

## Do Blogs Dynamically Transform the Modern American Political Culture

Recently web logs, or blogs, have exploded in popularity and have come to occupy an increasingly important place in American politics. Given the disparity in resources and organization against other actors, their influence presents a puzzle. How can a collection of decentralized, nonprofit, contrarian and discordant websites exercise any influence over political and policy outputs? As the World Wide Web approaches its teens, we have new expectations about both the right to express an opinion and access to information upon which to base that opinion. Blogs have begun playing an important role in raising people's expectations. Thus, blogs have demonstrated influence; the power to affect events. Blogging is now positioned inside the context of participatory journalism and the responses of mainstream media and political parties to the new technology are reflections of its emerging influence. From what evidence illustrates, blogs have managed to affect today's news agenda.

The Italian Renaissance gave Western civilization several crucial transformations. None, for this article's purposes, matters more than perspective. Boccaccio's Decameron, published in 1353, is considered to be among the earliest works of literature to propose that a point of view is crucial to understanding. Gutenberg's printing press brought forth a revolution that no one could have anticipated at the time. Today, the Internet is the most important medium since the printing press. It subsumes all that has come before and is, in the most fundamental way, transformative. When anyone can be a writer, in the largest sense and for a global audience, many wish to become one. Actually, no better environment exists nowadays for people to exercise these among many other rights, than the Internet and one of the best mediums to exercise these rights are weblogs.

According to some critics, most weblogs will never attempt to reach a public, even if they are in theory reachable by all Net users. The great majority of weblogs will probably be for personal use, while the user base will be peer to peer, not author to public. Other critics, in their attempt to evaluate the accelerating speed of the weblog trend, support that from what it seems so far, it is probable that most weblogs will be short lived, and wind up abandoned, just as most conversations are abandoned. Also it is probable that a few popular blogs will have huge user base and the vast majority will be invisible most of the time, a pattern that reminds some of the "old" and "traditional" mass media. Since the software and interface are highly flexible, and the uses of an easily updated, good-looking page are endless, weblogs will be commonly used in closed systems - private and company networks - as much as the open waters of the Web.

In relation to political coverage and news stories, bloggers have broken or magnified major news stories and blogs themselves draw fire for partisan politics, poor journalistic practices, and duplicity. But the issue still remains that blogs are still in their infancy, despite the wave of press they have received during the last two years. They provide a reasonable, but far from perfect, entry point into the news space, better at offering commentary and starting conversations than serving a current-events-indicator role.

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### About the Author

Jonathon Hardcastle writes articles for <http://letstalkaboutbusiness.com/> - In addition, Jonathon also writes articles for <http://universeofjobs.com/> and <http://yourealestatesource.com/>