

Participatory journalism at British news websites

7th International Symposium on Online Journalism, University of Texas,
USA, 8 April 2006.

Neil Thurman



**Avril
Williams**



Peter Bale



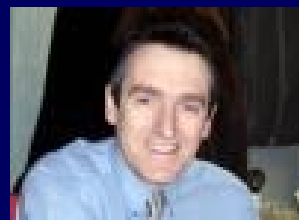
Stewart Kirkpatrick



**Pete Clifton &
Mike Smartt**



Richard Burton


































Pete Picton

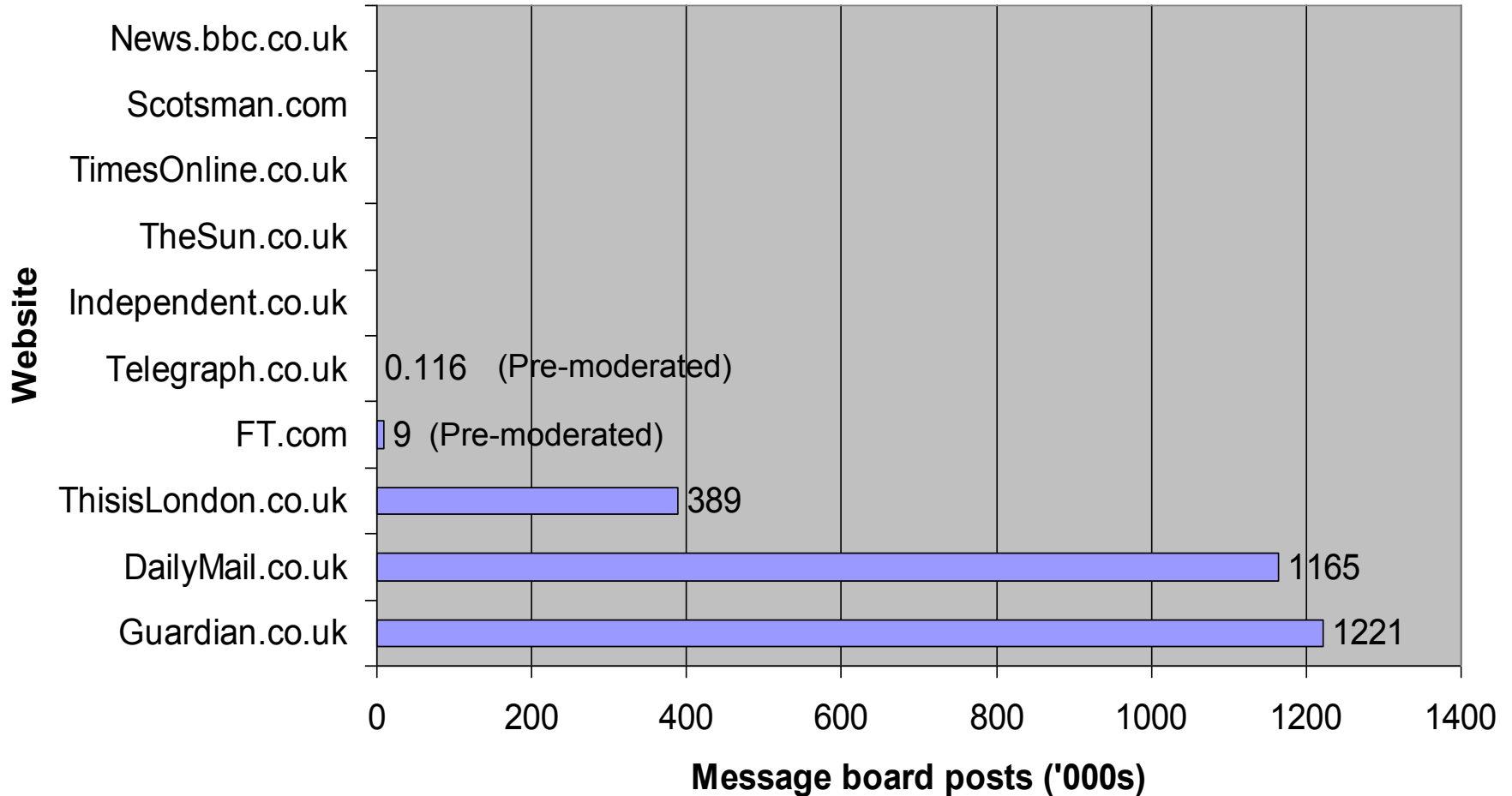


Tracey Corrigan

Table 1: User generated content initiatives at a selection of British news Web sites

Web site	Polls	Have your say	Chat room	Q&A	Blogs with comments enabled	Message boards			Other
						Moderated		Posts	
						Pre	Post		
Guardian.co.uk					 ¹			1,221,054 ²	
DailyMail.co.uk	 ³							1,165,000 ⁴	
ThisisLondon.co.uk	 ⁵							389,000 ⁶	 ⁷
FT.com								9,432 ⁸	 ⁹
Telegraph.co.uk								116 ¹⁰	 ¹¹
Independent.co.uk									
TheSun.co.uk	 ¹²	 ¹³							 ¹⁴
TimesOnline.co.uk									 ¹⁵
Scotsman.com					 ¹⁶				 ¹⁷
News.bbc.co.uk									 ¹⁸

Use of message boards at ten UK news websites



Mail ONLINE

« Back to home Login » Register » 17 June 2005

Main sections: **Boards & chat**

Boards & chat
Boards guide
Boards help
Boards map
House rules
Search boards
Internet safety
Report abuse
Terms
Boards log in

Search boards... **GO** » Select board: [Current affairs]

Click for advanced search

Politics

Important! Our house rules **« BACK**

Ou est les europhiles? 10 replies

Posted by: ramblemania on 01/06/05 at 05:56 PM
Just wondering.

Report this post to a moderator **REPLY**

Re: Ou est les europhiles? 0 replies

Posted by: goneforlunch on 01/06/05 at 08:26 PM
> Just wondering.

Drowning their sorrows I expect!

Report this post to a moderator **REPLY**

