13 (6.6%)	198
Overall totals	126 (46%)	52 (19%)	74 (27%)	22 (8%)	

$p < .001 \chi^2 = 18.581 \text{ df} = 3$

While the Messenger staff, as expected, was more timely in its postings, the almost 41% of the community’s postings as timely shows that people are not letting things get stale.

As Table 2 shows, no one type of item dominated, and those that could be considered traditional news and sports stories, such as reports on game and

⁵⁹ Coding of stories was carried out by the principal investigator and graduate student using the codebook in the appendix. Initial intercoder reliability was 61.3% overall, but was more than 93% in all categories except timeliness because of a misunderstanding of how event calendar items were to be coded (all were to be coded timely, no matter how far in advance they were entered, because they remained visible on the calendar for people to plan). When those anomalies were corrected, overall reliability improved to 87.1% and was 100% in all categories, except timely (96.8%), picture included (93.6%), and identity clear (96.8%).

election outcomes, civic events and festivals, made up about a fifth of the items posted. Stand-alone photos clearly drove postings, topping all other types, even though the photo-posting system was reliably available for less than half the time studied. As a further dimension of this, we looked at photos across all postings – both stand-alone photos and those where a picture was paired with a story. We found 101 items with some type of photo, which means just 30 stories had embedded photos out of a possible 165 (after stand-alone photos and event calendar items were subtracted from the total). It can be reasoned that with the proliferation of digital cameras, it is easier to snap a photo and write a few caption lines than write 100 or more words on an event and perhaps pair that story with a photo. Witness the woman sending the picture of the Darlington fire to friends. Adding a photo to a story is also not as easy in Drupal’s picture modules as posting the photo alone, and we are looking at alternatives. Those considering similar sites should note the importance of making it easy not just to post photos but to integrate them with stories.

Table 2

Stories by type (N=274)		
News	36	13.1%
Sports	21	7.7%
Community conversation	40	14.6%
Reviews	8	2.9%
Event notices	28	10.2%
Miscellaneous	20	7.3%
Reply	39	14.2%
Photo only	81	29.6%
Undetermined	1	0.4%

See codebook in appendix for full explanation of story types.

Stories filed by “citizen journalists” cannot simply be shoehorned into the categories traditional journalists use – categories often bounded more by “I know it when I see it” rather than formal definition. It quickly becomes apparent there

is a hybrid type, part news, part comment or call to action, but not really with the rigorous argument traditionally thought of as editorial or commentary. We view it as an attempt to converse, much as you would over the back fence or kitchen table, in which both information/news and opinion is conveyed, and we created a category called “community conversation,” defined as follows:

The author, not acting in the traditional journalistic role of neutral reporter, seeks to inform the community – which includes expressing an opinion – on an issue, call the community to action (including solicitation of contributions to HVTD) or thank the community for participation.

This mixing of information-delivery with opinion or commentary may be anathema to some traditional journalists, but those creating a participatory journalism site can expect to find many posts like this.

Posting with pseudonyms was the dominant method.

We allowed people to use pseudonym “handles,” and 61% of the posts used an alias.⁶⁰ The site allows people who register to associate a picture with their ID, which can help promote transparency, but just 19 posts out of 274 had such a picture (it was not possible to determine who overall had associated a picture with their registration, since, if the person had not posted, the picture would not be seen).

Clearly, people like not having their names directly associated with their posts. It is a balance between the concern that requiring people to use real names will scare away too many from participating and the transparency provided by knowing who is doing the posting.

We are reassessing this policy, but it is not clear that once you have started down this path you can turn back without kicking significant numbers of people off the site and requiring them to reregister.

⁶⁰ At one point, a newspaper staffer used an alias when the person’s original logon would not work. We considered that a bad idea, and it was stopped and the original logon fixed.

Conclusions:

Any concerns that Hartsville Today participants would not rise to the challenge and post newsy, timely pieces were unfounded. A wide variety of material has been posted in a timely manner, especially photos.

Photos clearly are an important category, as they are an easy way to document the news without the necessity to write, and more than once we have heard fears expressed about the need to be a “writer.”

