

# Madison Commons - Media Giraffe Profile

## **Madison Commons**

Lew Friedland - Project Director



"We're trying to do an experiment in open-source journalism right now in Madison, I don't know if we'll succeed or not. But there's a need for it . . . for that great work to be done, it has to be maintained by

the citizens themselves. And I think that's one place where open source, local journalism has to take up the mantle . . . ."

*Lew Friedland, June 28, 2006, during an Amherst, Mass. conference (noted below)"*

**Address:** School of Journalism & Mass Communications, 5115 Vilas Communications Hall<br>821 University Ave.

**Location:** Madison, WI, 53706-1497

**Email:** info@madisoncommons.org / lfriedla@wisc.edu

**Website:** <http://www.madisoncommons.org/about.php>

**Phone:** 414-736-4665

**Work:** 603-263-7853

## About

Lew Friedland (BIOGRAPHICAL LINK) is a professor at the University of Wisconsin who helped originate the Madison Commons, a non-profit local news website which, in an unusual arrangement, collaborates with *The Wisconsin State Journal*, the legacy daily newspaper in the Wisconsin capital.

---

### FROM THE WEBSITE:

"Madison Commons . . . is designed to provide news and information about all of Madison's neighborhoods and a crossroads for the discussion of community issues. The name comes from the idea of a village commons, a place for news, talk, debate, and some entertainment, too, that's open to everyone. Our goal is to gather stories from all of Madison's neighborhoods in one accessible place."

---

Kristian Knutsen wrote on the website of *The Istmus*, an alternative print weekly on March 8, 2006:

- Madison's newest community journalism project, intended to serve as "a crossroads for the discussion of community issues," has debuted. Named Madison Commons, the pilot project will create and distribute neighborhood-level "citizen journalism" . . . the region's dominant media chain, Capital Newspapers Inc., publisher of the Wisconsin State Journal, is an integral player in the Madison Commons project . . . the project -- also conceptualized as a "community information commons" -- has three components: training, online publishing and collaboration with existing media outlets . . . The State Journal will be republishing Madison Commons content, while articles from the daily newspapers are already getting republished on the Commons' website."

The Commons Project is funded by a New Voices grant from J-Lab and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The project offers workshops for citizens to learn reporting and writing skills. They are administered by Cathy DeShano, Madison Commons managing editor, (cldeshano@yahoo.com -- phone 608-237-1435. The classes include a basic reporting toolkit.

---

Here is an excerpted text of remarks by Friedland made June 28, 2006 at the University of Massachusetts, during the Media Giraffe Project summit:

"Local reporting positions are being slashed all over. So we actually have, I think, the same kind of crisis in miniature in local news, which as you correctly point out, is the heart of much local journalism. Much of the journalism in the U.S. we have is national stories. And [the problem] may be worse because the open source

and the distributed solutions that Jay [Rosen] and Jeff [Jarvis] and others have been talking about are much less available in local communities.

"You can have blogging, but the kind of larger pool of people who are going to do the sort of real reporting that supplements or complements the kind of work that goes on nationally doesn't exist. We're trying to do an experiment in open-source journalism right now in Madison, I don't know if we'll succeed or not. But there's a need for it . . . .

"We just finished a study, there were 630, roughly, civic or public-journalism projects in the United States that were done over about 10 years. They were wonderful, there was great journalism done in many of those 630 projects. But what happened was that newspapers themselves -- most of them were driven by newspapers -- decided to pull the plug on them. Why? Because they got tired of them, they got bored, they were too much work, they weren't profitable.

"So for that great work to be done, it has to be maintained by the citizens themselves. And I think that's one place where open source, local journalism has to take up the mantle . . . ."

Media Giraffe Profile Archive | ID: 433

Created: 2008-01-12 12:28:40

Last Modified: 2008-12-02 10:32:31