Re: Ou est les europhiles? 1 replies

Posted by: colonel_bogey on 01/06/05 at 08:33 PM
Plotting how to get their own way without the inconvenience of the people spoiling their power games.

Report this post to a moderator **REPLY**

Quick links

- Weather

Site tools

- Login
- Register
- Text-based site
- Accessibility
- Contact us
- Need help?
- Site map
- Make us your

FT.com FINANCIAL TIMES

25% less fuel *compared to competing aircraft currently in production

Friday Jun 17 2005 . All times are London time.

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Comment & analysis / Discussion & polls

99 Can Iraq avoid splitting into separate regions?

Violence in Iraq shows no sign of diminishing in the wake of Iraq's elections. How long should US-led coalition forces remain in the country and can Iraq avoid splitting into separate Kurdish, Sunni Arab and Shia Arab regions?

Hosted by - FT.com **Post reply** **Search**

13 replies All times are BST

Can Iraq avoid splitting into separate regions?

Can Iraq avoid splitting into separate regions? 07 Jun 2005 03:39 PM
by FT.com FT Administrator **FT**

Poll Question:
Can Iraq avoid splitting into separate Kurdish, Sunni Arab and Shia Arab regions?

FT.com discussions feature a representative sample of contributions. Click [here](#) for the discussion rules and guidelines

Choices:
 Yes
 No

Vote now **Vote results**

FT.com 'discussions'
-- 9,433 posts

DailyMail.co.uk 'boards'
-- 1,165,785 posts



24 HOURS A DAY

« Back to home Login » Register »

Main sections News Election 2005

- News
- News headlines
- World news
- City news
- Mail comment
- Photos & video
- Mac cartoons
- News alerts
- E-editions
- Webchats
- Message boards