The challenge for Hartsville Today – as it may be for many sites in smaller towns – is to get everyone in the community involved. Sites such as this can highlight possible weaknesses in relationships with minority communities. The challenge is not only to effectively recruit people to register, but to get a wide spectrum of them to post, so that the site does not predominantly reflect older white males.

Sales

The Messenger's advertising manager is frank: She struggles with how to sell Hartsville Today without cannibalizing advertising from the newspaper's print edition and its Web site.

One ad for a satellite TV dealer was sold in mid-March and has been on the site since then. Obviously, this a long way from making the site self-sustaining, even it were to be measured only as cash flow without directly apportioning any newsroom expenses to it.

Sites around the country are still trying to find business models for citizen-journalism sites, or even for how to integrate such features profitably into their regular sites.⁶¹ The concern of the Messenger's sales manager is not out of place among newspapers in smaller areas where it is perceived there are

limited advertising dollars, the newspaper may have most of them already, and growth is slow. In addition, advertisers may be cautious in associating themselves with a Web site where the quality of the content can be uneven.

However, viable citizen-journalism sites also offer even closer ties to the community and a lively, varied stream of content that can attract otherwise hard-to-reach people. The key is to use that to expand the pool of ad dollars, and that means moving away from print's run-of-press model to aggregating marginal revenues through focused channels that may be created as the need arises.

The Messenger has recently hired an independent contractor with experience selling across print and Web. The newspaper, for instance, is looking at a way to sell the availability of Friday night football game stories and photos *on Friday night*. It may mean creating a channel of their own, perhaps inviting the public to augment coverage with "spotted" photos of friends from the game. That package could then be offered to a local advertiser as an exclusive.

⁶¹ Outing, S. (April 2006). *The business of supporting citizen journalism*. Accessed at http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=96572 (July 7, 2006)



D&D Home Cable
1061 E. Bobo Newsome Hwy
Hartsville, SC

843-332-3129

Obituaries offer an opportunity to monetize out-of-town visitors to a site. Creating an obituaries section, but with just a few lines of the actual obituary so as not to dilute paid obituaries, could provide more compelling material. That channel could then be sold to a florist – put a small, tasteful ad on the page, *and make sure it clicks through so that a person can order flowers right then*. Even better, code it so that the order form is filled in with the deceased’s name and the funeral home based on the obituary being looked at.

Go Skokie’s creators explored an online ad-creation tool to let businesses create simple ads with their logos and a few lines of text.⁶² The lower you get the marginal costs of putting an ad online, the more chance the newspaper’s participatory -journalism site can make money at the margin.

The Messenger is trying to adapt a feature one of its stringers came up with – “What is it? – that uses mystery photos of things around town. The cross-media strategy would work with a local advertiser to supply gift certificates. In return, the contest begins in the paper as the photo framed with an advertising border. Readers go to Hartsville Today to submit their guesses – all while seeing an online ad. At the end of the week, the Messenger’s staff harvests the right guesses, picks one and awards the prize – with, of course the picture, ad and winner’s name back in the following paper. Then start over again.

The idea is to upsell the advertiser across media by showing the effectiveness.

There is no guarantee it will work out, but it shows the kind of flexibility and thinking needed.

The same author who, as noted earlier, wondered if the Web would be the end of community journalism also wrote this: “After all, the very same technology that breaks down the mass audience into tiny segments also allows savvy entrepreneurs to reconnect those fragments ... so they again draw the eyeballs of readers and the interest of advertisers.”⁶³

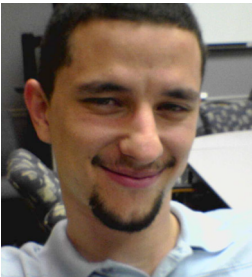
⁶² Gliniewicz, L. et al. *Hyperlocal citizens’ media*. p. 72-74

⁶³ Zielenziger, M. *Newspapers in retreat*.

Technology

One thing is sure about the technology for participatory-journalism sites: It will change. Tagging, friend-of-a-friend, moblogging, Web video, podcasting, mobile video, RSS – how many of these were new to the vocabulary in just the past two years?

