



NEW ENGLAND NEWS FORUM

New England News Forum
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 26, 2007

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From left: Wilpers, Hume, Crossley, Williams

ON MAY 17, BOSTON-AREA EXPERTS TO DISCUSS AND SHARE CHANGES IN NEWS AT COMMUNITY LEVEL; FIRST NENF "CIVIC LIBRARY LISTENING" EVENT

BOSTON – Sweeping changes in the technology and economics of news that create new opportunities for building community are the topic when the New England News Forum holds its first ["Civic News Library Listening Series"](#) event Thurs., May 17 at the Boston Public Library.

The 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. event is free and public and will include a Q&A session during which the audience can share ideas and initiatives at local community building. The session is entitled: "Restoring Media Trust: The News Revolution -- What Does It Mean to Your Community?"

Among expert speakers will be John Wilpers, editor of [BostonNOW](#), the new free daily newspaper; Ellen Hume, director of the [Center on Media & Society](#) at UMass-Boston and founder of the [New England Ethnic News Wire](#), Callie Crossley, of WGBH's ["Beat the Press"](#) and NPR's "News & Notes", and Lisa Williams, originator of [H2Otown.info](#), a citizens-news website for the city of Watertown and an acknowledged expert on so-called ["placeblogs"](#) – a term she's coined.

"Our Civic News Library Listening Series puts media experts together with active citizens for directed discussion and informal dialogue," says Bill Densmore, director of the News Forum. "With blogging, citizens news gathers and the emergence of simple video and audio tools, the lines between commercial journalism and citizen activism are blurring. We're helping define the new relationships."

The Civic News Library Listening Series, which will continue with a similar event May 24 at the Springfield [Mass.] Public Library, is supported by a grant from the Massachusetts Foundation on the Humanities. The New England News Forum is supported by a [grant](#) from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Internet technology is dramatically changing the financing and formatting of the news, profoundly affecting participatory democracy and community, and eroding public trust in the media. Existing news organizations, citizens and "bloggers" are experimenting with new forms.

The New England News Forum (NENF) is inaugurating the "Civic News Library Listening Series," to help understand these changes. In Springfield, and Boston, and then throughout New England during 2007 and 2008, the NENF will enlist libraries, local media organizations and active citizens in a series of "town meetings."

These evening events will typically involve several discussion leaders and then an explicit period of "listening" to citizens express concerns about the news. They will often be videotaped for research.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

John Wilpers is editor-in-chief of BostonNOW, a free five-day tabloid newspaper that began publication April 18 with the aim of using citizen-generated news and comment as a core part of the publication. In a 30-year newspaper career, Wilpers has been a reporter and editor at newspapers throughout New England, including editor and chief of two suburban Boston weekly groups, and started and edited AOL's Digital Cities Boston. Most recently he edited the Washington Examiner, another free daily. He lives in Marshfield.

Ellen Hume is senior research fellow, and director of the Center on Media and Society at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She also directs, under a Ford Foundation grant, the Ethnic Media Project and New England Ethnic News Wire (<http://www.go-NEWz.com>) which foster story exchanges, online digests, "best-practices" workshops and an online media-outlet directory for Haitian, Russian, Latino, Irish, Indian, Chinese, African, African-American, and other ethnic cultures in Greater Boston. Hume is a former White House correspondent for The Wall Street Journal, director of the PBS Democracy Project, and executive director of the Shorenstein Center at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She authored the prizewinning 1995 study, "Tabloids, Talk Radio and the Future of News."

Callie Crossley is a commentator, speaker, writer, broadcast journalist and filmmaker. She is a weekly contributor to the radio program "NPR News and Notes" and to WGBH-TV's "Beat the Press" media-criticism program. She is program manager for the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University. She spent 13 years as a network television producer for ABC News "20/20" and produced the PBS documentary series "Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965." Crossley's public speaking topics include the current state of the media, women and the media, race and media, media literacy, women's leadership, young people and activism, social amnesia and the civil rights movement, the decline in civic engagement, documentary filmmaking, and most recently, the importance of libraries.

Lisa Williams runs H2OTown, a community and news metroblog for Watertown, Mass. She is creating the largest online directory of geographic-community oriented websites in America at Placeblogger.com and is a consultant to Boston.com and the Center for Citizen Media at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School. In her previous career she was the director of the business software/enterprise research group for the Yankee Group, a large technology analyst and research firm based in Boston. She's been a consultant to national and local publications on the subject of blogging and community engagement online. Williams holds a B.A. in writing and publishing from Emerson College.

ABOUT THE NEW ENGLAND NEWS FORUM

[The New England News Forum](#) (NENF) is collaboration among news professionals, citizen journalists, educators and the public to promote vigorous, trusted, accountable journalism – and accountable government. It aims to increase public trust and deepen public understanding of the news media by promoting the practice of trusted, thorough, and accountable journalism.

NENF is a member organization based with the journalism program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and initially funded by a seed grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. It launched to the public on April 7 with a conference in Lowell, Mass. entitled: ["The New\(s\) England Revolution: From Politics to Courtroom to Classroom."](#)

NENF is an independent resource which can help define, research, advise -- and hopefully strengthen and expand -- the relationship between news producers and news consumers. Its website offers journalists, web-news entrepreneurs and active citizens a place to engage in discussion, to share and resolve disagreements over media issues such as privacy, coverage, access, accuracy, bias and emphasis.

For more information, contact the New England News Forum at UMass Amherst by phone at (413) 577-4370 or email to mail@newenglandnews.org or go to the website, <http://www.newenglandnews.org>

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Editors: Higher resolution photos of speakers available at: <http://www.mediagiraffe.org/library>