Partners

- Elizabeth Arden
- Diet centre
- Dating
- Money shop
- DVD rentals

Find me a job

Find a holiday

Find a home

Find me a date

Special promotions

- Free DVDs
- Daily Mail Ski Show
- Win £35k ski holidays
- Free beauty goodies
- All promotions »

News galleries

- Tory wives
- Top Christmas toys
- Earthquake rescue
- Southend Pier
- All galleries

Dancing in the streets
Paris and Madrid host parties to back their
See the

Guardian Unlimited

Read today's paper
Sign in | Register

news.teleg

Search Westminster weblog

telegraph.co.uk

News home

West (Filed)

Breaking news

Business news

Crossword Society

Factfiles

Law reports

Matt cartoon

Obituaries

Opinion

Picture galleries

Quiz

Text alerts

Weather

Weblogs

Week at a glance

Your view

About us

Contact us

As the false s royal v from it

Follow my adventures online & WIN your own Western Australian holiday. enter here

Go to Guardian Unlimited home Go

Online blog

Friday June 17 2005

WEEK FEED

Online: latest technology headlines

Simon Waldman: Coming to a hard disk near you
John O'Farrell: What about a little five-card pension?
Virtual trade gets real
Student union discount cards for sale on eBay
Online ticket touts win hands down

Gamesblog: latest news and comment

Quick mobile gaming round-up
Snake 'creator' honoured at MEM awards
\$26,500 virtual property owner speaks
Reviewed
Mobile gaming's answer to E3?™

By Bobbie Johnson / Lunatic Tendencies 09:08am
"PlayStations and television are replacing pets in the modern home," reports the Scotsman:

The percentage of British homes with a pet has fallen from almost 55 per cent in 1999 to 48 per cent today. In some cases, children are even turning to virtual pets instead of the real thing. "The falling number of children has contributed to this decline. What is more, even in those families with children, the demand for pets may not be as strong as it once was, since many children now prefer to immerse themselves in the world of computer games and TV programmes," the study [by Mintel] concluded.

Oh, come on. It's Friday.

Permalink | Comments 2

THE VOLVO XC90 THE D5 ENGINE TEST DRIVE

George Jones, Andrew Gimson and Andrew Sparrow will be contributing to the daily diary, as they chase the three party leaders around the country, picking up on the speeches, slip-ups and stress.

Monday, April 11, 2005

Early start for the first real day of campaigning. The

BBC NEWS UK EDITION

Last Updated: Monday, 13 June, 2005, 13:30 GMT 14:30 UK

E-mail this to a friend

Printable version

My Day in Iraq: US aid worker

As part of the BBC News website's One Day in Iraq coverage, we heard from people from all walks of life, all over the country.

"Susan", a US aid worker based in Dohuk in the Kurdish autonomous area of northern Iraq, told us about a day spent working with local communities to improve awareness of the burgeoning political system.

“It was the second day of a three-day workshop in Mangesh focusing on the Iraqi constitution and elections.

The night before, I stayed at the home of friends near Dohuk. There were 12 of us sleeping in two rooms on mattresses. Luckily, it was a cool night!

We had problems getting people here from Baghdad as the road is dangerous and we didn't have time to organise flights, but locals managed to



Um Mustufa, hairdresser

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numbers

ARCHIVE

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SHOPPING

PROMOTIONS

GAMES

Debate

June 13, 2005

Will extra hours at school be good for children?

The Education Secretary Ruth Kelly has launched a £680 million initiative to keep schools open from 8am to 6pm, with schools running breakfast clubs and a range of after-school programmes. She said the extended hours would help "latchkey kids" and allow schools to become community centres. But teachers' unions question whether the scheme is adequately funded, and whether parents will have to pay. E-mail your view on the new scheme, using the form below

This scheme will benefit middle class working parents, like me, who are prepared to pay for their children to be supervised before or after school, while the parents are still at work. I doubt if it will benefit those "alienated from society" who will have neither the funds nor the inclination to sign their children up. However, as most current after school clubs have great difficulty finding staff to work the hours I can't see that it will ever be available to all children. *Elaine Wintle, Cambridge*