We are not going to dwell on the technology or specific programs. We have mentioned Drupal because we use it, as do many other sites, and we'll make some references to it here. But My Missourian uses Mambo. Go Skokie used Geeklog, and there are other viable programs out there.



Instead, here are some recommendations from Ed Schaal, systems administrator at S.C. Net Solutions, who has handled all the behind-the-scenes work.

“They definitely need to know what features they want”:

You will need some kind of content management system, CMS for short. Many are on the market. In a broad sense, they break two ways – open-source and vendor systems. Vendor systems give you the potential advantage of maintenance agreements, hosting and custom design. The bottom line: They cost money, sometimes lots of it. Northwest Voice and TheColumbiaRecord.com use such systems. But they can save you staff time.

Open-source systems are free – but not cheap because your staff or your Internet service provider must set them up. They just have the potential to cost less, and they are numerous. Go to a site like www.opensourcecms.com, which lets you try various programs on its servers before you decide. The rest of this section will deal primarily open-source systems.

Many of these systems look like blogs because, well, at their heart that's what they are. But their level of customization varies. Do you want a site that looks like a blog, or one you can customize? You might need a special module for that. Ratings systems, photo filing, news aggregators, tag clouds – like a car, you can hang a lot of bells and whistles on these babies. But at the beginning, as we said

in the site design section, you have to decide what your readers and users are likely to want – and how easy it will be to change if your first guess is wrong.

We chose Drupal because it has a very active software community developing lots of widgets, but it has its problems, and so it may not be for you. Some newspaper publishing systems in recent years have incorporated blogs and similar things as the industry has moved to the CMS model. However, few are likely to have all the options a vibrant developer community provides.

“You could probably have everything running in a month.”

You will not only need the CMS, you will also probably need PHP, which has become one of the Web’s most widely used scripting languages, and someone who knows how to tweak it. PHP has become pretty much the default among Web hosts, but check to make sure yours has it.

You probably will also need MySQL, a database system. It’s free, too, but some Internet service providers (if you are not hosting your own servers) will charge you for database space. Most content management systems are really just large database manipulators.

So yes, you could have it up in a month or less – if you’re sure your systems administrator is giving you much of his or her attention. If you are hiring IT services, make sure you get an agreement that person is going to put his or her efforts your way for the time needed.

Unfortunately, once these things are running, they don’t run themselves. IT is going to need at least a couple of hours a week to tweak it, both for upgrades and for any brilliant ideas you come up with, such as in sales. There are frequent security upgrades and not all the modules under the old systems work with the new until the module’s creator gets around to updating it. So that great news aggregator you had going might be broken for a bit and have to be taken down (with an explanation to your users, of course).

And having those couple of hours a week won’t work if they’re just at 2 a.m. Sunday. Remember, your readers and users now will be stakeholders in part of

your system. If it goes down, you'll hear from them, and if it doesn't get fixed, you could lose their attention.

“Make it quick and easy for the users.”

Drupal falls down a bit here. Its module that would allow users to search Hartsville Today for specific content does not work well with the version of PHP S.C. Net Solutions is using. The screens where you enter text require a slight knowledge of HTML code to enter links or simple formatting commands. (Rich text editors, which allow you to create things like links with one click are available, but buggy.) Its image module returns inscrutable error codes to users who try to upload a photo that is too large – instead of telling them what is wrong or just resizing the file.

But we picked Drupal because it has a lot of users we can learn from and lots of modules, and more are being developed. So we will keep trying new ones. Remember, you can't turn these systems on and just walk away.

Here are some things you want in the system or in add-on modules.

You are going to want modules to deal with images, modules that let you form your own categories, modules that let you create your own content types, an event calendar, a news aggregator (lets you snag headlines from other sources – perhaps your own paper if you have not integrated your cit-j site into your main Web site), and modules that let you display Google ads or your own ads.

Pay attention to security.

We passed on some of the content management systems because we saw a lot of potentially destructive bots looking for those. Make sure someone does a Web search with terms such as “security,” “flaws,” “security holes,” “vulnerabilities” and “back end vulnerabilities” paired with the systems you are looking at.

