

# THE CHI-TOWN DAILY NEWS:

Creating a New Supply of Local News

---

*By Matt Hampel*

Case Studies 2008

MEDIA  
RE:PUBLIC



**Berkman**

The Berkman Center for Internet & Society  
at Harvard University

# THE CHI-TOWN DAILY NEWS:

## Creating a New Supply of Local News

### SUMMARY

The *Chi-Town Daily News* is an all-local nonprofit news website that serves the Chicago area. The publication, founded by journalist Geoff Dougherty in 2005, focuses on original reporting on local issues by both professional and volunteer reporters. The *Daily News* recruits and trains volunteer neighborhood reporters from across the city, who work under the supervision of professional editors. Additional material comes from paid freelancers. Dougherty, who is simultaneously CEO, chief editor and the site's developer sees the publication as a way to explore the possibilities of developing a sustainable news organization beyond a profit-driven model.

The *Daily News* has had unprecedented success at one of the toughest challenges of participatory news media—inspiring unpaid contributors to consistently undertake journalistically sound reporting on serious issues. However, with limited resources, its goal of building a full-scale publication and attracting a significant audience for that reporting are proving to be a challenge.

### HISTORY

Geoff Dougherty worked for 16 years in the print news industry before deciding to experiment with the nontraditional newsroom. In his first job at a small weekly paper in Colorado, he worked in several positions with limited resources, an experience that he now credits for helping him manage a news organization with few specialists. Dougherty went on to work as an investigative reporter for larger newspapers, including the *Miami Herald*, before joining the *Chicago Tribune*.

During his employment at these papers, Dougherty felt that financial constraints were threatening the public service mission of the press. At the *Chicago Tribune*, he saw gaps in the paper's coverage of the Housing Authority and other local governance topics. Dougherty also disliked the traditional newsroom model; he felt that the way a small number of editors and reporters set the news agenda ran contrary to the social responsibilities of the paper. As he commented simply in a 2007 Nieman Report, "I decided to start ChiTownDailyNews.org after spending four years as an investigative reporter at the *Chicago Tribune*. My time there convinced me that our city's newspapers were doing a terrible job of covering Chicago."<sup>1</sup>

The publication was originally launched as the *Chicago Daily News*, but the *Chicago Sun-Times*, which claims ownership of that name, soon sent a cease-and-desist letter. Dougherty argues that the trademark expired in the late 1970s, but switched to the *Chi-Town Daily News* name to avoid legal costs. "The *Daily News*" has become the common short-form name of the paper.

Early media attention helped bring readers and some contributors. "We really lucked out at the beginning," says Dougherty. "Clearly we struck a nerve. We heard from hundreds of people in our first month who were trying to let us know how excited they were about what we were doing."<sup>2</sup> The site was featured a number of times in the *Chicago Tribune* and on local websites, and it quickly developed a readership of several thousand people.<sup>3</sup>

### BUSINESS MODEL

The *Daily News* was established as a nonprofit explicitly to avoid the commercial pressures that Dougherty considered to be negatively shaping editorial priorities in traditional newsrooms. Dougherty incorporated the company, called PublicMedia, Inc., as an Illinois nonprofit in 2005.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Stephen Doig, the Knight Chair of Journalism at Arizona State University and a longtime advisor to Dougherty, provided advice on editorial and organizational structure and became one of the company's first board members.<sup>5</sup>

The organization's seven-member board includes people with experience in journalism, business, social work, community organizing, design, and law.<sup>6</sup> According to Dougherty and Doig, the board maintains a hands-off approach to the daily management of the organization.<sup>7</sup>

Dougherty originally wrote a business plan for the *Daily News* based on advice solicited from personal contacts and local experts in legal issues, marketing, and search engine optimization. Initially, he intended to raise thousands of dollars in seed money with a large portion of funds to be set aside to support dedicated servers. Then Dougherty realized that he could launch the project with a standard web-hosting plan that cost about \$20 a month. He covered this cost himself and developed the site on his own time. The *Tribune's* ethics code prevented him from launching the site while still working for the company, so he resigned during a round of layoffs.<sup>8,9</sup>

After leaving the *Tribune*, Dougherty worked as a freelance journalist and web developer to support himself while he worked on the site. As the *Daily News* grew, he began looking for funding from a variety of sources, including foundations, individual donors, and local advertisers.

