

Preface

Volume 7, Access, Participation, and Democratization in the New Media Landscape (2011)

Welcome to the 7th issue of the McMaster Journal of Communication. This issue spotlights the theme of “Access, Participation, and Democratization in the New Media Landscape”. One of the aims of this volume is to enlarge the dialogue surrounding new media technologies by further explicating the depth and scope of their impacts, and the contexts in which new media technologies function.

Our issue begins with T.J. Lavender’s article, “Video Games as Change Agents — The Case of Homeless: It’s No Game”, which explores the potential for video games to serve as an effective platform for social change. Similarly, in, “Houses that Cry: Online Civic Participation in Post-Communist Romania”, Laura Visan details the role that activism through online communities has played in post-Communist reconstruction in Romania, examining the instrumental role of an online project, Houses that Cry. With the proliferation of social media sites that encourage creating and sharing, “Participatory Culture and the Hidden Costs of Sharing” explores the popularity of this cultural trend, and investigates the potential harms of divulging vast amounts of personal information.

In “A Burmese Case Study: Far from Inherent—Democracy, and the Internet”, Jaspreet Sandhu looks at online activism during the Saffron Revolution of 2007, exploring the dynamics of Internet access under authoritarian rule, arguing that socio-economic barriers and state intervention can impede democratic visions of the Internet. Likewise, Evan Lewis criticizes claims that Web 2.0 is a democratizing force in "Forever Blowing Bubbles: Deflating Web 2.0", and concludes that without reasonable rates of profitability for business models surrounding new media, free access to user-generated applications will not be a sustainable trend in the long run.