And beware of a particularly nasty little trick called an “SQL injection.” Your IT people will know what this means: Always validate user input by matching fields in PHP script.

You may have to spend some more time and money researching audience measurement to effectively sell ads.

S.C. Net Solutions uses a basic Red Hat package that tracks the number of visits, pages and kilobytes served up and what the IP addresses were of computers that visited the site. But, for instance, it does not separate out search-engine bots or track unique users, and parsing out the numbers for an individual “channel” is not easy.

You’ve probably already looked at these issues when it comes to selling ads and tracking audience. These systems are still developing, and some can be expensive.

Some content management systems do have measurement modules that can help.

*A few final words
from Publisher Graham Osteen*

This project is vitally important to smaller papers because if newspapers don't "get there first" in the communities we serve, you can be sure someone else will. It's about owning your market, and that means developing the niche products and services to accomplish the task. Online products will be part of the mix, whether we like it or not.

There are generally more questions than answers about what actually works and what people respond to, and there's no clear direction yet on where to put time and effort.

The lead users are determining the path the project takes more than the newspaper owners, partly by design and partly by necessity. As with many small newspapers, we don't have the staff resources to devote to "staffing and studying." We have to depend some on instinct. So far, we've been fortunate to have people who care about this community and are gifted writers and photographers.

The quality of what is on the site is good, but that doesn't guarantee readership and participation. The second phase, now that the site is established and has become fairly consistent, is to market and promote the effort more aggressively and to create revenue streams.

That will ultimately be the real determination of success or failure.

Some thoughts as you consider a cit-j project

The level of planning and detail will be more than twice as much for a typical independent publisher than it was for us because we had the benefit of a grant and the USC team. As a publisher, I could not have guided the process myself and done my job adequately because it would have been too time consuming.

As guidance for other publishers, I'd say that you would need a project leader inside or outside the business that you would pay, or a graduate assistant or

professor who takes this on as a project in order to get it off the ground and have something to show for their efforts such as a graduate project.

Expect to spend \$5,000 on quality IT and Web site development (estimated on time costs); \$1,200 for three good cameras; \$1,200 for three stringers (\$50/week for 8 weeks minimum to get things rolling); and \$500 in assorted marketing and promotion costs. I think these are conservative estimates to get it up and running properly, \$8,000 to \$10,000.

Once it's started, I believe a small newsroom can handle it if you have active stringers and one person in the newsroom who can monitor the site and make frontline decisions. My newsroom consists of a managing editor who is also a senior staff writer, a lifestyles writer who is also an editor and photographer, a sports writer who is also an editor and photographer, a general staff writer who takes pictures and edits when needed and a graphic artist who does page design and takes pictures.

A student intern working on a project like this would be helpful, but mostly you have to develop stringers and then develop guidelines for your staff to contribute consistently and in a meaningful way. This takes some discipline, and we're still learning.

The pleasant surprises have been Dick Puffer, Jana Longfellow and several other fairly regular users who are contributing unique local content. I especially enjoy the old Hartsville post cards. Historic content about the town will be something we really play up heavily in the second year because nothing gets a publication closer to its community than a demonstrated ability to recount and understand its history.

We're working on a project with summer intern, Kelly Cavanaugh, whose series on teens in Hartsville is sure to generate discussion. Once she returns to college, she will write periodic columns for print, post them online, and encourage and report discussions in both places. A Hartsville native also is doing a series about his experiences teaching English in China, and we will use his work as a

jumping-off point with HVTDD. He will be in graduate school in Connecticut, but will contribute regularly.

The questions about unrestricted access seem to be the first thing out of people's mouths when we speak to civic groups. We emphasize to them that we have some controls, but mostly we depend on an honor system of sorts. For some people that's enough; for others it's a big deal.

We went that route because we decided there's no real way to monitor everything ahead of time due to time and personnel constraints. Until we start getting more active and broader usage – and some advertising – the safeguards are in place. But if you run into weird stuff early on, then you'd need to rethink it based on your community. One person could create the need for constant monitoring, so that's a subjective process as the site is developed. If nasty stuff crops up, we'll cross that bridge and probably tighten up procedures.