## Funding

As of 2008, the *Daily News* was mostly grant-funded, with the majority of its budget coming from a \$340,000, two-year grant from the Knight Foundation to recruit and train a volunteer reporter from each of several dozen Chicago neighborhoods. A few smaller grants, such as \$5,000 received from the Chicago Headline Club's Watchdog Fund to investigate police misconduct, are directed towards specific efforts.<sup>10</sup>

The *Daily News* offers display advertisements on the site, runs some Google text ads, and sometimes inserts local ads in email newsletters to users. At the time of writing (mid-2008), advertising on the site was sparse, featuring a local computer repair shop, an eco-friendly boutique, a car dealership, and a dog-walking service, among other local businesses. The advertising system has the ability to pair advertising with articles mentioning specific areas and to run ads targeted to readers who have entered a neighborhood in their profile.<sup>11</sup> The location-specific ads are the least expensive of these—\$50 for an ad running 30 days.<sup>12</sup> Advertisers receive a report detailing impressions and click-through rates.<sup>13</sup> Dougherty says that local small businesses often need to be introduced to online advertising and convinced of its value. To support these efforts, the *Daily News* hired a full-time general manager in March 2008 to handle such business development work.

Individual donations to the site are encouraged and acknowledged with gifts such as tote bags and USB flash drives.<sup>14</sup> In 2008, the site began asking readers to “subscribe” to the site via PayPal for five dollars a month.<sup>15</sup> However, subscribing doesn't change access to content—there is no print edition, and all content, feeds, and email updates are available for free—but subscribers are thanked with a *Daily News* T-shirt.

## EDITORIAL MODEL

The vision for the *Chi-Town Daily News* is to be “an online news organization with a relentless, exclusive focus on Chicago.”<sup>16</sup> To achieve this, the project features original reporting on the city by volunteer reporters trained and supervised by professional editors. A small group of paid professional journalists are assigned to cover important stories that are more complex or not being covered by the volunteers.

With financial support from a Knight News Challenge grant, which began in March 2007, the *Daily News* has been actively recruiting and training 70 residents as “volunteer grassroots journalists”<sup>17</sup> with the aim of having at least one from every Chicago neighborhood.<sup>18</sup> These neighborhood reporters write the bulk of the articles on the site, which are generally about local civic issues—changes in the school board, updates to the sewer system, a deficit in the health system—occasionally interspersed with local sports or arts news. The content tag “Knight News Challenge” distinguishes all posts by the volunteers for the duration of that grant.<sup>19</sup>

Articles are organized under topics that indicate the *Daily News*' serious focus: Education, Environment, Housing, Politics, Transit, Culture, and Special Reports.<sup>20</sup> The home page features articles designated by the editors as “Top News.” In June 2008, between 10 and 20 articles were being posted weekly, with about half written by volunteers and half by freelance reporters.<sup>21</sup>

The *Daily News* is devoted to original reporting and has very little opinion or repackaging of wire reports. Articles are written in a serious, straightforward style and usually feature some of the elements of traditional news stories: the inverted-pyramid structure,<sup>22</sup> a descriptive nut graph,<sup>23</sup> quotes from multiple parties, and original research. Individual articles, which usually run between 250 and 750 words, vary in quality. Unlike other participatory news sites such as Newsvine, Gothamist, or Nowpublic, the *Daily News* does not base stories on reporting from other sources. Articles occasionally contain graphics or photos and may have links to other parts of the website or to external sources, but articles containing

# CHI★TOWN DAILY NEWS

Your neighborhood. Your city. Your news.

Local News Culture Events Neighborhoods Blogs Updates Special Reports Donate About Us

no links at all are common. A small map of the location that is referenced in the article appears with most pieces.

