

Center for Digital Democracy - Media Giraffe Profile

Center for Digital Democracy

Jeff Chester - Executive Director



"Advertisers are harnessing technology that targets and follows Internet users on their journeys through cyberspace, collecting data and tracking behavior. Virtual software marketing tools will be deployed across the digital landscape so that wherever we go, whatever we do do--e-mail, instant messaging, mobile communications or searches--we will be immersed in enticing content for the lifelong sell . . . The most powerful communications system ever developed by humans is increasingly being put in the service of selling, commercialization and commodification. And it will lead to an inherently conservative and narcissistic political culture, in which the interests of the self and the consumption of products are the primary, most visible, media messages. And unless we begin to challenge it now, the emerging digital culture will seriously challenge our ability to effectively communicate, inform and organize.

Jeff Chester, in an Oct. 14 essay in The Nation magazine"

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About

UPDATE: January 7, 2007:

In an excerpt from his just-published book, Chester writes that it is time for media activities to figure out a business strategy for competing with the ad-driven commercial-media marketplace, which will otherwise dominate the airwaves. [READ MORE](#)

UPDATE -- Oct. 14, 2006:

In an essay on the AlterNet site, reposted from The Nation, Chester discusses the Google acquisition of YouTube and Fox Interactive acquisition of MySpace and argues media-savvy progressives should be creating alternatives to a marketing-driven media system.

From the Center for Digital Democracy website (<http://www.democraticmedia.org/index.html>):

The broadband revolution--much like the radio, television, cable, and online revolutions of the recent past--provides yet another opportunity to make our media system more democratic, more diverse, and more participatory. It is incumbent upon community activists and leaders, recognizing the power of broadband, to become more actively involved in the design and deployment of the new high-speed networks that will bring video, data, and telephone services to our homes and businesses.

The Center for Digital Democracy Mission Statement (<http://www.democraticmedia.org/cddmissionstatement.html>):

The Center for Digital Democracy is committed to preserving the openness and diversity of the Internet in the broadband era, and to realizing the full potential of digital communications through the development and encouragement of noncommercial, public interest programming. To these ends, CDD has four broad goals:

- To enhance public understanding of the changing dimensions of the US digital media system, by explaining the communications options and the public-interest resources that citizens should have at their disposal.
- To foster the development of a new generation of activists to work on digital media policy issues, and to make the media industry more accountable to the public.
- To promote the development of a new online "commons," a consolidated and more visible space in which the public will have access to a variety of noncommercial sources of information and service.
- To stimulate nonprofit organizations (especially progressive, public-interest groups) to become active producers of next-generation broadband media content.

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Jeff Chester is executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy, a nonprofit organization devoted to ensuring that the digital media serve the public interest. A former journalist and filmmaker, his work has appeared in many publications, radio and on TV. In the 1980s, Jeff led the national campaign that prompted the creation by Congress of the Independent Television Service (ITVS) for PBS. In 1990, he co-founded the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression, which focused on protecting artists' rights. The following year he created Ralph Nader's Teledemocracy Project on cable TV reform. In 1992, he co-founded and served as executive director (until 2000) of the Center for Media Education, a leading force on such issues as Internet privacy, media ownership, and children's TV. At CME he led the successful campaign at the Federal Trade Commission to impose conditions on the merger of AOL and Time Warner. He also co-directed the campaigns that led to stronger rules by the FCC on children's educational TV, and to the passage of the 1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. Under Jeff's leadership, CDD co-led the two-year campaign against proposals by the media industries and FCC Chairman Powell to eliminate critical ownership safeguards. His work helped generate unprecedented public support opposing the Big Media lobby. He has also campaigned to maintain the Internet's open and non-discriminatory architecture, through work in the press, Congress, and in the courts. In 1996, Newsweek Magazine named him one of the Internet's fifty most influential people. He established CDD in 2001 with the support of a Stern Family Foundation "Public Interest Pioneer" award. Chester holds an MSW in community mental health from UC Berkeley. He is currently finishing a book for The New Press on the digital media and the public interest.

Links

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