Public support has been trickling in, slow but enthusiastic from what I can gauge, and I base that on the fact that 80% of the time people engage me in conversation about what's in the print product. I usually hear that they've "taken a look" at HVTDD, but only a handful of people seem to be regularly involved in that versus having an opinion about the material in the core product. When they see it, they like it. But that doesn't guarantee they'll actually participate.

We're in the process of creating and selling more print and online packages that include Hartsville Today using an independent contractor with a lot of online and print sales experience. I believe that for many of the Messenger's advertisers, adding the two Web sites to the package makes good sense, and we'll know in the next month how that will play out in terms of new revenue.

The view from 10,000 feet is that this is a worthwhile and ongoing project, but be prepared to spend some money on the front end if you want to establish a site that will mean something and be viable. Also, plan to monetize it ASAP using a print-online package buy that makes it easy for advertisers to see results right away. We haven't done this yet, but we will.

Identify people in the community who will take the ball and run with it, because the worst thing that could happen is a stagnant site that doesn't engage anyone. It has to evolve, and it has to have pictures.

Spend the time, effort and money on the front end; then do your best to keep it fresh.

Appendix A



Guidelines for Freelancers

I _____, as a freelancer being paid to provide content to and encourage participation in HartsvilleToday.com, and, if requested, to provide content to the Hartsville Messenger, acknowledge that I am an independent contractor and am not being hired as an employee by the Messenger; Osteen Publishing Co. or any of its subsidiaries or affiliates; the University of South Carolina or any of its departments, schools or other subdivisions; or the state of South Carolina or any of its subdivisions.

I agree further that this document is a general guide and not an employment contract, nor an employee handbook, and I accrue no rights to any benefits as a result. There is no obligation to continue using me as a freelancer, and HartsvilleToday.com, the Messenger, or Osteen Publishing may terminate the relationship at any time without notice, notwithstanding the initial intent to provide payments for a certain period to encourage participation in HartsvilleToday.com and to provide content for the site.

The rights to all material produced for HartsvilleToday.com, the Messenger, Osteen Publishing, or any subsidiaries or affiliates belong to those entities once submitted for posting, publication or distribution, whether posted directly by me on HartsvilleToday.com or submitted in any other form.

HartsvilleToday.com, the Messenger, Osteen Publishing, or any subsidiaries or affiliates shall have the right to reproduce, reuse, store, compile, republish or otherwise use such material in any media known or not yet devised. The freelancer retains the rights to any material not posted or submitted. The freelancer agrees not to delete any material on HartsvilleToday.com that was produced as a freelancer, such decisions being the sole purview of the Messenger, Osteen Publishing, or its affiliates and subsidiaries. Excepted are deletions made during the normal course of writing and editing such material online or through another means for submission.

If any error or question of accuracy or authenticity is raised about a freelancer's work and the freelancer becomes aware of such questions or challenges, he or she shall immediately notify the managing editor of the Messenger or, if the managing editor is not available, an appropriate management-level employee of the Messenger. The Messenger or Osteen Publishing will then decide what course of action to take.

The freelancer agrees to hold harmless HartsvilleToday.com, the Messenger, Osteen Publishing, the University of South Carolina, the state of South Carolina and any affiliates, subsidiaries, or subdivisions from any legal action or judgment resulting from posting work or submitting work for possible publication.

Signed _____
(freelancer)

Date _____

The above person will be paid a total of _____ to provide content for and encourage the participation of others in HartsvilleToday.com from _____ through _____, or to provide material as requested for publication in the Hartsville Messenger. Such payments will be made in equal weekly installments. The freelancer will be responsible for all taxes and any other deductions.

HARTSVILLE TODAY.com

What a freelancer does

As a freelancer, you are being paid to cover community news in Hartsville and surrounding areas primarily for posting on HartsvilleToday.com and to encourage and help others log on to HartsvilleToday.com and share their news, information and stories. While you are not an employee of HartsvilleToday.com, the Messenger or Osteen Publishing, as a freelancer many people will see you as representing those entities. Therefore you must conduct yourself at the highest ethical, legal and moral levels. That includes logging on to HartsvilleToday.com using your real name, not an alias. (If you previously have used an alias, you should create another logon using your real name during your time as a freelancer.)