During a typical week, the *Daily News* will post articles on a variety of social and political issues. For example, during one week in August 2008, a freelance reporter wrote two articles about a proposed boycott of the Chicago public schools, following up on two he had written the previous week. Another freelance article investigated the Chicago River ecosystem, and a third covered the results of a Chicago Housing Authority redevelopment project. A volunteer reporter covered the opening of a co-op grocery store, and a second profiled a large non-profit garden operating in the center of Chicago. This was an extensive, 880-word feature article for which she interviewed the founder, employees, a city official, customers, and a restaurant owner who buys produce from the garden.<sup>24</sup>

Though new content appears steadily, the *Daily News* seems far from its goal of being able to produce a steady stream of in-depth reports. Only four articles have been posted in the site's "Special Reports" section in the last year. Only one was written by a neighborhood reporter—Kimberly Michaelson, who reported on a police beating on the south side of the city. The other three—one other police story and two on the Chicago Transit Authority's budget and record—were all written by paid freelance reporters or journalism school students. There are seven blogs on the site, including one by Dougherty, who writes about the *Daily News* and the news industry in general. The other six are on local sports. All seven blogs are low-volume in terms of posts and have attracted few comments.

The site also features a bare-bones events calendar. Events, which are posted by editors, include a start and end date, short description, and a location. The site's software automatically generates a map of the location. Editors and reporters use this community calendar to find nearby story topics, and staff members regularly contact outside organizations to update the calendar.

## Staffing

In mid-2008, the *Daily News* newsroom, located on the north side of Chicago in the Andersonville neighborhood,<sup>25</sup> housed eight staff members. Three are full-time: Editor/CEO Dougherty, the general manager, and the community manager. The others are two part-time associate editors and three unpaid summer interns.<sup>26</sup> The interns, recruited through online job databases

and Craigslist, come from near (Kalamazoo, Michigan) and far (the University of Missouri).

## Early Problems

Dougherty's insistence that high-quality original reporting be more important than article quantity meant that in its first months, the *Daily News* was able to post new articles only a few times a week, due to a lack of contributors.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the initial burst of interest from readers was not maintained and traffic lagged. In April 2006, Dougherty organized a deal to use materials from Northwestern University's Medill Reports, a regional news service run by the Medill Graduate School of Journalism. About the same time, Dougherty received a \$12,000 grant from J-Lab, a project to support interactive journalism, headquartered then at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill School of Journalism.<sup>28</sup> This funding was used to develop a training curriculum for citizen journalists. The deployment of the curriculum got off to a slow start: the first training session brought only one participant, who lost touch with the organization within two months.<sup>29</sup>

## Neighborhood Reporters

With the Knight Foundation funding, the *Daily News* was able to approach the recruitment of volunteers more seriously. Frank Edwards, a longtime community organizer from the Austin, Texas area was hired in August 2007 to help recruit and train neighborhood reporters. Edwards, formerly an editor at the Austin chapter of the Independent Media Center, originally assumed that most of the recruiting work would be "shoe-leather-based" on the ground in neighborhoods, but response rates from neighborhood groups and events were low. Posting announcements online on Craigslist, Facebook, and the event-sharing sites Going.com and Upcoming.org has proven to be the most efficient method to attract volunteers.<sup>30</sup>

Craigslist has produced the greatest response, bringing an average of 5–10 prospective volunteers from each listing on the classifieds site. As Edwards commented during an interview, volunteering for the *Daily News* is largely pitched to prospective neighborhood reporters as "bottom-up news" in which a local is the best person to write about her community.<sup>31</sup>

As of mid-2008, *Chi-Town* has trained 65 neighborhood reporters, representing 35 of 77 neighborhoods. Of these, about 10 have contributed only once to the site.<sup>33</sup> Active contributors write approximately one story a month,

Chi-Town Daily News Neighborhood Reporters cover stories that impact their lives and the lives of their communities.

They report on everything from new businesses to local artists and schools to police brutality.

We're looking for writers, photographer, videographers and audio producers from every Chicago neighborhood to produce news about their communities.

Please come to our orientation on Tuesday, July 1st at 7PM at 5412 N Clark.

To RSVP or ask questions: Frank (at) chitowndailynews (dot) org  
More info : chitowndailynews.org/pages/citizen\_journalism

This is a volunteer position.

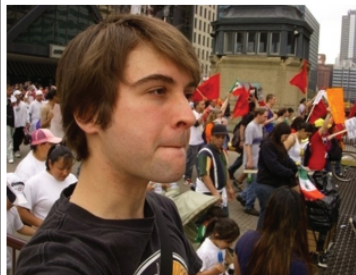
*Chi-Town seeks volunteers on Craigslist.*<sup>32</sup>

which takes about 5–6 hours of work, the amount of time Edwards has found that volunteers can feasibly be asked to contribute. Incoming volunteers generally have an interest in writing and are involved in their communities. About a quarter of the volunteers majored in English in college. Some say they are new to the city and want to use reporting as a way to learn about their communities.