Thank goodness for this. Our daughter starts school in September, at the moment she's thriving in a private nursery. My husband and I both work in flexible jobs, but cannot see how we would be able to continue without relying on friends or neighbours. I'm fed up with people trying to make us feel bad about working and having children - get back to the 50s or wise up to the realities of modern life. *Jo O'Hara, Alderton, Wiltshire*

Long form

Citizen journalism

Short form

Editors' concerns / local constraints

1. Spelling, punctuation, editorial selection, accuracy & balance
2. Introducing blogs would result in a style of journalism more inclined towards personality and opinion
3. Making user generated content initiatives pay
4. Uncertain legal environment
5. The management of the journalists involved in user-generated content initiatives.
6. The information systems involved in the eliciting, processing and publishing of reader contributions.

1. Editors' concerns: Spelling,
punctuation, editorial selection,
accuracy & balance

“[the reason people] buy a newspaper or a magazine is to read a well-crafted news story or feature by someone who is trained and experienced in that field”

Pete Picton, editor, 

[10 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“On any user-invited feedback, most people are making the same point. You'll find that there will only be about, maybe, ten points of view so hundreds and hundreds will all be making the same points in different ways or the same way”

Mike Smartt, ex-editor,  News Website

[25 October 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[I] strongly believe ... that there is a premium to be paid for editing experience...readers want you to sift out content for them. That’s why they prefer different brands to others.”

Pete Picton, editor, 

[10 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“99 per cent of the blogs are extremely dull or are of very marginal interest”

Peter Bale, editorial director



[14 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“there are a lot of very mediocre blogs out there”

Richard Deverell,  News Interactive

[3 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[the contributors were]... a bunch of bigots who were shouting from one side of the room to the other and back again without even bothering to listen to what the other side of the room were saying. If someone did try to put a reasonable, balanced view it was an exception.”

Martin King, editor,



[16 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“we are slightly more comfortable [now that] we are not putting things on the website which we are not happy to have there”

Tracy Corrigan, editor,



[13 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

2. Editors' concerns: Introducing blogs would result in a style of journalism more inclined towards personality and opinion

“the message is the only thing that is important. No one knows you, no one cares about you. The reader wants information . . . [the] traditional journalist [.] is a fly on the wall [...] delivering information”

Richard Burton, editor, telegraph.co.uk

[7 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[bylines are only used] as a reward for special pieces of work, or when we need to make clear who is providing the analysis ... if you put them on every straight news story ... they'd become meaningless”

Pete Clifton, editor,  News Website

[18 March 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4361339.stm>]

3. Local constraints: Making user generated content initiatives pay

“[we had to] cut down the number [of user generated ‘Discussions’ because] if you do lots and lots of them then it is quite resource intensive”

Tracy Corrigan, editor,



[13 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[I think readers’ contributions can add] another dimension to our stories. If I had more resource I would like to get these people to write for me. For example it would be fascinating to hear about day-to-day life in Baghdad. Is it worrying to go out and get your milk and paper? What do you do about dropping your kids off at school? Are there days when you don’t go out because you think it is dangerous?”

Martin King, editor,



[16 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[they are] motivated because they just want to write their experiences...the question of getting paid isn't a major issue”.

Mike Smartt, ex-editor,  News Website

[25 October 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[user contributions are treated in] a traditional news-gathering way. We interview them, thank them and that would be the end of that”

Pete Clifton, editor,  News Website

[8 November 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“people love it, they are very loyal to it...the number of pages per visit for those people is very, very high...about forty to fifty per cent of the *DailyMail.co.uk*'s traffic is made up of the [message boards]”

Avril Williams,  

[22 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[we] were getting very substantial pages impressions. Something like 20-30 thousand page impressions a week from just the Middle East chunk [of our message boards but that was from] about 220 [users]”

Martin King, editor,



[16 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“it's difficult, it's really difficult to get them out of message boards”

Avril Williams,  

[22 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[we use] intelligent hyperlinks within postings. So if someone writes 'Weller' then that 'Weller' would become a link to the 'Weller' website...[it is the price users] have to pay for their message boards”

Avril Williams,



[22 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“On the day of the Buncefield oil depot explosion we received about 6,000 emails and 3 – 4,000 video clips, stills, and eyewitness accounts. TV news were coming to the website for material.”