You agree not to plagiarize – in other words, taking others' work, no matter how small a part, and representing it as your own. When in doubt, credit the source.

You should seek all sides to a story (there usually are more than just two) and avoid situations that could suggest a conflict of interest. While journalists employed by news media typically do not cover or write about organizations to which they belong, "community storytelling," sometimes called "citizen journalism," is different and encourages people to share news about their lives and events. But if you do write about an organization to which you belong or a cause to which you are devoted, you still are expected to do so in a straightforward, balanced manner, taking into account and including other views. Experience shows this will bolster your credibility.

The newspaper may have equipment, such as cameras, you can use, but use of this equipment does not make you an employee. You are expected to have the necessary computer and Internet access.

A freelancer normally can expect to spend eight to 10 hours per week gathering information (which can include taking pictures or other multimedia elements as appropriate); writing and posting the material to HartsvilleToday.com or, where appropriate, submitting it to the Messenger for possible publication; and encouraging others to participate in HartsvilleToday.com. But you set your own schedule after consulting at least weekly with the managing editor of the Messenger as to what stories the newspaper desires to be covered.

For instance, spring brings emphasis on recreational sports and on community matters such as construction projects that get under way as the soil warms (and their implications), gardening, nature, graduations and educational achievements, and health and fitness as people get active again. Neighborhood news is especially important, as your goal is to get into areas the Messenger may not have the staff or space to cover.

"News" is what people are talking about or what you think would set them to talking if they knew about it. But be sensitive to issues of propriety and privacy when dealing with individuals. Try to think of your readers, not just your own interests. While you must be interested in something to make it a good story, your interest alone does not mean it is a story everyone else would be interested in.

We want "clear" writing, but not necessarily a strict journalism style. However, please try to spell and use words correctly. Shorter sentences are easier reading. Sometimes a photo alone is enough. We'll be happy to answer questions as time allows.

Encouraging other people to use HartsvilleToday.com means you will do your best to learn the features of the site so that you can show others. That includes how to log on and how to use such things as basic HTML tags to add formatting to a post, how to post photos, and how to post calendar events. You can't cover everything, so if you see things of interest, we want you to "talk up" the benefits of sharing that news on HartsvilleToday, thus encouraging people to post and start community conversations.

Appendix B

Codebook for content analysis of postings

Category ID # (Number)	Description	Code
	Individual identification number to differentiate each posting from all other postings	Assigned number beginning with 001
Week of Post	(Weeks 5-10 all end on Fri., others on Thurs.)	
Week 1	October 27-November 3, 2005	1
Week 2	November 4-November 10, 2005	2
Week 3	November 11-November 17, 2005	3
Week 4	November 18-November 24, 2005	4
Week 5	November 25-December 2, 2005	5
Week 6	December 3-December 9, 2005	6
Week 7	December 10-December 16, 2005	7
Week 8	December 17-December 23, 2005	8
Week 9	December 24-December 30, 2005	9
Week 10	December 31, 2005 - January 6, 2006	10
Week 11	January 7-January 12, 2006	11
Week 12	January 13-January 19, 2006	12
Week 13	January 20-January 26, 2006	13
Week 14	January 27-February 2, 2006	14
Week 15	February 3-February 9, 2006	15
Week 16	February 10-February 16, 2006	16
Week 17	February 17-February 23, 2006	17
Week 18	February 24-March 2, 2006	18
Week 19	March 3-March 9, 2006	19
Week 20	March 10-March 16, 2006	20
Week 21	March 17-March 23, 2006	21
Week 22	March 24-March 30, 2006	22
Day of Post		
Monday		1
Tuesday		2
Wednesday		3
Thursday		4
Friday		5
Saturday		6
Sunday		7
Section	IG=Image Gallery	
	Home	1
	Arts, entertainment, reviews	2
	Business	3
	Education	4
	Faith	5
	Governing & Safety	6
	Health	7
	Hobbies & Clubs	8
	Home & Gardening	9
	Neighbors	10
	Pets	11
	Sports <i>High School and College</i>	12