Recruitment of contributors has not been uniformly successful. The predominantly African-American south and southwest areas of the city have turned up few volunteers. The organization expects that it will need to go in person to specific neighborhoods to recruit volunteers from the final 10 or 15 districts.

Volunteer journalists are assigned to one of the two paid editors, who manage their involvement with the *Daily News*. New volunteers must attend an orientation session before contributing. Once a casual event—perhaps only a meeting over coffee—the orientation was formalized after some first-time reporters contributed stories about topics in which they were directly involved, in violation of *Daily News* policy. Orientation sessions now cover the basic “five Ws”<sup>34</sup> of journalism, along with conflict of interest guidelines. The goal of the orientation is for the volunteer to have met the editors, to understand basic content expectations, and to have a story to cover. That first assignment is generally to report on a neighborhood meeting, which offers the volunteer a well-defined, low-pressure task.<sup>35</sup>

## Frank Edwards



### Articles

#### Daily News and Brews

Viewed 3 times  
Posted about 3 hours in Community calendar

#### Rethinking PR

Viewed 14 times  
Posted 11 days in Thesis 11

#### Workshops, orientations, and targeted recruiting

Viewed 78 times  
Posted about 1 month in Thesis 11

#### New Writer's Orientation

Viewed 36 times  
Posted about 1 month in Community calendar

#### Chicago Public Library Green Awards

Viewed 52 times  
Posted about 1 month in Community calendar

Member since: August 15, 2007

Occupation: Organizer!

Age: 26

I'm an organizer at the Daily News, and have been involved in grassroots media work for about six

*Chi-Town staffer Frank Edwards has an author's profile on the site.*

The *Daily News* has developed a six-module training program for the neighborhood reporters. Classes, which are taught by staff, last a couple of hours each and address topics such as reporting, news writing, interviewing, photography, and ethics. The goal is to pay “more than lip service to the principles of journalism,” says board member Doig. “It’s not that hard to learn basic reporting and writing skills.”<sup>36</sup> Originally, a separate class on ethics was planned, but staff realized that it was more effective to incorporate an ethics section in each of the skill training sessions. Online materials complement the classes, with clear simple guidelines on journalism practice.<sup>37</sup>

The training events have been a reliable source of volunteers, and staff are exploring ways to take the program into neighborhoods instead of hosting them only at a central location. Current neighborhood reporters are encouraged to attend the training sessions, and will eventually be invited to lead them alongside paid staff. As of early 2008, only three neighborhood reporters had attended all of the sessions, but the second full cycle was just beginning.

## Editorial Process

Every article submitted to *Daily News* editors is held to the same standards and goes through the same editing process, regardless of whether it was contributed by a volunteer or a freelance reporter. Editors report that articles submitted by neighborhood volunteers often take more work; these articles

are sent back with requests to add sources and represent multiple points of view.