Pete Clifton, **BBC** News Interactive

[31 January 2006, personal conversation with Neil Thurman]

4. Local constraints: Uncertain legal environment

“[libel laws are] holding publishers back and certainly give me cause for concern”

Stewart Kirkpatrick, editor, 

[20 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

sundayherald

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news alerts ◀

June 19, 2005

Est 1999

search

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news



While the G8 waters down its plans to combat climate change, the Antarctic ice sheet is melting far faster than we thought. The consequences could be devastating
‘This is definitely not science fiction ... it could happen’
By Rob Edwards, Environment Editor

Lord Fraser: McLetchie should reveal tax expenses
By Paul Hutcheon, Scottish Political Editor

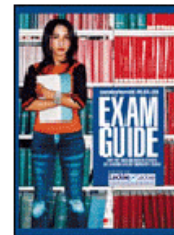
Rebate row will mean ‘lame duck presidency’
Blair’s tenure to be ‘hard going’
By James Cusick, Westminster Editor

news focus



EVERYONE AGREES GLOBAL WARMING IS WRECKING OUR PLANET ... EVERYONE EXCEPT THOSE WHO CAN STOP IT ON THE SUMMIT WHICH COULD CHANGE THE PLANET

inside



TEST STRESS?
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webfeature

thestaff

Meet the Sunday
Herald team

readerpoll

Should Scotland's
prisons be privatised?

- Yes
 No



The Sunday Herald

vs.

Lord Robertson

5. Local constraints: The management of the journalists involved in user-generated content initiatives.

“Maybe we would do more blogs if we had lots of people who had time to write but I think it is difficult to get journalists to commit to doing very long term blogs when they are doing full-time jobs as well”

Tracy Corrigan, editor,



[13 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“What you can end up doing is forcing somebody into something by saying ‘when you are out on this story we want you do a blog’. Reporters are trained in certain ways and they look for certain things, they work to certain deadlines. They work to a brief. Giving somebody an open-ended, ‘have a bit of a rant’ brief doesn't necessarily suit them professionally”

Richard Burton, editor, telegraph.co.uk

[7 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

6. Local constraints: The information systems supporting the processing and publishing of reader contributions.

“[I considered a] bulletin board structure...a technological beast in which people can write in and they can be published straight to the web or they can be filtered and monitored [but in the end was] worried [that we would be] going into an area that was just too complicated...the monitoring worried me. The people weren't trained to any discernible standard to watch for problems”

Richard Burton, editor, telegraph.co.uk

[7 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“[My] journalists ... know what they are doing. We don't have any nonsense up there. Cutting and pasting into XML and just subbing it on the run seems to be a lot easier and more fun and just produced fewer problems”

Richard Burton, editor, telegraph.co.uk

[7 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“Blogs worry me. Blogs are the ultimate publishing tool. It means anybody can be a journalist ... this idea with blogs and particularly wikis that you can go in and edit stuff and all join the party. It is a load of fun but it just detracts from what a traditional idea of journalism is. I think we have to be quite careful”

Richard Burton, editor, telegraph.co.uk

[7 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

"We are keen to introduce blogging in a way that is different to our rivals and make it relevant for an urban London audience"

Avril Williams,  

[22 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

"[blogs can] look quite attractive [they are] something I want to examine"

Richard Burton, editor, 

[7 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“When John Peel [the popular British DJ] died we had, in total, over 100,000 emails. On the first day we had 35,000. Because our approach is to read and sub everything that we put up, we just couldn't cope. We must have delighted about 50 people by publishing their comments but the other 34,500 must have thought, ‘I've spent all this time crafting this beautiful poem and you've just ignored it’”.

