

Web Video 2004: A Breakthrough Technology in a Breakthrough Year

“The Revolution will not be televised,” Joe Trippi advised us all in the title of his book on e-politics in 2004.

Joe could not be more wrong.

2004, indeed, will be remembered not just as the year of the blogger, but also as the year campaigns, would-be ad makers and revolutionaries, video satirists and polemicists put Web video squarely on the map. This involved a series of “first”:

- **The First Major Presidential Web Video Ad**
Before the Bush-Cheney campaign aired their first TV ads, they e-mailed two notable Web video ads to their six million e-mail subscribers: “Coalition of the Wild Eyed” and “Unprincipled.” The latter garnered tremendous free media for the campaign on news networks and the print media and put the Kerry campaign on the defensive.
- **The First Presidential Debate Rapid Response Web Video**
The Democrats had their own Web video breakthrough. Following the first presidential

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debate, the Democratic National Committee e-mailed reporters and supporters “Faces of Frustration,” a Web video showing President Bush scowling, smirking and grimacing throughout the course of the debate. The video was re-broadcast by NBC and other news media, deepening the perception that Bush had been badly beaten by Kerry.

- **The First Terrorist Web Videos**
It is horrific, but necessary, to note the most notorious users of Web video: jihadist terrorists. 2004 brought a succession of Web videos of terrorist messages and videos of acts of violence and murder of hostages. Previously, Al Qaeda and terrorist groups sent videotapes or audio recordings to television networks, such as Al Jazeera. Starting in 2004, the terrorists began webcasting their videos,

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and international news organizations rebroadcasting the Web videos—an infamous milestone in Internet history.

And the list goes on: MoveOn.org's groundbreaking political advertisement-making contest, "Bush in 30 Seconds," and JibJab.com's breakthrough satire, the first political flash animation to generate true national attention and more.

If 2004's revolutions were not televised at least they were *webcast*. As television and computers converge via technology, such as on demand video, digital video recorders and wired home networks, they are becoming increasingly the same thing.

Beyond 2004

What does the future hold for political Web video? Its use will continue to spread by groups including:

- **Members of Congress**
Members of Congress are increasingly using the medium to reach constituents. In addition to basic Web site welcome and issue videos, many are using videos to reach constituents for special events and targeted messages. Democrats Bob Menendez and Pete Stark both webcast responses to the President's State of the Union. Stark's video was viewed by some 5400 constituents. And Congressman Earl Blumenauer is

planning the first-ever Video Town Hall, with constituents e-mailing questions and the congressman answering them via live webcast, in March.

- **Non-Profits & Think Tanks**
Non-profits and think tanks are increasingly turning to Web video—indeed, have led the way in the political arena—to get their message out, via event webcasts, online documentaries and video news releases.

- **Public Relations Firms**

Many PR firms are advising clients to use Web video as direct public communications and in some cases as a Web video news release. One famous recent example is Michael Jackson's Web video message to supporters on the eve of his trial, which was rebroadcast by several network and cable newscasts.

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Their Web video content is attracting advertising, including more Web video and rich media ads.

- **The News Media**
The news media have and will continue to lead the way—by fits and starts—at putting video on the Web. From C-SPAN, which has been providing live simultaneous webcasts since 1997, to MSNBC.com, which is increasingly living up to its original goal of being a true multimedia news site, to the washingtonpost.com and nytimes.com, the giants of the print media world who are increasingly Web video media