## Multimedia

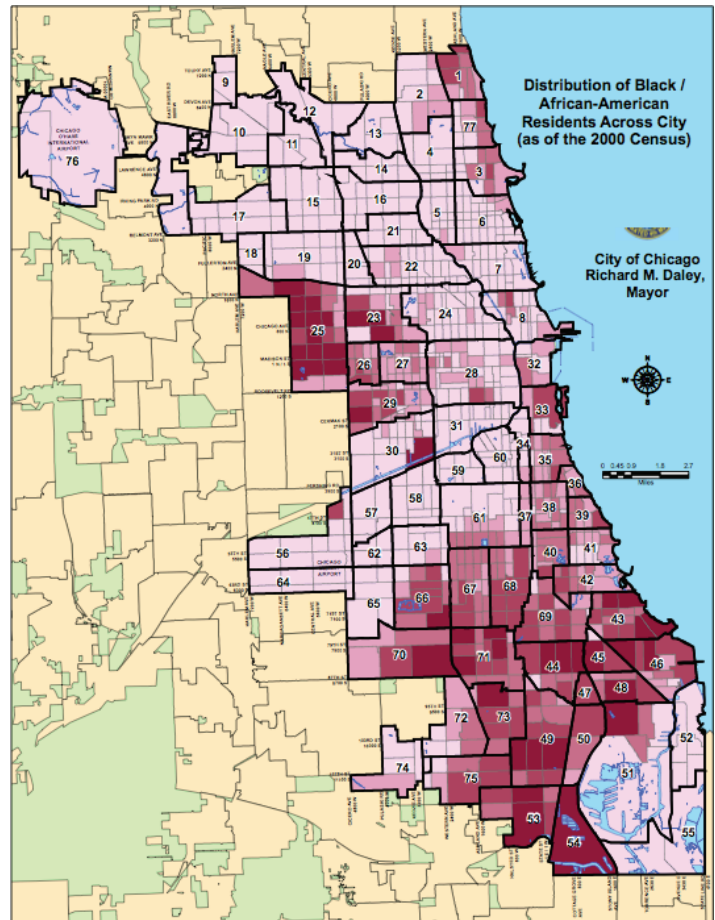
The *Daily News* has a large rotating photo section on its home page. Photos are selected from Flickr, and photographers are credited with a link back to their photostreams. Even though the photo section occupies nearly half of the above-the-fold content area on the home page, little information about the photos is displayed. Only some photos have a caption, and others only list a nondescriptive filename, such as IMG\_7796.JPG. Captions are visible only on individual photo pages—not on the home page.

The organization has a video camera that reporters can use, but few of the volunteers are confident with the medium. The home page of the site once featured an online video player, but there was not enough content to keep it fresh, and the player was removed. The *Daily News* will be running videography workshops, which editors hope will encourage more multimedia coverage as volunteers become familiar with the technology.

To cover breaking news, *Daily News* editors will call volunteers who are in the area, using their contact management software to identify the appropriate reporters. During the summer, interns—who have more flexible schedules—are dispatched to cover breaking stories.<sup>38</sup>

Editors use a web-based customer relationship management (CRM) system called Highrise<sup>39</sup> to keep track of all *Daily News* journalists.<sup>40</sup> Each volunteer has a profile in the system, with details including contact information, neighborhood, and interests. Staff use the system to record every interaction with volunteers, including stories written, meetings, and training sessions. The system reminds editors to follow up with volunteers at least once a month. If a neighborhood reporter hasn't been in contact in that time, an editor will call to offer help finding a story idea or moving to the next stage. For example, a reporter might need assistance searching for background information or identifying the right officials to contact.

This mixed professional/amateur model is not free. Dougherty estimates that articles written by the volunteer neighborhood journalists cost between \$90 and \$125, including the time spent editing them.<sup>41</sup>



*Chi-Town* has few authors from the heavily African-American neighborhoods.

Source: City of Chicago website.

## Plans for the Future

To coordinate reporting priorities across larger areas, the organization plans to create neighborhood editorial boards composed of reporters from several neighboring communities. *Daily News* staff have realized that one reporter in each neighborhood is insufficient to cover all newsworthy events, and envision a pool of 300–400 producing roughly 5,000 articles a year. Edwards envisions a stable newsroom operating with six editors and six interns on an annual budget of \$1 million.<sup>42</sup>

## COMMUNITY

As a publication that relies on a community of contributors who make a substantial personal commitment, the largest problem for the *Daily News* is retaining volunteers. To encourage a sense of belonging, the organization is beginning to encourage

face-to-face gatherings of neighborhood reporters. Reporters are strongly encouraged to attend the monthly journalism workshops, and Edwards is organizing bar-night fundraisers and appreciation events.<sup>43</sup>

Readership surveys in early 2008 revealed that the site's audience is largely young, with above-average education. Overall, the audience remains small in comparison to popular local blogs like Gapers Block, which enjoys about three times the monthly traffic, or Chicagoist, with several times as many readers.<sup>44</sup>

Both readers and contributors seem motivated by the journalism rather than any interactive or social media features. Although registered site users can comment on all articles and articles with new comments are highlighted on the home page, discussion on the site is minimal and there are no other features on the site that aim to build community among readers. This lack of interactivity makes the *Daily News* feel more like a traditional newspaper than many more established newspaper sites now do.