Pete Clifton, editor,  News Website

[8 November 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“We have to accept that we have got to be a bit more relaxed about letting user comments come into a well flagged up area of the site where people will know we haven't gone through these with a fine tooth comb”

Pete Clifton, editor,  News Website

[8 November 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

“We’re looking at software eBay uses called Jivesoft, which would allow readers to access comments in different ways. We would still have the BBC selection which is what we do now but in addition you could invite other readers to rate each comment on how interesting or useful they found it. Then the best ones would rise to the top”

Richard Deverell,  News Interactive

[3 November 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]

‘Popular’ ‘Have your says’:

100,000 page views

2,000 contributors (0.05% of readers)

For comparison:

Popular stories get 500,000 page views

BBC News website gets 3.5 – 4 million unique users / day



The screenshot shows the BBC News 'Have Your Say' page. At the top, there is a red navigation bar with the BBC NEWS logo and a button for 'LATEST NEWS IN VIDEO AND AUDIO'. Below this, the page title 'Have Your Say' is displayed with a 'Beta' label and a 'Send us your feedback' link. A membership banner offers 'New visitors: Create your membership' and 'Returning members: Sign in'. A red box indicates 'This debate is now closed.' The main article is titled 'French riots: What now?' with the sub-headline 'Should emergency laws in France be extended?'. The text discusses Jacques Chirac's comments on the riots and the French government's plans to extend emergency laws. A search box for 'HAVE YOUR SAY SEARCH' is located on the right. The left sidebar contains various news categories, and the bottom of the page shows 'COMMENTS' with a count of 821.

BBC NEWS LATEST NEWS IN VIDEO AND AUDIO

Low Graphics | Help

News Front Page
World
UK
England
Northern Ireland
Scotland
Wales
Business
Politics
Health
Education
Science/Nature
Technology
Entertainment

Have Your Say
Magazine
In Pictures
Week at a Glance
Country Profiles
In Depth
Programmes

BBC SPORT
BBC WEATHER
news
BBC ON THIS DAY

Have Your Say Beta [Send us your feedback](#)

New visitors: [Create your membership](#) Returning members: [Sign in](#)

This debate is now closed.

This Have Your Say is **CLOSED**

ABOUT HAVE YOUR SAY

- ▶ **THE RULES**
- ▶ How do I comment?
- ▶ How do I complain?
- ▶ How does recommendation work?
- ▶ Sending images - terms

HAVE YOUR SAY SEARCH

French riots: What now?

Should emergency laws in France be extended?

The French President, Jacques Chirac, has said the riots in his country have revealed a crisis of identity, and has vowed to fight what he calls the 'poison' of discrimination in France.

Mr Chirac, who has been accused of weak leadership during the crisis, also said the rioters must be brought to justice.

France's National Assembly has approved plans to extend state of emergency laws by three months.

What do you think of the tough measures imposed by the French government? What do you think the causes of the violence are? What will be the long-term impact? Send us your comments.

Published: Thursday, 10 November, 2005, 12:51 GMT 12:51 UK

COMMENTS Number of Comments: 821

Conclusions

- High variance in reader involvement -- reflects legal environment & local personnel, technical & resource conditions
- Some sites 'burnt' by inappropriate submissions have withdrawn forums
- Editors' attachment to traditional standards not firmly fixed, inhibit less than local conditions.
- User forums generate loyalty in niche groups, profitability unproved
-
- User generated content initiatives often justified in terms of what they bring to the print or broadcast parent: but novelty will wear thin
- Sites should:
 - (1) more fully integrate their user contributions into their mainstream journalistic enterprise
 - (2) find ways of satisfying unmet and growing demand from readers to contribute & be published.

“We have this huge resource of opinion, of really quite vocal readers . . . so how do we get them in the paper? Because if we get their names in the paper they are more likely to buy it”

Stewart Kirkpatrick, editor, 

[20 December 2004, telephone call with Neil Thurman]