	Sports <i>Rec Leagues</i>	13
	Hartsville Places (IG)	20
	Bloomin' Hartsville (IG)	21
	Hartsville People (IG)	22
	Happenin' Hartsville (IG)	23
	Hartsville News (IG)	24
	Historic Hartsville (IG)	25
	Hartsville Birthdays (IG)	26
	Hartsville Holidays (IG)	27
	Hartsville Sports <i>Adult</i> (IG)	28
	Hartsville Sports <i>School</i> (IG)	29
	Hartsville Sports <i>Youth</i> (IG)	30
Type		
	Postings (distinguished from those posted to the events calendar) designed to inform readers about an organization, an interesting person, an event, a new issue or developments in an existing issue. These are written in a journalistic or quasi-journalistic orientation through observation, reporting the views or others or reporting the contents of document where the primary goal appears to be transmitting information in a balanced way with limited or no expression of personal opinion. Also includes all event-type news that does not have the event calendar time stamp.	
	News	1
	Scores from or stories about athletic events, or about teams or players of any age or skill level, where the primary goal appears to be transmitting information in a balanced way with limited or no expression of personal opinion.	
	Sports	2
	The author, not acting in the traditional journalistic role of neutral reporter, seeks to inform the community - which includes expressing an opinion - on an issue, call the community to action (including solicitation of contributions to HVTD) or thank the community for participation.	
	Community Conversation	3
	Traditional art, film, music or literary reviews. As opposed to a news story, a review clearly expresses a value judgment about the quality of the performance or work.	
	Reviews	4
	Defined as coming from a calendar posting. Can be identified by the date header/stamp. (Note: all Type 5 also get Timeliness Type 3)	
	Events	5
	Lost and found, pleas for help, otherwise uncategorized. Includes system announcements and Hartsville Today updates	
	Miscellaneous	6
	Any reply to any original posting, whether the original posting is a story or event.	
	Reply	7
	Post is an image or image with short description.	
	Photo only	8
	Undetermined	9
Handle		
	Screen name of contributor of particular posting	
Timeliness		
	Within 48 hours before or after an event or development; or, in the case of a reply, within 48 hours before or after the original post.	
	Timely	1
	More than 48 hours before or after an event or development; or, in the case of a reply, more than 48 hours before or after the original post.	
	Delayed	2

	Evergreen	No real time element; all event calendar items	3
	Undetermined		9
ID Picture			
	ID picture yes	Includes a picture that shows the person posting	1
	ID picture alias	Includes an ID picture, but it may be a logo, drawing or something else that does not make clear the person's ID.	2
	ID picture no	No ID picture of any kind	3
Picture			
	Picture yes	A picture or graphic accompanies the posting	1
	Picture no	No picture or graphic accompanies the posting	2
Identity			
	ID Clear	The person posting uses his or her name as ID (or enough of it, such as initials and last name, to be clear)	1
	Alias	The person uses an alias or the ID is not clear	2
Source			
	Newspaper or USC staff	Someone affiliated with the Hartsville Messenger or the USC research team	1
	Community participant	Someone not affiliated with the newspaper or university.	2
	Undetermined		9

Appendix C First Year Spending

(From New Voices grant. Does not include in-kind services.)

Contractual Services			
	Banners	150.91	
	Newsplex-training	3,000.00	
	Stringers	800.00	
			3,950.91
Materials/Supplies			
	Food-meeting Hartsville staff	59.77	
	Training	31.16	
	Misc. (Map, display poster)	22.00	
	Cameras to lend	1,643.69	
			1,756.62
Printing			
	HVTD cards	53.50	
			53.50
Personal Services			
	Student – logo design	50.00	
	Graduate student – site design	150.00	
	Graduate student – recruitment/research	2,500.00	
	Project leader	2,500.00	
			5,200.00
Fringe Benefits			
	Project leader	490.00	
	Graduate student	23.99	
			513.99
Total			11,475.02
Funds remaining			524.98