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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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On April 16 & 17, 2009, the University of Massachusetts Amherst hosted “YouTube and the 2008 Election Cycle in the United States,” an interdisciplinary workshop designed to generate papers for an upcoming special issue of the *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* (*JITP*). The result was proof that *JITP* and its scholarly community are at the forefront of digital methods, whether for implementing research technologies or leveraging technology in the presentation, sharing, and archiving of findings. The 73 registered participants and roughly 300 live stream viewers enjoyed ten paper presentations, two stunning keynote talks from Richard Rogers and Noshir Contractor, as well as a poignant presentation from Max Harper of the 2008 Obama Video Team.

At the conference web site<sup>1</sup> which was built by graduate student Nathaniel deVelder on a Drupal (free, open source) platform, you can review the papers, slides, posters, and YouTube versions of research presentations and join a community able to comment on and annotate the conference materials. You can also watch all of the presentations with the slides via the link to the Panopto.com presentation delivery platform. The meeting served as a model for our future work at the journal in the years to come.

Fresh off the excitement of *JITP*-2009, which was the first annual thematic conference for the journal, we are hard at work planning *JITP*-2010, titled “The Politics of Open Source,” and featuring keynote speeches from MIT’s Eric von Hippel, Sunlight Lab’s Clay Johnson, and other luminaries. There was a palpable sense of excitement at the end of *JITP*-2009 about the format and results of the workshop, so

we anticipate much the same feeling emerging when we meet again in Amherst May 6 & 7, 2010. We are also excited about the imminent publication of *JITP* 6(3/4), a special double issue guest edited by Andrew Chadwick titled “Politics: Web 2.0” that is due out late this summer.

In general, *JITP* is holding steady as a scholarly endeavor. Our reviewer database is now at 500 members and we handle all journal submissions via our newly constructed in-house Manuscript and Review System (MARS), which is online at [http://www.jitp.net/m\\_submit.php](http://www.jitp.net/m_submit.php). We continue to seek ways to improve MARS and to accelerate the process whereby papers are reviewed, as well as to improve the quality of the reviews provided in the process. Once MARS is a mature software system, it will be much more likely for a paper to get turned around in about 45-60 days by 3-5 reviewers and two editors.

This is a very robust issue of *JITP*. We lead off with Martin Hilbert’s piece, “The Maturing Concept of E-Democracy: From E-Voting and Online Consultations, to Democratic Value out of Online Chatter.” Hilbert explores Web 2.0’s “gigantic digital polis of massively parallel online chatter” in search of democratic life signs emergent in tools and techniques designed to manage, map, and navigate the maelstrom. An e-democracy with transparent ranking and status tools, equipping citizens with “more or less intelligent digital assistants” might just be in the processing of reaching its early stages of maturity.

In “The Digital World of Local Government: A Comparative Analysis of the United States and Germany,” Tony E. Wohlers systematically investigates the presences and sophistication of

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<sup>1</sup><http://youtubeandthe2008election.jitp2.net/frontpage>

local e-government efforts in two nations. Like many ITP scholars, his impressive snapshot of more than 1,000 municipalities captures an aggregate but fleeting glimpse of the ways that digital government evolves despite “the lack of technology, web staff, financial resources and expertise” that is widely reported in government agencies. The rarity of genuine citizen participation mechanisms is, of course, notable and surprisingly persistent. The good news is that small towns are, at last, coming online.

Jim Snider’s article is really quite good and should be very widely read by the staff of the Congress of the United States and all the state legislatures as well. I thoroughly enjoyed the read, despite the length, and his argument in favor of a better way to serve the data makes perfect sense. Besides, his title is just divine: “Would You Ask Turkeys to Mandate Thanksgiving? The Dismal Politics of Legislative Transparency.” Snider directs our view to the role of unnecessarily limited access to voting records in the age of the Internet and powerful databases. He also points prophetically to the possibility for more complete, accessible, and fully annotated records on every single legislative vote and the various incentives and rationales that limit legislator support for making such records available. Just think how useful such annotations would have been for

understanding the voting record of Illinois legislator Barack Obama and his many abstentions. Jim identifies a conflict of interest that critically undermines the full potential of low-cost legislating with high transparency and accountability in the digital age.

Continuing a recent trend, we have some nicely constructed *JITP* Workbench Notes in this issue. In “‘Blogs I Read’: Partisanship and Party Loyalty in the Canadian Political Blogosphere,” Greg Elmer and a vast army of collaborators report on the status of partisan “blogrolls” in Canadian electoral politics. In “Political Science Computing: A Review of Trends in Computer Evolution and Political Science Research,” Euel W. Elliott, Karl Ho, and Jennifer S. Holmes elegantly track the “impact of advances in computing on empirical research in political science,” by coding over 1,300 articles from the *American Political Science Review*. Finally, in “Local E-Governance and the Risk of Territorial Fracture: The Case of Catalonia,” Anna Garcia Hom and Ramon J. Moles contribute the notion of territorial fractured space to continuing work in the area of digital divides.

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