

YourHub.com: The Business of Interactive Newsgathering, Consumption and Distribution

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This paper examines the issues surrounding the changing face of news journalism—focusing specifically on the migration of the newspaper business to the Internet. Much is at stake for American culture as companies look to digital technology to breathe new life into a dying business. While many have noted the impact of the digital revolution on a number of specific areas of mass communication—music, data transfer, and information infrastructure, the movement of major news organizations to an interactive product model is a relatively new and emerging phenomenon. At stake are issues surrounding the standards of professional journalism, the influence of profitability on an institution vital to the health of our democracy, and the paralyzing effect of information overload.

YourHub.com serves as an interesting case study. Launched in May of 2005 by the Denver Newspaper Agency (*The Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News* corporate management group), This interactive product is being aggressively franchised nationally. In less than one year it has been adopted in numerous markets in six different states—Colorado, California, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, and Tennessee.

YourHub.com combines the concepts of newsgathering, blogging, and network building into an online innovation that moves published information both ways, blurring any distinction between the traditional sender/receiver mass media relationship. YourHub.com allows individual users to publish stories in real time. These stories have no limitation in scope, appearing in unedited form within seconds after submission. In an era where interactivity has risen to a level of basic consumer expectation, YourHub.com is achieving a high level of product-to-market success.

With its popularity there has also been controversy. Opening the doors for self-proclaimed but untrained journalists, claim some, will ultimately undermine the tradition of responsible journalism. Critics suggest that the technology might have a negative effect on the role of the press in our society by inviting uncontrolled sensationalism via the desire by online contributors for self-commodification and the establishment of personal online *brands*. In addition, many fear the sheer volume of information due to this technological development will render media meaningless—an information glut so enormous as to be unmanageable and paralyzing.

On the other hand, some advocates of the public journalism movement see the technology through a lens of promise. For many theorists and practitioners, including *Rocky Mountain News* publisher John Temple, products like YourHub.com are the necessary facilitators to enable a true citizen-based version of our free press.