



NEW ENGLAND NEWS FORUM

NEWS, ART AND COMMUNITY IN A DIGITAL AGE:

Exploring Ways to Better Link Online News with Physical Spaces -- The Newshare Cafe and other ideas <http://www.newshare.org>

A FREE one-day workshop in Amherst, Mass., to consider strategies for connecting physical and virtual communities around civic news and engagement.

Saturday, September 12, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
The Jones Library, Amity St., Amherst, Mass.
(DIRECTIONS)

Sponsored by the [New England News Forum](#) and the [Media Giraffe Project](#) at UMass Amherst.

NO CHARGE TO ATTEND / [VIEW LIKELY PARTICIPANTS](#) / [SIGNUP REQUESTED](#)

Around the United States, and in New England, the infrastructures which support a sense of community are under stress. And this is true of the news. Newspapers are shrunken, and less able to provide the news we need to be effective citizens. Local radio has all but abandoned the news.

Yet from Boston to Northampton, Burlington to New Haven, and in cities and towns across the nation, local online news communities (LONCs) are emerging. Often run by entrepreneurs, these LONCs are beginning to fill a void. How are they making the connection with physical communities?

DISCUSSION STARTER: Could coffee houses help sustain journalism? An idea

Newshare[®]



Eighteenth-century English and Colonial America coffee houses served as headquarters for shipping news and havens for gatherings of patriots. They were crucibles for democracy, a shared space for uninhibited debate and discussion of issues and events. Could 21st-century coffee shops -- well connected and served by a circuit-riding journalists -- help bring journalism back to community? [READ MORE](#)



As journalism and news migrate online, how do we restore, enhance . . . and create . . . our sense of community? How do we re-connect with physical communities? How can we include multiple voices and perspectives, multiple cultures, multiple communities? For example, how do we forge an alliance with the “cultural creatives” – the artists, the writers – as equally engaged citizens in common cause to enrich our communicative environment?

On Saturday, we'll consider these questions, and some ideas. For example: What would happen if coffee shops, colleges and schools, museums and libraries were organized as informal meeting places for regular, scheduled “*newshares*” – aided by professional reporters, informed by regular discussions on civic issues . . . a place to share the news that makes community real . . . about schools, our built and natural environment . . . social services . . . government . . . the future . . . and about local heroes . . . in short, a forum to explore what's really happening, why, and where it's taking us.

Come with your ideas – we'll consider together how to make them real

Come to Amherst with your sense of possibilities. Together, we'll consider how to make them real. Figuring out how we strengthen the connection between online communities and physical ones is an urgent need.

DISCUSSION STARTER: What's the emerging role of public officials in communicating the news?

For example, will communities which once had a single newspaper now host several topical newshares? Could libraries become hosts for regular “newshare”-type meetings? [Consider the example](#) of the West Oakland, Calif., public library and the Oakland Tribune newspaper.

WHAT'S THE PROGRAM? WE DECIDE

We'll convene with a few purposes in mind (and you can add an additional purpose because this is a discussion gathering with no formal program). Some overall questions we'll consider:

Some questions

- What are the models of local-online news community that seem to be working so far?
- How do they connect with physical communities already?
- How do you let the community know you are there . . . and relevant?
- What role should public officials play in writing and reporting the news?

Specific topics proposed

- Kick around aspirations and plans for a larger regional or national gathering (Josh Stearns of FreePress and others)
- Learn about the Newshare Cafe project (David Scribner/Bill Densmore et al.)
- Discuss the growing role of art/multimedia in news delivery and creation (A. Johnston and others)

Other possible discussions

- Doing grassroots journalism (Eesha Williams)
- Front Porch Forum (Michael Wood Lewis)
- Paying for content (Clay Ward)
- What will people pay for? (Steve Brandt)
- What do we call new journalists and why do we care? (Steve Thurston)

Our organizer/sponsor is the New England News Forum at UMass Amherst. There is no charge to attend. If it makes sense to do so, we'll put in an order of box lunches (probably about \$12 each) that you can pay for.

Like a pod camp – unstructured gathering

Think of this gathering as a bit like a "pod-camp" -- what it becomes is what we bring. It's an unstructured social gathering of like-minded folks who want to end the day with a fresh idea or two, and a few more collaborators. And think of it as a chance to enjoy the Five College area on an early fall afternoon. We'll have free wifi courtesy of the Jones Library and an LCD projector will be available. The room we've reserved can hold up to about 100 people.

DIRECTIONS: I-91 or MassPike

Amherst is central to much of New England. It's about two hours from downtown Boston, two hours from New Haven – less than three hours from Burlington, Vt. Take Interstate 91 north or south to Northampton, then east on state Route 9 about seven miles to the Amherst Town Common. From Boston take the MassPike (Interstate 90) west, following exit signs for UMass Amherst. The library's just off the northwest corner of the common, the center of Amherst. There is public parking on the green, and in a town garage two blocks from the library. Handy driving directions are [POSTED](#) on the library's website.

An overnight stay on Friday or Saturday

If you are thinking of coming from afar, there are several chain-type hotels along state Route 9 in Hadley, Mass. Searching Google for "[hotels in Hadley, Mass.](#)" should bring them up. You can also stay in the University-owned [Campus Center Hotel](#) in the middle of the UMass-Amherst campus. The room rates are \$139-\$149 per night. Call 413-549-6000 and press option No. 2 for reservations. Other recent offered rates (via Sidestep.com):

- \$99 -- EconoLodge Hadley
- \$100 -- Howard Johnsons Express Inn Hadley
- \$86 -- Comfort Inn Hadley

Suggested Amherst Bed & Breakfast options ([VIEW ALL](#))

se B&B's are walking distance to the library, should they still have rooms for this weekend.:

- \$85+ -- [Emily's Amherst B&B](#), 71 North Prospect St., Amherst MA 01002 / 413-256-0000 / (closest to library -- two blocks / two-night minimum)
- \$85+ -- [Horace Kellog Homestead](#) / 459 South Pleasant St., Amherst, MA 01002 / 413-253-4988 or 413-896-5368 (walk to library)
- \$105-\$125 -- [Allen House Victorian Inn / Amherst Inn](#) / 257 & 599 Main St / Amherst, MA 01002-2409 / 413-253-5000 (also walk to library from 257 Main)
- \$85 -- [Delta Organic Farm B&B](#), 352 East Hadley Rd., Amherst MA 01002 / 413-658-5036
- \$87 -- [Birdsong Bed & Breakfast](#), 815 South East St., Amherst MA 01002-3047 / 413-256-0433. (1.7-mile walk/short drive)
- \$95 -- [The Birches B&B](#), 236 Middle St., Amherst MA 01002, 413-256-6257. (short drive)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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