## TECHNOLOGY

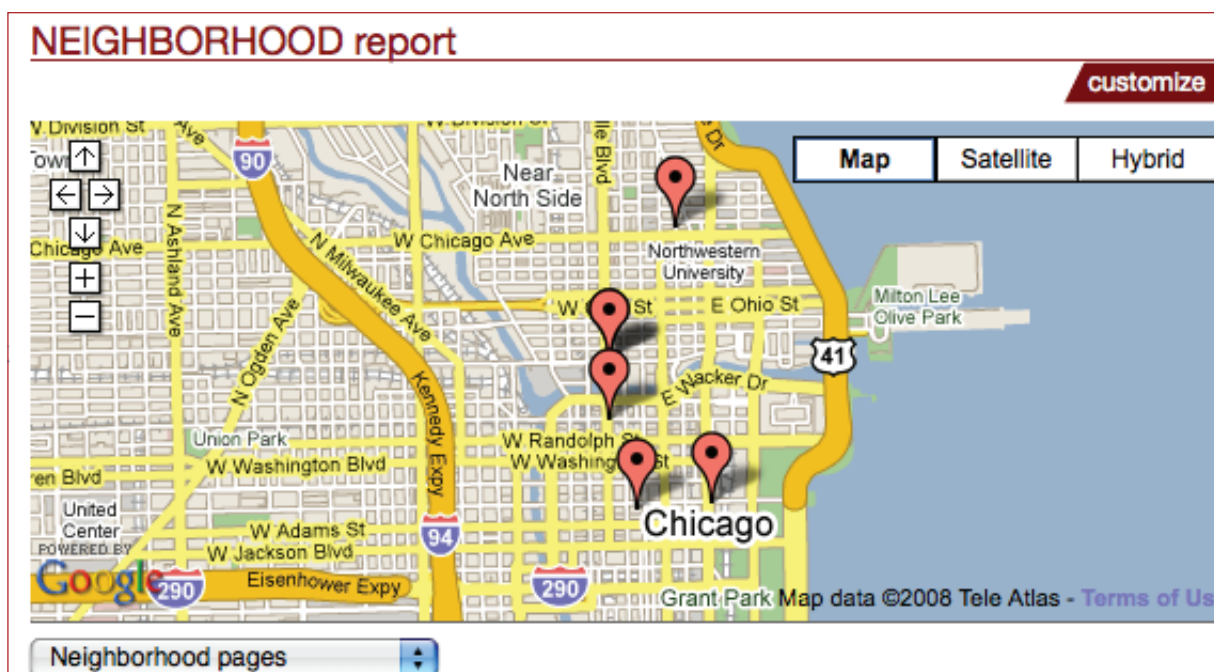
The *Daily News* website is hand-coded by Dougherty in Ruby on Rails<sup>45</sup> and lacks some of the fundamental functionality of off-the-shelf content management systems. Individual article

pages do not display what section the article is in, making it impossible to browse back to the main category page. Searching is not available from most pages. Many old links to articles on the website from external sites are broken, and the 404 “page not found” error page doesn't display useful information and hasn't been updated to reflect the current design of the website.

Articles are categorized with tags set by the site's editors. A box in the right-hand column of some pages lists and links to a collection of articles related to about 20 of the most popular tags. However, the tagging system, though used on nearly all new articles, is poorly implemented. There are more than 300 pages of tags, many with no associated articles. In contrast with iReport, which can display tags visually, alphabetically, and by popularity over time,<sup>46</sup> or Vocale.org, which has a complex category system,<sup>47</sup> the only way to browse the tags on the website is in a simple list sorted alphabetically.<sup>48</sup>

Users who create free accounts on the site are able to customize a news map on the home page and add comments to articles. When registering, users must supply an email address and are asked for their occupation, neighborhood, date of birth, a photo, and a short biography. These optional items can be included in a user profile, but the use of profiles has not yet been broadly adopted.

The *Daily News* home page has a map that centers on a user's neighborhood and displays map pins that indicate the



*News items can be displayed on a map of each user's neighborhood.*

locations of events in the news. Although this feature shows promise—*Chicago Tribune* writer Stephen Johnson praised the “advanced technology . . . that former print folk don’t usually mess with”<sup>49</sup>—it is not yet fully functional. When tested with the Hyde Park neighborhood, the map centered on a town of that name in Vermont instead of the appropriate area in Chicago.

