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a *gnovis* special issue

New Media, Technology and Democracy

Engagement 2.0? How the New Digital
Media Can Invigorate Civic Engagement
Lindsay Pettingill

Facebook and Youth Mobilization in The
2008 Presidential Election
Angela Sanson

Creating Community Through the Arts:
Cultural Engagement, Democracy, and the
Role of Civil Society
Tatyana Varshavsky

Research Spotlight: Focus On *Hyperpolitics*
an interview with *Jacqueline Klingebiel*

Meet the Candidates: Politicians' Strategies
of Self-Presentation in Online Formats
Theresa Schlafly

Coming Down the Stretch: An Analysis of
the use of Sports References in Political
Dialogues and its Effectiveness
David Garr





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***gnovis* mission**

gnovis is an online academic journal and forum that cultivates new ways of seeing and understanding culture through critical inquiry. *gnovis* presents work by graduate students pioneering interdisciplinary perspectives on issues in the arts, politics, media, and technology.

gnovis publishes biannual issues of its peer-reviewed journal, periodic multimedia pieces, a weekly blog featuring reflective academic discussion pieces, and occasional gallery and conference reviews. *gnovis* is sponsored by Georgetown University's graduate program in Communication, Culture & Technology (CCT).

Submission Information

gnovis welcomes the submission of articles in any discipline concerned with contemporary topics in communication, culture and technology. Articles should be 3000 to 7500 words, excluding abstracts, citations, and appendices. All submissions will undergo a double-blind peer review process.

Our contributors are most often graduate students, but we welcome qualified submissions from all sources.

Further details about our submission guidelines, peer review process, resources for graduate students, and additional publications are available on our website, www.gnovisjournal.org.

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Georgetown University's peer-reviewed Journal of
Communication, Culture & Technology (CCT)

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Editor's Note

Less than a month from today, following the national conventions and selection of vice-presidential candidates, the 2008 US Presidential Election will finally enter its concluding stage – a two-month political & media extravaganza that will exceed any election spectacle we've seen before.

Despite the seemingly endless flow of ads and media coverage, we nonetheless are in a moment of calm between the storm of the primary season and the impending maelstrom of the general election, the perfect moment for critical reflection and analysis. Although the democratic value of such a lengthy campaign cycle is questionable, its academic value is undeniable. A primary season that eclipses an entire academic year – and arguably a second – provides the academy with a wealth of research material, and plenty of time to process it, even before the arrival of the general election.

Capitalizing on this opportunity, *gnovis* is pleased to introduce the provocative work of a new generation of media and technology scholars in this special issue, “**New Media, Technology & Democracy.**”

The first half of our issue explores emerging forms of civic engagement, beginning with Lindsay Pettingill’s “**Engagement 2.0? How the New Digital Media Can Invigorate Civic Engagement.**” Pettingill argues that traditional methods for measuring civic engagement – which widely suggest that youth engagement is falling – are not applicable to today’s younger generation. Substituting Henry Jenkins for Robert Putnam, Pettingill proposes Engagement 2.0, a modified conception of engagement that incorporates the participatory cultures of new digital media.

In “**Facebook and Youth Mobilization in The 2008 Presidential Election,**” Angela Sanson examines one such participatory culture, the Facebook social network. An enthusiastic champion of Facebook’s revolutionary political potential, Sanson argues that, among other things, Facebook is a central player in the political lives of the Millennial demographic.

Tatyana Varshavsky’s “**Creating Community Through the Arts: Cultural Engagement, Democracy, and the Role of Civil Society**” brings a valuable perspective to the

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discourse of civic engagement, examining the relationship between cultural and community engagement, and a broader notion of citizenship. By stepping out of the normative model of the Big Media / Big Politics spectacle, Varshavsky offers an inspiring view of civic engagement, at once pragmatic and idealistic, which would give even Robert Putnam a glimmer of hope.

The second half of this special issue focuses on content analysis, particularly of the 2008 primary season, beginning with a special feature - “**Research Spotlight: Focus On Hyperpolitics**,” an interview with Jacqueline Klingebiel. Klingebiel, a recent graduate of Georgetown’s graduate program in Communication, Culture & Technology (CCT), discusses her innovative thesis project, “Hyperpolitics: Bringing the Public Back Into the Conversation.” Her project, a blog hosted on Georgetown’s Digital Commons, examined political YouTube ads during the presidential primaries.

In “**Meet the Candidates: Politicians’ Strategies of Self-Presentation in Online Formats**,” Theresa Schlafly provides a comparative content analysis of the online strategies of selected 2008 presidential candidates, both on their own websites and on social networking sites. Schlafly’s approach is influenced by both technological and social determinism: she views candidates’ strategies as latent reactions to new technologies, but also sees complications being raised by the unpredictable and unstable social status of new media forms.

Our final paper, true to its name, is “**Coming Down the Stretch: An Analysis of the use of Sports References in Political Dialogues and its Effectiveness**,” by David Garr. Through a combination of content analysis and survey data, Garr reaches for a statistical justification for the prominence of “horse-race journalism” in contemporary political media coverage. His results are unexpected.

It is worth noting that *gnovis* is not alone in noticing the timely opportunity to examine these issues, during this brief window between the primaries and the general election. As I sat down to write this note, I was listening to a live feed from the Aspen Institute’s FOCAS forum on Media & Democracy. Much of the forum addressed questions of media ethics and responsibilities, as well as the democratic challenges and opportunities presented by new media and technology, and the event featured such prominent and diverse figures as Madeleine Albright, Craig Newmark . . .

. . . and CCT’s own Diana Owen. Dr. Owen’s encouragement and insights early have been essential in the preparation of this special *gnovis* issue, and her students have been invaluable contributors. I would like to thank Dr. Owen for her enthusiastic support by ending with a question she posed this week in Aspen:

“Has the more open communication environment, with this plethora of media options and sources, made the election process more accessible for candidates and citizens, or has the proliferation of media created an information environment so cluttered that it is difficult, if not impossible, for many citizens to negotiate [it] effectively?” -- Dr. Diana Owen (August 10, 2008)

Please keep this important question in mind as you navigate the papers in this issue.

Brad Weikel