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Citizen Journalism: A Powerful New Trend In Reporting 'The News'

By Marisa Peacock

Nov 28, 2007

Filed Under: [citizen journalism](#) [orato](#) [web publishing](#)

Like some of you, I'd never heard of Orato.com before. I consider myself hip to the jive on sites that cater to the citizen journalist so when I received press about Orato.com and all that it claimed to be, I was intrigued.

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Orato, Latin for "I speak," touts itself as an outlet and resource for the [citizen journalist](#). No longer do mere mortals need to wait for those in the news media to report to us; we have taken the pen (or laptop, or camera phone) in our own hands and fought back.

"On Orato.com," it is said, "the subject owns the story." And the story isn't just limited to politics, [as other citizen journalism sites are](#). Orato covers all the juicy tidbits of health, popular culture and sex ... oh yeah, and current events, too.

Recently Orato provided five reasons why citizen journalism is a concept whose time has come." I love a good top five list as much as anyone, so I took a gander. (Notice they didn't say five *good* reasons?)

- The Internet is where it's at. And when I say it I mean news and other stuff. The World Wide Web is the new Studio 54. If you want to be seen, it's the place to be.
- The user doesn't keep banker's hours. No — we sleep in, we stay up late. We're always wandering around crazy places where things consequently *happen*. Places where we can say what's on our mind, uncensored and unedited. We're crazy!
- We tell it like we see it! No need to remove our personal perspective. People don't want to hear a balanced story—it's the *imbalance* we love anyway. It's not the facts, it's the flair!
- People who work for a living are suckers. The citizen journalist likes adventure and will risk his life for the story. Who needs insurance and respect? Le scoff.
- "Real" news is depressing. Enough about the war, crime, gas prices. We want a little zip! Stop bumming us out and

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Okay, I exaggerate. A lot. But Orato’s top five sounds more like a pitch to join the high school newspaper than a call to contribute to a grassroots mission dedicated to improving the quality of news.

And isn’t that what [citizen journalism](#) really is?

It allows ordinary folks to *take back* the news. But at the same time, we risk making it worse. The stories of the foot soldier are invaluable, but we shouldn’t resort to reporting about anything, just because we can. That’s what CNN is for.

I am not opposed to letting the innocent bystander tell his or her story, but credibility and good grammar go a long way. Because “Everyone who shares his or her story gets the final editorial cut,” it’s not unusual for stories on Orato.com to start off thus: “Yesterday me and my youngest son...”

Egads.

But Orato remains an interesting concept. Orato’s founder, Sam Yehia says that it’s “a celebration of every person’s right to be heard in his or her own words.”

Let’s hope they have a right to an editor, as well.

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