The home page also features a weather forecast, upcoming events, the four most recent user comments on news articles, and the four latest entries from the RSS feeds of the *Chicago Tribune*, WBEZ (Chicago Public Radio), and the *Sun-Times*. The Blog Farm offers links to recent pieces in several Chicago blogs.

The “contact us” page lists the email addresses and phone numbers for the editor, general manager, associate editor, and community organizer, as well as the street address of the *Daily News* offices. The address and phone number are repeated in the footer, which appears on all pages.

The site introduced public profiles for contributors in mid-2008 as a way of establishing credibility and continuity. Audience members can track a reporter’s coverage across time, and eventually, learn more about their background. Currently, most profiles only list the articles a reporter has contributed, but reporters can add personal information including neighborhood, occupation, age, and a narrative biography. Neighborhood reporters are given the same prominence as freelance contributors and editors. A contact form may be included on the page, though email addresses for authors are not displayed. The site’s editors encourage use of the profile form, but so far few volunteer reporters have taken advantage of them.<sup>50</sup>

The challenges of keeping up with needed maintenance and improvements on the technical side will almost certainly require Dougherty to relinquish technical control and hire new staff. The current idiosyncratic system could prove time-consuming for a new developer to take over, and the organization may eventually find it more effective to implement an open-source or low-cost content management system.

## CONCLUSION

The achievements of the *Chi-Town Daily News* are a testimony to Geoff Dougherty’s energy and dedication. Seeking to get original reporting that is up to professional standards from volunteers puts the *Daily News* in an ambitious minority among

citizen journalism projects. Attempting it across a major city is probably unprecedented; similar projects almost always serve far smaller communities.

The ambitious scope of the *Daily News* project and the depth of Dougherty’s involvement also hamper its progress. On a basic operational level, the publication suffers from Dougherty being solely responsible for technical maintenance and improvement of a complex site while managing a newsroom of staff and volunteers. Issues like the broken tagging system, poor photo system, and neglected design point to the demands on Dougherty’s time.

A more fundamental question is whether the publication has successfully identified its readers and figured out how to reach them. Covering the stories that the large newspapers ignore is an important mission. Nonetheless, it is not the definition of a cohesive news product. It seems clear that, at present, the site’s collection of articles on events in far-flung neighborhoods and disparate issues simply do not add up to a “must-read” publication for ordinary people. The use of RSS feeds and email newsletters to deliver the content to readers who are interested in specific issues or locales works around this issue, but it begs the question of whether a standalone publication is the ideal venue for *Chi-Town*’s journalism. Even if the *Daily News* were to reach its goal of a much larger cadre of reporters, it would still lack the capacity to provide consistent coverage of breaking news.

Promoting civic engagement would seem to be an obvious goal of reporting on schools, the transit system, and local politics, which are largely ignored by other media. However, the *Daily News* site has not developed the kind of online community that enlivens many participatory media sites—comments on articles and personal details about authors are practically nonexistent. Plans to increase face-to-face interaction among volunteers may spark the kind of participation that is currently lacking on the site.

The *Daily News* has successfully identified and addressed very real concerns about the supply of certain kinds of media: local issues that have civic import and are not being covered. At the same time, it has made clear that meeting these needs, even with volunteer labor, is by no means free. This raises questions of how to put a value on this kind of journalism. Is there an intrinsic value to reporting ignored stories, even if each story is read by a only few hundred people at most? How many readers is enough to justify the effort? Should the organization focus on building community



engagement neighborhood by neighborhood, in effect creating a network of hyperlocal news organizations?

The *Daily News* needs to make choices about where to put its limited resources. There are at least three separate paths that could increase the number of people reached by the organization's work:

- **Be more like a for-profit site**—try to build audience for the site, adding some popular high-volume content to draw new readers in hopes that they will also take in the more serious reporting.
- **Be more like a community**—build more active communities around neighborhoods or themes covered by the publication, through partnerships with local organizations like schools or community centers.
- **Be more like a news agency**—focus energy on distributing the reporting in as many venues as possible.

None of these paths is guaranteed to work, but there is also no guarantee that the organization can continue to attract funding the organization in its current form. The *Daily News*' reporting network as a possible model for producing a significant source of high-quality local reporting across a large city could have significant implications for other projects. It is important that it does everything possible to discover a sustainability model.

Matt Hampel (<http://matth.org>) is a student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/07-4NRwinter/p62-dougherty.html>

<sup>2</sup> Dougherty, personal interview.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Dougherty, personal correspondence. Due to the IRS applications backlog, tax-exempt status was granted retroactively to the date of founding in 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Doig, phone interview.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.chitowndailynews.org/pages/board>

<sup>7</sup> Dougherty, Doig, interviews.

<sup>8</sup> <http://newsbare.typepad.com/mgpaudio/2008/01/video-chitown-d.html>

<sup>9</sup> [http://featuresblogs.chicagotribune.com/technology\\_internetcritic/2005/12/chicagos\\_newest.html](http://featuresblogs.chicagotribune.com/technology_internetcritic/2005/12/chicagos_newest.html)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Ravings\\_from\\_the\\_editor/Grant\\_2,14687](http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Ravings_from_the_editor/Grant_2,14687)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Ravings\\_from\\_the\\_editor/Its\\_all\\_about\\_the\\_maps,11111](http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Ravings_from_the_editor/Its_all_about_the_maps,11111)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.chitowndailynews.org/advertiser>; no additional details on estimated or minimum impressions given.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> <http://chitowndailynews.org/about/donate>

<sup>15</sup> <http://chitowndailynews.org/pages/subscribe>

<sup>16</sup> Geoff Dougherty, Nieman Reports: <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/07-4NRwinter/p62-dougherty.html>

<sup>17</sup> *Chi-Town* phrasing.

<sup>18</sup> [http://newschallenge.org/chi-town\\_daily\\_news](http://newschallenge.org/chi-town_daily_news)

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.chitowndailynews.org/tags/tag\\_detail/Knight%20News%20Challenge](http://www.chitowndailynews.org/tags/tag_detail/Knight%20News%20Challenge)

<sup>20</sup> A Sports category contained little content and was removed from the site's navigation in summer 2008, although articles originally filed there remain on a page and there is an RSS feed for Sports.

<sup>21</sup> Dougherty, email correspondence.

<sup>22</sup> The inverted pyramid dictates that articles should give the most important information before proceeding to lesser details, so that readers who do not read to the end will still learn the key information.

<sup>23</sup> The nut graf (also graph or 'graph) is the paragraph that summarizes the news value of the story.

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Culture/City\\_Farm\\_grows\\_jobs\\_knowledge\\_and\\_tomatoes,15388](http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Culture/City_Farm_grows_jobs_knowledge_and_tomatoes,15388)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.chitowndailynews.org/pages/contact>

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, phone interview.

<sup>27</sup> Dougherty, personal interview.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.j-lab.org/m06release.shtml>. J-Lab has since relocated to American University.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.newcitychicago.com/chicago/5462.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://poynter.org/column.asp?id=101&aid=140354>

<sup>31</sup> Edwards, phone interview.

<sup>32</sup> *Chi-Town Craigslist Noticed*, accessed July 2008. URL.

<sup>33</sup> Edwards, phone interview.

<sup>34</sup> The questions that every story must answer: "Who? What? Where? When? Why?" Also called the five Ws and one H in order to add the question "How?"

<sup>35</sup> <http://poynter.org/column.asp?id=101&aid=140354>

<sup>36</sup> Doig, phone interview.

<sup>37</sup> <http://learning.chitowndailynews.org>

<sup>38</sup> Edwards, phone interview.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.highrisehq.com>

<sup>40</sup> Edwards, phone interview.

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Ravings\\_from\\_the\\_editor/Cheap\\_but\\_not\\_free,15189](http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Ravings_from_the_editor/Cheap_but_not_free,15189)

<sup>42</sup> Edwards, phone interview.

<sup>43</sup> Edwards, phone interview.

<sup>44</sup> Quantcast puts *Chi-Town*'s monthly visitors at 6900, *Gapers Block*'s at 21,300, and a *Chicagoist*'s monthly audience at 105,000. The sites of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Sun-Times* of course dwarf all of these, with 3.1 and 2.4 million monthly visitors, respectively.